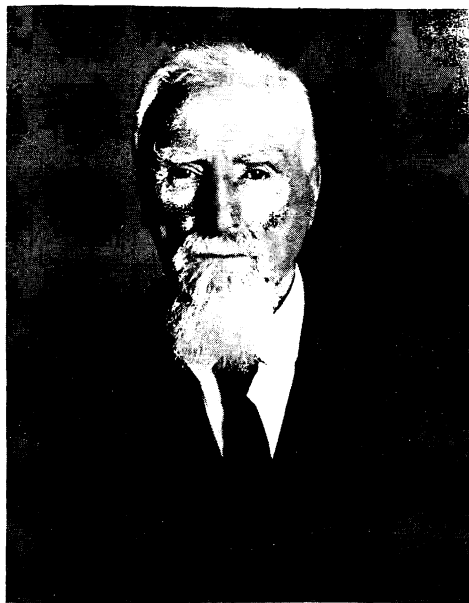


“Horatio Alger Doesn’t Work Here Any More”: Masculinity and American Magazines, 1919-1940

Tom Pendergast

Throughout the early 1920s, the *American Magazine* spoke with surety about the issues that concerned American men. The popular magazine dedicated itself to reflecting the concerns of middle-class business men, and its articles, stories, and editorial comments were optimistic about the prospects for men who dedicated their lives to duty, morality, and self-control.¹ But by the mid-1930s, the *American Magazine* was unable to sustain the optimism with which it had infused Victorian masculinity and was catering mainly to women. In 1933 a new magazine, *Esquire: The Magazine for Men*, promoted itself as the voice of Modern masculinity and articulated a vision of American masculinity different in every way from that promoted by the *American*. Avoiding entirely the narratives of business success that were at the heart of the *American*, *Esquire* spoke to the male concern for clothes, leisure, and sexuality. The two magazines could hardly have been more different. But, then, the same could be said of American masculinity, for the images and ideals that defined masculinity in American magazines in the early 1920s seemed at best old-fashioned and at worst laughable by the late 1930s.

That cultural norms for masculinity should have undergone significant changes in the years between the wars should come as no surprise, for little in American culture was left untouched by the cycles of economic boom and bust, by the sweeping political realignments, and by the social fads—the youth craze, changing sexual norms, etc.—that matured into general cultural dispositions in these years. When scholars have explained the changing nature of masculinity in



Captain Robert Dollar
CAPTAIN DOLLAR is one of the biggest business men in the United States. He is the president and chairman of the Dollar Savings Loans. He has the reputation of being a "captain" in every sense of the word. He is a member of the United States Olympic Committee and has been successful in arranging a short, well-organized Olympic competition with the Chinese Government and Japan. He is also a member of the United States Olympic Committee and has been successful in arranging a short, well-organized Olympic competition with the Chinese Government and Japan.

Figure 1: At the heart of the *American Magazine* and *Esquire* lay vastly different conceptions of American masculinity: from the *American Magazine*, Captain Dollar, the self-made man of integrity. (*American Magazine*, January 1919, p. 7.)

these years, however, they have most often asked us to view such changes as the result of the shift from proprietary to corporate capitalism. To simplify this complex argument, the older proprietary/small capitalist economy promised men that if they practiced self-control, assertiveness, and virtue they could achieve the dream of independence that lay at the core of the Victorian masculine ideal. As the economy was corporatized and concentrated, however, men were encouraged to eschew the older styles of masculinity in favor of an emphasis on personality, cooperativeness, and self-effacement. Scholars who have taken production as the driving force in historical change have tended to emphasize how such a transition affected men in the workplace, the place where men produced. I would like to suggest, however, that we will gain a more nuanced understanding of the changes in masculinity by exploring the larger cultural context of such change in the years between the wars; that is, by examining what it meant as these changing economic circumstances were filtered through the mediums of a developing consumer culture.



"But Com' you see tomorrow, today, I'm getting jurisdiction about the day after?"

Figure 2: *Esquire* advertisement reflecting a contrasting version of American masculinity: anonymous youth, garbed in this year's fashions. (*Esquire*, May 1936, p. 38.)

Corporatization, after all, went hand in hand with the growth of mass entertainment and the proliferation of consumer goods and their advertisements. By the end of World War I, the United States was both corporatized and modernized, and the twenties saw a widespread public acceptance of and participation in the corporate economy, mass culture, and the culture of consumption.² American masculinity was reconfigured within the context of all of these changes, and I will discuss that reconfiguration in terms of a movement from one pole to another, from Victorian masculinity (a way of being masculine that valued "character," inner-direction, honor, loyalty, independence, self-control, a sense of duty, and patriarchy) to Modern masculinity (a way of being masculine that valued "personality," other-direction, youth, malleability, cooperativeness, expressiveness, and sexuality).³ Of course, the decline of one set of cultural ideals and the emergence of another was not absolute. Disparate masculine images and ideals existed alongside one another throughout the period, as they do to this day. But by the end of the 1930s, those images and ideals associated with Modern masculinity dominated the mainstream mass media and reflected an image of

masculinity well suited to perpetuate the growth of a culture based on consumption.

Magazines provide one way of tracking this shift, for they provide a way to examine the images and ideals of masculinity that seemed to appeal to American men. Magazines offer a particularly rich medium for locating the intersection of forces that reshaped masculinity in this period, for they allow us to examine the results of editorial decisions meant to “win” an audience as well as the variety of means that advertisers use to sell a product. Magazines educate readers on how to consume while they are themselves consumed; they are a package of images and ideas that operate on several levels at once. In this paper, I examine the visions of masculinity offered by a number of magazines that appealed to masculine interests in the years between World War I and World War II.⁴ Both Victorian and Modern masculine images were represented in the pages of the magazines I examine, and they shifted and developed in response to each other and to the changes shaping American culture. By the end of this period, the dominant expressions and images of masculinity closely reflected the demands of a corporate consumer culture, offering constraints that were less visible if no less real than those provided by Victorian masculine norms.

Defenders of the Faith: Victorian Masculinity in the Modern Era

In 1911, Crowell Publishing Company president Joseph Palmer Knapp added the *American Magazine* to a stable of periodicals that included *Woman's Home Companion* and *Farm and Fireside* (later *Country Home*). The *American* had been run by a group of famous muckrakers, including Ray Stannard Baker, Lincoln Steffens, and Ida Tarbell, who had become dissatisfied with *McClure's*, and included William Allen White and Finley Peter Dunne on its editorial board. Originally a stridently Progressive, muckraking organ, the magazine soon “tempered the severity of its muckraking with material dealing with the homely affairs of average people.”⁵ Under Knapp, the magazine began to specialize in inspirational biographies of well-known men, the majority of whom ran America's largest corporations.

Knapp hoped to turn the magazine into the men's equivalent of *Woman's Home Companion*, and in 1915 he found an editor who embraced that task. In the eight years he was with the magazine, John M. Siddall made the *American* into the magazine for the self-made man, corporate style.⁶ Few editors ever made their presence better known in a magazine than Siddall, who shaped the work of his stable of writers to make the magazine an unashamedly optimistic booster of American businessmen. Siddall seemed to hover over the shoulder of the reader, pointing out the important lessons to be learned in each article in a box that accompanied most articles and some fiction. He wanted to be sure readers got the point; “Give this article a good read,” he advised, “for you will benefit from it.”⁷

Siddall also spoke directly to readers in his monthly editorial, "Sid Says—," sharing his views on the issues of the day. It was in this column in 1921 that "Sid" explained the purpose of the magazine: "Victory. Victory for the individual. Victory over the difficulties and obstacles that beset you."⁸

At the heart of "Sid's" magazine were profiles of men who achieved success through hard work, integrity, dedication, and self-control. It was in the profile that the masculine ideals of Victorian Man reigned supreme. A composite portrait of the corporate leader depicted in the early 1920s would show a man in his fifties or sixties who had worked his way to the top of a large company, usually one he had started himself. The man wore a beard and looked directly into the camera. The caption below his picture was a variation on this theme: "Captain Dollar is one of the biggest businessmen in the United States. He is the creator and owner of the Dollar Steamship Line. He was once a penniless lumberjack. Captain Dollar is a man whose reputation for integrity and ability is such that he was recently commissioned by the United States Government to arrange a thirty-million-dollar shipbuilding contract with the Chinese Government, and was made the depository for receiving these millions without even being asked by either nation to put up a bond!"⁹ Such profiles, written under Siddall's editorship by B. C. Forbes, Bruce Barton, Mary B. Mullett, Merle Crowell, and several others, were mini-*bildungsromanen*, showing how a man committed to hard work and integrity from his early days steadily rose to the top. They were portraits of a unitary male self, a self launched on an upward trajectory toward success in a world of other men.

It wasn't only businessmen who taught readers the values associated with *American*-style manhood. Football coaches, professors, athletes, and preachers were also called upon to do their duty. Fielding H. Yost, the illustrious coach of the University of Michigan football squad, advised readers "Never lose your self-control . . . Never stop fighting . . . Be aggressive," and concluded that character is the number one thing that wins ball games.¹⁰ James H. Foster, president of the Hydraulic Pressed Steel Company of Cleveland, Ohio, wrote his own copy for an article titled "Men are *Square*." His own way of dealing with disputes between labor and capital was simple: he reminded himself that workers were men just like himself. Putting himself in the worker's shoes, he wrote: "You wanted your boss to recognize that you were men—with all the pride, the self-respect and the right to happiness of every other human being."¹¹ Dr. Frank Crane listed the "Ten Good Points" that defined the religion of everyday man: Truth, Law, Justice, Work, Democracy, Mercy, Monogamy, Optimism, Science, and God.¹² Again and again, articles in the *American* in the early twenties drove home the essential tenets of success unsullied by qualification or doubt. All a man had to do was model his character after these essential attributes and he would succeed.

The fiction published in the *American* served the same ends. Harold Titus's "The Stuff of Heroes" is a telling example of an *American* staple, the workplace story. The story opens, "Until his brother-in-law died and left Emmy with two

children . . . and without a roof or a dollar, the details of living had been of little consequence to Henry Boggs.” Shouldering these obligations, Boggs becomes a dynamo in his workplace, unselfishly and almost single-handedly resuscitating the flagging department in which he works as a clerk. The story concludes with Boggs winning a big promotion and the heart of the girl he has admired. The lesson: honor family responsibilities and work hard and the rewards you desire will follow.¹³ A nearly identical conclusion is drawn in “Where Their Roads Parted,” by Mella Russell McCallum. In this story, two college chums who once longed for literary success meet after several years apart. Bachelor Bob Daynes finds his old friend Dick married and haggard, tied to the obligations of a wife and family, and he thinks, “Something young was slipping from Dick.” Yet for all his vaunted freedom, Bob cannot find the motivation to complete the book he hoped to write. And despite his responsibilities, Dick does write a fine and popular book. In the end, the “victorious” Dick says to Bob, “When are you going to get yourself a wife and family, old bystander?” Again, the lesson is that obligation and duty and sacrifice are the qualities that make the man, not youth and energy and vitality.¹⁴

There were others who subscribed to these core truths of Victorian manhood. The *Saturday Evening Post*, for example, had long committed itself to supporting the mainstream conservative views of the American business class. The two magazines were very much alike: they carried the same ads, published short fiction from many of the same writers, and hewed to a liberal Republican party line. The *Post* published more political editorials, had half again as many subscribers, and had more ads for women. The important thing differentiating the *Post* from the *American Magazine* was that the former magazine was not at all self-conscious about the definitions of masculinity it worked within, while the latter returned incessantly to questions of how to make a man.¹⁵

Though he managed a much smaller empire in print, John L. Griffith, editor of an amateur sports monthly called the *Athletic Journal* and the Commissioner of Athletics of the Big Ten Conference, was also sympathetic to the Victorian image of men promoted by the *American Magazine*. Griffith launched his magazine in March of 1921, hoping to draw upon the heightened public interest in athleticism that had been promoted by the recent war. “The world war demonstrated the value of athletics in the life of the nation,” noted Griffith in the first of his regular editorials, and he hoped his magazine would promote the athletic training of men in the colleges and high schools of the nation.¹⁶ Griffith’s magazine took little advertising, especially in the first few years, and then only for athletic equipment and sports-related education and camps; many of the articles were written by Griffith himself, many others by college coaches and athletic directors; though no definite circulation figures were available, the audience Griffith addressed included those interested in promoting athletics and could not have been large.¹⁷ Yet Griffith elaborated upon the *American*’s version of masculinity, constructing in his pages an ideal of manhood more vigilant in its self-control and stern in its asceticism than anything imagined by Siddall.

Though Griffith began his magazine with the simple idea of promoting athletics, that agenda quickly expanded to saving the souls of American male youths, indeed the soul of America. “The Journal . . . believes that if our sports are properly coached, are extended to include large numbers of competitors and are in the hands of men who are concerned with improving the quality of manhood in America, that then our athletics are second in importance to no other constructive agency.”¹⁸ Athletics taught men how to win at life, argued Griffith, and “when a true sportsman loses or fails to succeed, he doesn’t blame society or the government and turn bolshevist, but he takes off his coat and fights a little bit harder to win.”¹⁹ Griffith’s justification for beginning the magazine soon turned into a crusade to maintain the standards of “Spartan” amateur athleticism in the face of a wide array of challenges posed by an American culture that often appeared hostile to those standards.

Griffith feared that the values of strenuous athletic competition were coming under attack in the 1920s and, especially, in the 1930s. Professional athletics posed one sort of challenge to his virtuous athletic code, for they promoted winning over competition and encouraged men to use any means to attain their end. More dangerous yet were those who wanted to curb competition to allow “weaker” sorts to participate and enjoy sports. In 1925, Griffith complained that “ladies of both sexes are preaching a doctrine of athletics which . . . would develop men of weak and insipid character. What we need is more of the strenuous life, more of the rugged sports, more of the idea that a man should do his best in athletics and in everything else.”²⁰ Griffith carried this idea to its logical conclusion by 1932, when he argued that: “Today, whether we like it or not, we are working out the principle of the survival of the fittest. The weak will perish and the strong will survive. . . . [T]he men with fighting hearts and with minds that think straight, will be in the forefront.”²¹

As the Depression worsened and Roosevelt implemented the New Deal, Griffith’s defense of the masculine athletic code became increasingly embattled. The Depression was a test of men, he argued. Strong men would stand up to the challenge; weak ones would succumb to the “cults of the under men, the cult of incompetence.”²² Griffith’s stance offers one way of complicating our easy understanding of the relationship between economic decline and masculinity, which holds that men were “emasculated” by the Depression and looked to a protective state for succor. Instead he urges that men not dwell on their decline in economic status but view it as a challenge to overcome. In increasingly ideological editorials, Griffith aligned himself against the New Deal and what he saw as its various foreign equivalents: totalitarianism, fascism, communism, and socialism. Yet by 1940 Griffith had found in the impending war some hope that the masculine ideals he defended might still have a place in America. Beginning that year, Griffith began to promote athletics as preparation for war, athletic men as warriors, and he was pleased to see resistance to his Spartan code diminishing. “Today, with a world war in the offing, we hear very little criticism of the manly sports which place an emphasis on courage, strength, and a fighting spirit,” he

exulted.²³ The nation's need for a fighting force thus might redeem it from twenty years of dissipation.²⁴ Little could he know that the war would further women's entrance into the economy, reassert the guiding power of the state, and spark a boom in mass culture and consumerism unlike anything the country had ever seen. Griffith's warriors might serve the country in time of war, but the ideals those warriors represented—character, courage, integrity—were part of a unitary self that was no longer fully embraced by popular magazines.

Griffith's stand on the importance of strenuous masculinity was in many ways an anachronism. No other editor or publication stuck so steadfastly to such a view of essential maleness. Yet Griffith's position is also important, for it emphasizes the endurance of certain elements of masculinity in the face of widespread change. Griffith carried the banner for the martial spirit, for male aggression as an end in itself, for what he called "athletic asceticism." That ascetic martial spirit had been dramatically de-emphasized in a culture based upon mass entertainment, consumerism, and corporate capitalism. In times of peace, the character traits developed by such training served no useful purpose except on the field of play. But war could and did call forth the remnants of the martial masculine ideology that were useful. Until the potential need for organized violence is either eliminated or abstracted (via technology, for example, in the Gulf War), it seems that our culture will find ways to maintain the athletic ascetic mode of masculinity, either by segregating it into an appropriate domain—i.e., the military subculture of the armed forces, military academies, and quasi-military boy's organizations—or ritualizing it in organized sports.²⁵

Eroding the Ideal: A Pleasing Personality Wins the Day

J. D. Fetzer also started a sports magazine in 1921, and its initial impulse and audience seemed to mirror that of the *Athletic Journal*. *Football World*, "A Magazine with a Mission to Serve the College Man," was "devoted to Inter-collegiate Athletics and sports of Amateur standing only," heralded the first masthead. But Fetzer's approach to sports proved to be quite different from Griffith's, and quite a bit more popular. Fetzer justified the magazine by arguing that "Among men, no heroes of the day have more popularity than the sportsman. . . . If the sport mania is one of the reactions after the war, it is the healthiest of all."²⁶ By the third issue, the magazine claimed a circulation of 200,000, quite a large number for the time. The magazine soon changed its name to *Athletic World* and began to cover a wide variety of sports, including women's sports, especially swimming.

The *Athletic World* quickly developed an identity quite at odds with that of the *Athletic Journal*. Where the latter publication stressed the character building qualities of athletics, the former celebrated the dynamism and entertainment of the games and the personalities of the athletes. Where the *Journal's* tone was stern

and moralistic, the *World’s* was light and entertaining. The two magazines had initially shared the same advertisers—makers of sports equipment and apparel that appealed to consumers on name and quality, not image. The *Journal* never left this core of advertisers, while the *World* soon picked up an array of advertisers who promised to make men strong, popular, and wealthy, and to educate them sexually. The *World’s* editorial offerings reflected the growing emphasis on personality and self-absorption as it offered articles on gaining strength, diet, and nerves. Its photographs also accentuated the physical body, and most often featured women and bare-chested men in swimming suits. From the same starting point, these two magazines took radically different approaches to constructing the masculine athletic ideal.

In short, where the *Athletic Journal* celebrated self-control and looking inward, the *Athletic World* celebrated dynamism and the extension of the self outward. In editorial material and ads, this magazine viewed men in terms of their expansive power, their ability to develop strength and vitality. “Strength lies dormant in us all,” wrote George O. Pritchard. “It is up to ourselves to bring it to life and develop it.”²⁷ If editorials provided the motivation to develop one’s body, the many ads that filled this magazine during its muscle stage (1923-1925) promised men that becoming strong was quick and easy. “If you were dying tonight,” asked Earle E. Liederman’s ad, “and I offered you something that would give you ten years more to live, would you take it? Well fellows, I’ve got it.” That “thing” being offered was physical training, and Liederman and other “physical culturists” made a cult of the perfectible body. Liederman boasted that “When I’m thru with you, you’re a real man”; Charles Atlas claimed that “muscles that are powerful . . . will make you the *admired* instead of the *pittied*” (sic); Prof. Henry W. Titus promised that his ten cent book would make a man “MASTER of all that you desire to achieve”; Lionel Strongfort, creator of Strongfortism, advised men to avoid the devastating sentence of “Sexual Death” and try his system that has “reinstated thousands of despairing souls in the manpower of the nation.”²⁸

What is most striking about the magazine in these years is the remarkable congruity between what was said and what was sold. *Athletic World* sold a seamless package of perfectible masculinity, from advice on what to eat to dance lessons that promised overnight popularity, from an African bark extract that promised “Vim, Vigor and Vitality” to a book promising “Sexual Knowledge.”²⁹ The dynamic and powerful masculinity the magazine promoted was purchasable and available to anyone; it did not rely on character but on following the correct steps outlined in some ten cent guide. As kitschy as such ads and ideas often were, they marked a clear distinction between old and new masculinity.³⁰

Similar ways of constructing masculinity began to gain a foothold in the *American Magazine* in the early 1920s, even under Siddall’s stalwart editorship. This encroachment of modern masculinity upon the domain of the self-made man occurred first in advertisements which evoked images of men who achieved success via consumption, like buying Listerine to eradicate halitosis (bad breath),

acquiring the pleasing personality that assured the sale, or adding pep or vigor to life by eating the right breakfast cereal. These easy means to attaining success stood in stark contrast to the self-sacrifice demanded by Victorian masculine idealism. Superficial attributes began to appear as keys to success in fiction as well, though they never were heralded outright as such.³¹ And finally, the path to success in business—always the true marker of masculine success in a capitalist society—began to be portrayed as resulting from a man's personality, his attention to the details of his appearance, his salesmanship. Masculinity came to be constructed in terms of how men presented themselves, not who they were. After all, in an urban corporate world one could not know a man's background but might recognize his brand of after-shave. As the magazine's editors realized that the corporate world required a different masculinity, they reshaped the magazine's content to reflect those differing needs. Their embrace of Modern masculinity was never complete, but once it started the possibility for again adhering to the ideals of Victorian manhood was remote indeed.

If ever there was a medium antithetical to Victorian masculine ideals it was modern advertising. Advertisers wanted men to buy goods, and sold to them based upon who they thought men were and what they thought men wanted. Once advertisers had promoted their products with a description of the product and a price, but as advertising became professionalized, skilled admen crafted elaborate advertising campaigns that prompted consumers to purchase based upon the image that the product could give the consumer. Such a change did not occur overnight; indeed, a majority of advertisements still attempted to sell the product via a direct appeal to its quality, value, or price. But the pages of any magazine that carried paid advertisements reveal the increasing appeal of image in the modern era.³²

Some of the most remarkable advertisements to appear in the *American Magazine* in the years just after World War I promoted the skills that men needed to succeed in business. In 1919, the Independent Corporation dramatized one of the essential uncertainties of modern corporate life—how to conduct business relationships with unfamiliar people—in ad copy that read, “How To Size People Up From Their Looks.” “What I have learned about judging people . . . has already added 25% to my sales,” a person trained in Dr. Blackford's Course on Reading Character at Sight reveals. “It is all as clear as a book when you know the simple alphabet of signs that spell out a man's character and his mental ‘slants’—an alphabet that is surprisingly easy to learn.... And yet learning it was a matter of only a few spare half-hours, while smoking my after-dinner cigar.”³³ The ad promised that Dr. Blackford's Course would teach you how to read character, but if one could learn to read character then one could also potentially learn to project the attributes of character. Advertisers were ready to show men how.

Several organizations suggested to men reading the *American Magazine* that the key to success lay in developing a more powerful, dynamic, or forceful personality. Their lead lines read: “Why Live an Inferior Life?,” “How the

Biggest Thing in Life Almost Passed Me By,” and “How a Failure at Sixty Won Sudden Success,” and their text heavy copy told of men who had made successes of themselves by projecting their will outward. Success, advised the Pelton Publishing Company, marketers of the book *Power of Will*, “was simply a question of dominating will power—determination that brooks no interference, commands respect, and easily leaps all obstacles.” One could obtain such a will by buying their book and enacting their program, “For the will is just as susceptible to exercise and training as any muscle of the body.”³⁴ The Mentor Association pitchman, confiding in the reader in a conversational, man-to-man style, says he “had somewhat prided myself on being a self-made man” until he met men whose “broader view of life as well as their ease and fluency in talking marked them as men who were bound to succeed. They had *personality*.” Joining the Mentor Association, he learned personality in his spare time—and so could the readers.³⁵ Most extravagant of all were the claims made for Alois P. Swoboda’s system of Conscious Evolution. Following his system would make men “dynamic, vital, brave, authoritative, forceful, lively, dominant, courageous, self-reliant, daring, progressive, masterful, aroused, powerful and creative.” “Do it today! This is your opportunity! Now is your turn! This is your day! This is your hour! Write Now.” What more could be said?³⁶

Ads for personal care products tended to reinforce the notion that by spending just a little men could reshape the way they presented themselves. Durham-Duplex promoted their “He-Man’s Razor with the He-Man Blades”; Mifflin Alcohol after-shave depicted a bare-chested, clear-eyed man above copy that read “Moving blood—stamina—the decks of his mind cleared for action—it’s going to be a mighty good day in business for him”; a Boncilla facial gave a man “confidence in himself” and earned him the sale.³⁷ Such advertising tactics, repeated throughout the period in ads directed at men, represented the primary rhetorical vehicle which image-based advertisers used to sell goods to men. It would be naive to argue that men saw these ads and decided that appearance mattered more than substance, that personality mattered more than character. No one ad, no dozen ads, could have such power. But as advertising came to hold a growing number of pages in American magazines and as advertisements developed into an important medium for displaying idealized cultural archetypes, men could not help but be aware of the notion that they might fashion and refashion themselves by purchasing the goods they saw advertised.

Something very curious began to happen to the *American Magazine*’s editorial content in the years following the death of its beloved editor John Siddall in 1923. Both non-fiction and fiction moved away from the celebration of Victorian masculine ideals and into a tenuous embrace of many of the tenets of Modern masculinity. The *American Magazine* began to construct masculinity in terms initiated (at least within the magazine) by advertisements, thus suggesting that the ideal man was flexible, eager to conform his identity to the requirements of his increasingly corporate workplace, and interested in the benefits of a

pleasing personality. Thus the *American* reconstructed masculine ideals around the flexibility and subjectivity of the male identity.

Under Siddall's editorship, the *American* had revealed a deep distrust of "personality," which Siddall and several of his contributors depicted as a facade that men erected to present themselves to others. Personality was acceptable if it was a clear window on the essential self, but personality followed from and did not take the place of good old Victorian masculine ideals.³⁸ "Men Who Over-Advertise Themselves," wrote one contributor, were not likely to succeed in the business world, and he marshaled several business stories to prove his point. He concluded: "It may sound too absurd to say that the most effective form of self-advertising which a man can do is to forget himself. Yet in that seeming absurdity is hidden a very profound truth." These authors were especially concerned with the extent to which young men pursued self-image over competence in a business task.³⁹

Following Siddall's death in September of 1923, the magazine began to take a different approach to salesmanship and personality under the editorship of Merle Crowell.⁴⁰ Profiles of prominent businessmen continued, but tended to emphasize men who had achieved success by working within corporations, rather than by building a corporation from scratch. Ads began to feature younger men, mirroring an overall trend toward youth in advertising. And personality, far from being a false god, was something that the *American's* readers were being told how to acquire. In an article titled "Personality—Its 20 Factors And How You Can Develop Them," University of Pittsburgh professor Werrett Wallace Charters related how men could cultivate certain traits that would make them successful in business and in social life. Though Charters' list of "20 Factors" included the old standbys, it also promoted forcefulness, friendliness, adaptability, cheerfulness, neatness, and health habits. Charters advised that men try to see themselves as others saw them and recreate themselves to make up for the qualities that they lacked. "The remedy" for social faults, he declared, "is to become less self-centered."⁴¹ French Strothers carried personality promotion even further in his 1928 piece titled "Cut Loose, And Give Your Personality A Chance," in which he advised readers to "Yield to your impulse to do things that you really want to do," but also to "develop the habit of thinking about the other fellow instead of thinking about yourself."⁴² Men were to express their inner selves but in such a way as to respond to the needs and desires of an external audience; they were to combine self-expression with other-direction. What a difference from the advice given to men just a few years earlier!⁴³

For all the changes I have indicated, it is important to remember that through the 1920s the *American Magazine* remained a magazine dedicated to the success of American men and American business. The majority of its editorials, articles, and stories argued for the maintenance of old-fashioned morality and against the rages of youthful exuberance. Thus Harry Emerson Fosdick's claim in 1929 that "Our loosening of moral grip . . . is a national disaster. . . . We Americans need to relearn the serious meanings of self-denial and self-discipline," is more

indicative of the overall thrust of the magazine than are assertions that men should cut loose and express themselves.⁴⁴ Yet it is precisely because of this Victorian backdrop that the emerging expression of Modern masculinity appears so striking. It is as if the editors and writers of the magazine were testing how much of Modern masculinity could be allowed to filter in without killing off the old styles altogether. The final answer to this question would come only when the Great Depression had made the *American’s* tales of success seem anachronistic. But that gets us ahead of our story. Before we understand how economic uncertainty affected Victorian masculine ideals, we need to understand how Modern masculinity itself might call into question the values of Victorian masculinity.

Vanity Fair magazine portrayed masculinity in ways that were almost exactly the opposite of those articulated by the *American Magazine*. Confident where the *American* was insecure, sophisticated where its counterpart was anti-intellectual, *Vanity Fair* spoke to men who laughed at high-blown expressions of idealism, wore the latest fashions, and were unconcerned with money. The men who read *Vanity Fair* had arrived, or so one gathered by reading its pages. And they didn’t like to talk much about what it meant to be men—*Vanity Fair* did not offer its readers formulas for success or for developing one’s personality. What *Vanity Fair* makes clear in the 1920s is that wealthy, educated men did not indulge themselves in reflections about developing their character *or* their personality—you either had it or you didn’t—and actively mocked that class that did.

Begun in 1914 by Condé Nast publications as a magazine of opinion for New Yorkers and edited by Frank Crowninshield through the 1920s, *Vanity Fair* oozed wealth, sophistication, and breeding. It featured some of the best writers of the day (Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Clive Bell, Aldous Huxley, Jean Cocteau, Gilbert Seldes), ran advertisements for European travel, yachts, art galleries, and pure-bred dogs, and developed a tone of amused condescension toward the doings of all Americans outside the inner circle of a New York elite. Most of the ads were for men’s products, but those ads addressed men in a way totally unlike middle-class publications: ads in *Vanity Fair* never suggested to the reader that the product would allow the purchaser to improve upon himself. Clothes, the primary product advertised for men, were either fashionable or of high-quality, usually both. And men received word of the newest fashions in a regular column called “For the Well Dressed Man,” which did not advise so much as relate. The magazine constructed and expected a male reader who was utterly self-assured and needed no advice on how to comport himself.

Vanity Fair also singled out for special scorn the version of masculinity articulated in the pages of the *American Magazine*. In a feature called “Our Esteemed Contemporaries,” *Vanity Fair* mocked the editorial mannerisms of the *American*. Their lampoon of Siddall’s “Sid Says” punctured the optimism of the self-made man and his truisms:

Sid Says: Don't try to fail—it can't be done

There are some folks who think that they are “sure-fire” failures until they have “tried it out.” You may be “on the rocks” but don't forget that “every cloud has a silver lining,” and when anyone tells you that “it is all up with you,” just take your last “nickle” and go to a “barber-shop” and “get a shave.” You will be surprised to find how smooth it makes your “face” feel.

And, after that, everything will be “easy sailing,”—that is, provided you are made of “the right stuff.” Follow what Sid says each month and you will come out “all right.”⁴⁵

Though other articles weren't directed specifically at the *American*, they did mock the *American*'s ethos, usually with tongue planted firmly in cheek. “Careers For Young Men,” written by *Vanity Fair*'s anonymous “success editor,” advised that “any young man with a college education who has ambition, ideals and stick-to-it-iveness can undoubtedly succeed in . . .” bootlegging, business, or literature. Stephen Leacock's “How I Succeeded in My Business” cited his dedicated application of advice on improving one's diet and personality as the keys to his success, though he admitted he didn't have the foggiest idea what his company did. And Patrick Kearney's “The Great American University” satirized the claims made by “get smart quick” mail-order education schemes from Dr. Eliot's “Five Foot Shelf of Books” to Pelmanism to Alois P. Swoboda's *The Subtle Principle of Success*. “Their total purpose,” writes Kearney, “seems to be to inculcate superstitions which were laughed at in Aristotle's day, and which have been the common belief and practice of all savage tribes since the beginning of mankind.”⁴⁶

Unwinding the tangled strands of snobbery in *Vanity Fair* to find its way of understanding masculinity is no easy task. The evidence offered by *Vanity Fair* seems to indicate that a wealthy New York elite did not experience the same degree of self-consciousness about masculinity betrayed by middle-class (or middle-brow) publications. I suggest two possible explanations for why this is so. First, because of the certainty of their income, wealthy males were probably not susceptible to the kinds of lures toward self-improvement and personality-building that advertisers used to allure those less certain of their income. Thus the basis for their masculinity—their ability to provide for themselves and related others—was never an issue in *Vanity Fair* in the way it was for those striving classes who might have needed the motivation offered by the *American Magazine*.⁴⁷ Second, the rhetoric of consumption allowed and encouraged individuals to think of themselves not as objective cores of values but as highly subjective and malleable potentialities, capable of achieving multiple expressions through the goods they purchased and the way they presented themselves. Because of their

wealth, elites had been able to express themselves via consumption for a much longer time, and thus had become acclimated to the world of goods that rising incomes, expanded production, and the boom in advertising were just now promising to the middle class.⁴⁸

The 1920s was a transitional decade, in which both Victorian and Modern masculinity found proponents among American magazine editors and readers. But it was clear by the end of the decade that Victorian masculinity was losing ground, Modern masculinity gaining. Midway through the 1930s, the *American Magazine*, once the bastion of Victorian masculinity, had abandoned a male audience. A new business magazine published by Henry Luce and titled *Fortune* celebrated giant multinational corporations, the modern equivalent of the Victorian self-made man. And a new magazine aimed explicitly at men, *Esquire*, proclaimed itself as the vehicle for expressing the interests of modern men at its founding in 1933. In its attempts to appeal to the core interests of a masculine audience, *Esquire* in the late 1930s invites comparison to the *American Magazine* in the early 1920s. Yet the differences in the masculinity portrayed could not be more glaring.

Depression, the Death of the Patriarch, and the Flexibility of the Modern Man

Within the span of a year, two events changed the entire nature of the *American Magazine*. The first event was the “stock market upheaval” of 1929, which contributor M. K. Wisheart listed as just the sixth biggest news story of 1929, behind such celebrated occasions as the concordat between the Vatican and the Italian government and the formulation of the Young reparation plan.⁴⁹ For months to follow, the *American* took little notice of the Crash, until their avoidance began to seem like a game. The second event occurred in April of 1930, when the magazine got a new editor, Sumner Blossom. Under Blossom the magazine was quickly updated: new artists used cleaner, less-cluttered illustrations and tended to draw women in shorter dresses and more revealing bathing suits; stories were set in the city rather than the country and were racier and more frivolous; the titles of both stories and articles were louder, catchier.⁵⁰ It is difficult to tell which of these two events changed the *American Magazine* the most, the depression or the new editor. But within six years the *American* would change its identity completely.

The most striking change in the articles printed in the *American* as the Depression progressed was the abandonment of the optimism that had accompanied Victorian masculinity, the attitude that American men could achieve whatever they set their minds to. Merrylye Stanley Rukeyser said it well in his January 1930 article: “In the rail-splitting pioneer days, leadership went inevitably to forceful men—men with a powerful will and a sense of mastery. . . . But since America has come of age in a business sense, the older qualities are not

enough.” These days, Rukeyser quoted Paul H. Nystrom, “Fashion is one of the greatest forces in present-day life,” and the man who understands how to make people want something they don’t have is the one who will succeed.⁵¹ In May of 1930, Emil Ludwig advanced the unique proposition that “Greatness is always masculine. It is always productive, never receptive. Always gives, never receives.” But this, he claimed, is not an age for greatness, for democratization and the rough equality produced in this country create the conditions in which greatness is unlikely. In the language of our day, Ludwig was saying that a culture driven by consumption is not productive of the greatness associated with older styles of masculinity.⁵² Editor Blossom stated the implications best in a memo he sent to his staff. “Horatio Alger doesn’t work here any more,” it read.⁵³

If Horatio Alger stories weren’t going to work for the *American* any more, what would? There were several answers to this question. First, a number of articles suggested that men scale back their expectations. Bruce Barton, former profiler of corporate captains, put his talents to work relating the success stories of one man who goes door to door offering to wash people’s dogs, another who raises chickens out in his backyard, and still another who rents rowboats to vacationing rich folks. Edgar C. Wheeler’s piece, whose subtitle read “Fortune rides with many a man who has mounted his hobby to chase the wolf from the door,” held similar lessons. Throughout the articles both writers emphasized ingenuity and flexibility over dogged determination or pride. The authors tried to relate the skills needed to survive the depression back to values like integrity and control, but their efforts seemed strained.⁵⁴

Victorian masculinity as it was framed by the *American* had once presented a uniform ideal of male success, which the magazine had made tangible by depicting dashing and well-dressed college men, salesmen, and corporate executives sharing a set of core values as they pursued their upward trajectory. In the 1930s distinctively different images began to appear. Articles suggested the valor of physical labor and often depicted working-class men, as in Edmund M. Littell’s 1930 feature on steelworkers titled “Men Wanted.” And a new subgenre of fiction began to appear which told stories of working-class men, usually drawn with bare chests and jutting chins, whose courage saved the life of some weaker man in a more powerful position.⁵⁵ The point of view of such fiction also shifted to accommodate the diminished expectations the magazine had for American men. In the past, stories had been told primarily from the position of one who had succeeded; now they were told from the position of one who looked upon success, perhaps even one who had been blocked from success. Another departure from the older stance toward men was the growing emphasis on youth and personality. Youth had been seen as misguided and a little dangerous in the very early 1920s, especially under Siddall’s leadership; by the 1930s young people were lauded for their willingness to accept challenges and for their gumption.⁵⁶ Paul Gallico explained the popularity of sports heroes like Jack Dempsey, Babe Ruth, Dizzy Dean, and Walter Hagen in terms of their charisma and personality; notably

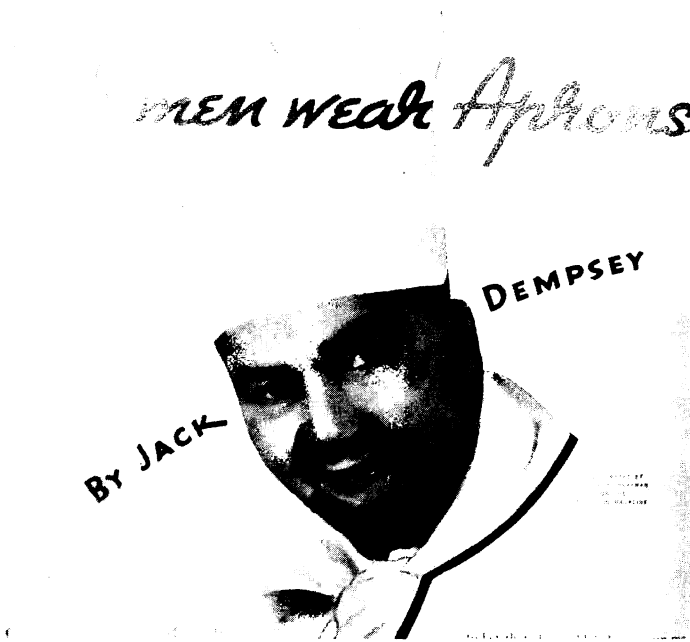


Figure 3: "He-Men Wear Aprons," proclaimed boxing great Jack Dempsey as he related his favorite recipes and signalled the *American's* abandonment of a male audience. (*American Magazine*, July 1935, p. 16.)

missing from his list of those who "got the crowd" was Lou Gehrig, the iron man whose record stood as a modern-day testament to the virtues of bygone masculinity. Gehrig, implied Gallico, was boring.⁵⁷

Two articles published a year and a half apart indicate the extent to which the *American* had abandoned its earlier conception of masculinity. In February of 1934, the *American* published a short piece called "A Young Man Speaks His Mind," in which "J. W." suggests that all the values his parents and his schools have taught him are useless in the modern world. In the most direct challenge to Victorian masculine values ever published in the magazine, J. W. writes, "So one good reason, please, Mr. Editor, why an ambitious young man should be honest. It's got to be a real, practical reason, too. And don't talk to me about great men having been honest. I don't want to be great. I want to be comfortable." The death of the Victorian masculine archetype was dealt a further blow in July of 1935, when Jack Dempsey authored a piece called "He-men Wear Aprons," in which the boxing great provides his favorite cooking stories and recipes alongside pictures of himself in an apron.⁵⁸

With its editor and its contributors no longer able to sustain the idealism of the Victorian self-made man, the *American Magazine* slowly transformed itself into a women's magazine. Articles written by and for women proliferated, and they mirrored the kind of domestic advice given in popular women's magazines.⁵⁹ The fiction became far more romantic, its illustrations featuring swooning damsels and brawny men.⁶⁰ And the advertising was increasingly pitched toward women. By 1936, the *American Magazine* had ceased to be a magazine for men at all. But a new magazine had since taken up the task of speaking as the voice of American manhood.

In the fall of 1933, editor Arnold Gingrich and publishers David A. Smart and W. H. Weintraub introduced a new magazine called *Esquire: The Quarterly for Men*. These three men formed the magazine, wrote Gingrich on the first of his long contents-page editorials, because "the general magazines, in the mad scramble to increase the woman readership that seems to be so highly prized by national advertisers, have bent over backward in catering to the special interests and tastes of the feminine audience." "ESQUIRE aims to become the common denominator of masculine interests—to be all things to all men," continued Gingrich. "The one test that has been applied to every feature that is in this first issue has been simply and solely: 'Is it interesting to men?' How often were we wrong? Come on, let's have it—we're leading with the chin."⁶¹ The magazine was an early success: Gingrich claimed circulation of 180,000 in May of 1934. And circulation grew throughout the 1930s, reaching 400,000 by March of 1936, and 600,000 by May of 1937. Something about *Esquire* appealed to men, but what was it?⁶²

From its opening words, *Esquire* distinguished itself for its unique tone and personality. Gingrich wanted the magazine to speak directly to its readers, and its readers to speak directly to it, so he addressed men as a friend might, with bluster and directness. Gingrich dared readers to accept the publication of a story by Langston Hughes, "a brilliant young Negro author," claiming that "there ought to be one magazine in America in which a man can read stories like this." And he told men to muffle their complaints when the magazine began to run some ads directed at women, arguing that "the magazine isn't edited for women and won't be."⁶³ The magazine seemed to listen as well, for it frequently responded to requests from readers for changes in the magazine and published a very large selection of reader mail, much of it quite critical.⁶⁴ Thus from its very opening *Esquire* attempted to cast masculinity in terms of its toughness, confidence, and lack of fear of challenge. But these qualities were not what made *Esquire* so modern.

Esquire pitched itself to men's most intellectual and most sensual interests at once. On the one hand it carried fiction and articles by the most celebrated authors of the day—Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos, Langston Hughes, Dashiell Hammett, James T. Farrell, and others. Hemingway was the magazine's favorite author, and up until 1937 he was given the first pages



Please do not handle the merchandise!

Figure 4: E. Simms Campbell's cartoons reminded male readers that in the world created by *Esquire* everything was a consumer item. (*Esquire*, April 1936.)

of each issue whenever he wanted them. Hemingway was also the quintessential modern male: hostile to Victorian masculine archetypes, he had reinvented himself as a swashbuckling world adventurer and his art as a gauntlet thrown down before writers of sentimental fiction. This was the man who had written in *A Farewell to Arms*, "I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain."⁶⁵ Not all the writers fit into Hemingway's tough guy image, but none of them wrote the kind of light, clean fiction that could be found in the *American* or the *Saturday Evening Post*. Much of the writing was of high quality, and it pushed men to engage the narrative styles of the best modernist authors, whose work explored the world through the guise of the individualized sensibility and not the overarching moral code.

While *Esquire*'s fiction appealed to men's more intellectual side, its cartoons and its "figures," forums for the display of female breasts and sexual innuendo, were as bawdy as those found in the naughtiest of the pulps.⁶⁶ The women who appeared in *Esquire* were young, long-legged, and full-breasted, and they seemed to exist to give men pleasure, to acquiesce to men's ever-present sexual urges. Two regularly occurring features were E. Simms Campbell's "Sultan" cartoons

and Charles Petty's finely-drawn female figures. Campbell's cartoon featured a heavysset, vaguely Arabic-looking man who surrounded himself with a harem of white women—blondes, brunettes, and redheads. In one cartoon, the Sultan is warned not to touch the merchandise at an auction of half-naked women. In another, a trader delivers the Sultan several half-naked women but the Sultan complains, "There's some mistake. What I ordered was two elephants and a camel."⁶⁷ In the Sultan's world, women were just one more product. Petty's drawings were studies in the idealized female form. One purpose of the single page sketch was to show off as much of the female body as possible; the see-through lingerie or body-hugging clothes were mere nods to propriety, for the Petty girl may as well have been nude.⁶⁸ Yet the milieu in which the Petty girl appeared fulfilled another purpose. The props—a phone, a riding crop, a pistol—and the caption reminded men that such girls did not come easy. When the Petty girl spoke to a man it was to tease; when she spoke to her girlfriend it was to commiserate about the difficulties of dating rich millionaires. At the same time that the girl's attire and pose seduced, her props and her words held men off.

These semi-erotic images must have been appealing to some readers, for several advertisers began to use the Sultan, the Petty girl, and similarly drawn cartoons to sell their goods in *Esquire*. In October of 1935, Hart Schaffner & Marx clothiers signed E. Simms Campbell to draw a cartoon for their ad, though the girls kept their tops discretely closed. In that same issue, Old Gold cigarettes hired the Petty girl to mouth their copy, "Hitched to a Humdrummy? Light an Old Gold." Assuming that the ad is for men, despite the fact that it addresses a woman, we can see that the appeal is to the man who wishes to have more sexual spunk—and what man would not wish such a thing if he read *Esquire*, which continually reminds men that conquest and sexual performance is what counts with women.⁶⁹ Soon Nat Lewis, a lingerie retailer, was using idealized female figures to sell men lingerie for their wives (not girlfriends).⁷⁰ It seemed only logical that a magazine that had been teasing males with an impossible female should try to get them to buy clothes to make their spouse fit their fantasy.

As striking as these individual elements of the magazine are, especially compared to other magazines for men, *Esquire* is even more fascinating when taken as a whole, as a package that conveys certain expectations about American masculinity. Those expectations differ in nearly every way from those articulated by the *American Magazine* when it felt confident in the security of the Victorian self-made man. The *Esquire* man, the modern man, is not interested in abstract ideals to guide his life, or at least he is not interested in learning those ideals in a magazine. He is relatively young, like the male figures in the advertisements with whom men are invited to identify. He is concerned with wearing appropriate fashions, and *Esquire* provides him with plenty of information on the latest cut in suits and sporting attire.⁷¹ He is forthright about his sexuality; indeed if we take the cartoons at all seriously he is somewhat controlled by his lust. He is above all else a consumer, looking for the latest and best in fiction, fashion, and flesh. Ads, articles, and stories combine to evoke a masculinity that is other-directed and yet

intent on projecting an image of individuality, as if one could simultaneously defy categorization and pursue fashion. The *Esquire* man is driven by the pleasure he may acquire in his leisure time rather than by abstract notions of success that must be deferred while he scales the ladder of self-made masculinity.⁷² Though the modern male is still expected to be the center of his family’s economic activities—the breadwinner—the pressures that confined Victorian men into moral, social, and intellectual straightjackets have disappeared. In their place are the looser-fitting though no less restrictive straight-jackets of consumerism and personality, which offer a constantly changing set of status markers and fashion trends to observe and obey. Such pressures affirm a masculinity that will charge the engines of a consumer-based economy, just as earlier masculine norms stoked the fires of producer-based capitalism.

The masculinity portrayed in American magazines underwent significant and undeniable changes in the two decades following World War I. By the mid 1930s, Victorian masculine ideals—self-control, the internally-coherent self, inner-direction—were no longer championed as keys to success in mass market publications. Consumer culture required a shifting, outer-directed, flexible notion of selfhood, of manhood, and the editorial and advertising content of many American magazines came to reflect this reconfigured notion of identity. Such a transition may be viewed as tragic, especially if one is sympathetic with Victorian masculine ideals and believes that a stable cultural order depends on the coherence of the patriarch—or at least the values that had been associated with patriarchy—at the center of economic and social order.⁷³ Yet the demise of Victorian masculinity can also be viewed as essentially liberating, if we view the fragmented and subjective nature of Modern masculinity as a positive and imaginative response on the part of a younger generation of men to changing economic and social conditions. The liberation implied by Modern masculinity cuts in several directions. It certainly freed men to take a more active role in family life and to resist the cultural pressures to conform to preconceived notions of success. It also helped to free women from the constraints of their own Victorian gender roles; indeed, modern feminism was instrumental in making the old version of masculinity untenable.

However we wish to shade such evaluations, it should be clear that changes in masculinity in this period were produced by cultural shifts far more complex than a mere economic depression, long considered the decisive factor influencing masculinity in this period. Certainly economic hardship challenged certain ways of constructing masculinity, but those ways were already receding in the face of the cultural reconfiguration wrought by modernism and consumerism. In the end it is probably not too important to place a value on the changes that occurred but rather to understand how such changes were both created by and constrained by other forces at work within the culture of the time. While it is clear that the potential ways for men to express their masculinity expanded during this time period, it is important to remember that the expression of masculinity remained

within the limits created by a capitalist economic order that was intent on framing the terms through which men could negotiate their identity, at least within the mediums of mass culture that were corporate-controlled. Just as Victorian masculinity articulated and reflected the dominant concerns and needs of a certain socio-economic order, so too did Modern masculinity. In the end, the liberation that seems to lay at the heart of modern masculinity may in fact be merely an illusion.

Notes

1. Circulation was over 1.8 million throughout the 1920s, peaking at 2,100,000 in 1928.

2. These are not, of course, the only contexts in which changes in masculinity ought to be considered. The impact of feminism and the women's movement, changes in sexual mores, the "youth craze," and other factors need to be taken into consideration, though I will not engage them directly here.

3. I use these poles to reduce to a phrase a whole constellation of values that are not easily disentangled, and I recognize that neither ideal was ever static or monolithic. I trust that the shorthand I use to indicate the traits associated with Victorian and Modern masculine ideals will indicate a variety of complementary arguments. Two key works in defining such archetypes are: Warren L. Susman, "Personality and the Making of Twentieth-Century Culture," in *New Directions in American Intellectual History*, Paul Conkin and John Higham, eds., (Baltimore, 1979), 212-226; and David Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd* (New York, 1950). Major books dealing with the broader question of masculinity in America include: Peter G. Filene, *Him/Her/Self: Sex Roles in Modern America* (Baltimore, 1974, 1986); Peter N. Stearns, *Be a Man!: Males in Modern Society* (New York, 1979, 1990); Joe L. Dubbert, *A Man's Place: Masculinity in Transition* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1979); Elizabeth Pleck and Joseph Pleck, eds., *The American Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ 1980); E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York, 1993); Robert L. Griswold, *Fatherhood in America: A History* (New York, 1993). On Victorian masculinity in particular see: Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen, eds., *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America* (Chicago, 1990); Mark C. Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, 1989); Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, 1989); Michael S. Kimmel, "Baseball and the Reconstitution of American Masculinity, 1880-1920," in *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order: Critical Feminist Perspectives*, Michael A. Messner and Donald F. Sabo, eds. (Champaign, IL, 1990), 55-65; Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York, 1989); J. A. Mangan and James Walvin, eds., *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940* (New York, 1987); Gerald L. Marriner, "A Victorian in the Modern World: The 'Liberated' Male's Adjustment to the New Woman and the New Morality," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 76 (Spring 1977): 190-203; Margaret Marsh, "Suburban Men and Masculine Domesticity, 1870-1915," *American Quarterly*, 40 (June 1988): 165-186; James R. McGovern, "David Graham Phillips and the Virility Impulse of the Progressives," *New England Quarterly*, 39 (September 1966): 333-348; Charles E. Rosenberg, "Sexuality, Class and Role in Nineteenth-Century America," *American Quarterly*, 25 (May 1973): 131-153; Arnaldo Testi, "The Gender of Reform Politics: Theodore Roosevelt and the Culture of Masculinity," *Journal of American History*, 81 (March 1995): 1509-1533. There are fewer works on Modern masculinity. Kevin White's *The First Sexual Revolution: Male Heterosexuality in Modern America* (New York, 1992) is the best available; also useful are: Joan Mellen, *Big Bad Wolves: Masculinity in the American Film* (New York, 1977), and Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment* (New York, 1983). See also: Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (New York, 1977).

4. A note on my selection of magazines: The magazines I chose to emphasize were selected from among a broad range of possibilities. Having surveyed this range, I selected the *American* and *Esquire* as exemplars because they were the mass market publications most capable of illustrating the underlying dynamic of change that I describe. For this article, I chose magazines that appealed to a white, middle-class audience, the audience most likely to purchase magazines and the products advertised therein; second, I chose magazines based on their intended rather than their actual readership, basing such decisions upon the tendency of

the magazines' editorial and advertising product to assume a male readership. Such selection criteria tended to preclude an extended consideration of non-white masculinity and of the influence of class on masculinity, both factors which I will consider in the longer work of which this essay is but a part.

5. James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States* 3rd ed., (New York, 1971), 141. See also: John Tebbel, *The Magazine in America, 1741-1990* (New York, 1991); Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines* 5 vols., (New York, 1938-1968).

6. My use of the term self-made man is meant to invoke two outdated though useful works: Irvin Wyllie, *The Self-Made Man in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1954); John Cawelti, *Apostles of the Self-Made Man* (Chicago, 1965).

7. One such boxed comment told readers that in this article they would find "ideas about the *spirit that wins*: whether the game is football, or business, or the greatest game of all—Life itself"; Allan Harding, "How to 'Play Your Game'—Whatever It Is," *American Magazine*, November 1922, 25.

8. John M. Siddall, "Victory—Victory for the Individual," *American Magazine*, July 1921, 14.

9. B. C. Forbes, "A Wonderful Scotchman's Story and Advice," *American Magazine*, January 1919, 17.

10. Allan Harding, "How to 'Play Your Game'—Whatever It Is," *American Magazine*, November 1922, 25, 84.

11. James H. Foster, "Men Are Square," *American Magazine*, February 1920, 16.

12. Dr. Frank Crane, "Ten Good Points About the 'Everyday Man,'" *American Magazine*, January 1919, 44-45. See also Allison Gray, "'Chick' Evans on Golf as a Test of Character," *American Magazine*, July 1919, 34, 150-154; James Harvey Robinson, "The Seven Greatest Americans," *American Magazine*, June 1923, 13-15, 136-142; Grantland Rice, "Do Your Stuff," *American Magazine*, July 1924, 45, 169-171.

13. Titus, "The Stuff of Heroes," *American Magazine*, August 1924, 23-25, 72-74.

14. McCallum, "Where Their Roads Parted," *American Magazine*, June 1923, 31-33, 102-108. In "Outwitting the Flapper" (*American Magazine*, March 1923, 30-31, 104-115), Dorothy Sanburn Phillips delivered a similar rebuke to single youth when she tells of a Victorian mother teaching her college-age son how to avoid the snares of loose modern girls. Hostility to youth remained constant in the *American Magazine* in the 1920s.

15. As the leading circulation magazine of the day, the *Saturday Evening Post* must be reckoned with (*American* was third or fourth in circulation throughout the twenties). I reckoned with it from 1919 to 1925 and from 1933 to 1936 and found little that added to this paper, thus the short shrift I give it here.

16. John L. Griffith, *Athletic Journal*, March 1921, 8-9.

17. Griffith cites a circulation of 14,000 in 1939 ("An American Type," *Athletic Journal*, June 1939, 20) but that is the only circulation figure I saw quoted in the years under study.

18. Griffith, "The Journal Next Year," *Athletic Journal*, May 1922, 16.

19. Griffith, "A Challenge," *Athletic Journal*, October 1922, 14.

20. Griffith, "Competition," *Athletic Journal*, May 1925, 14-15.

21. Griffith, "Athletics in a Time of Depression," *Athletic Journal*, December 1932, 7.

22. Quote from Griffith, "Strength or Weakness," *Athletic Journal*, January 1935, 20; for appropriate male reactions to the Depression and "state capitalism" see: "Christmas 1932," *Athletic Journal*, December 1932, 21; "Looking Ahead," *Athletic Journal*, June 1937, 22; "An American Type," *Athletic Journal*, June 1939, 20.

23. "Twenty Years," *Athletic Journal*, March 1941, 28.

24. See also "Athletics and the National Defense," *Athletic Journal*, December 1940, 12; "Are the People of the United States Too Soft?," *Athletic Journal*, January 1941, 16; "Athletics and the National Defense," *Athletic Journal*, April 1941, 14; "The Value of School and College Athletics in the Present Crisis," *Athletic Journal*, May 1941, 18-19, June 1941, 18-19.

25. Some men's historians have suggested that the celebration of male violence filtered up from working class men, for whom violence had long been a way of life. See Stearns, *Be a Man!*, and Eliot Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in Victorian America* (Ithaca, 1986).

26. *Football World*, October 1921, 4.

27. Pritchard, "Gaining Strength at Home," *Athletic World*, October 1923, 41, 53; William T. Todd, "Strength—What Is It? The Dynamic Power of Man," *Athletic World*, September 1923, 24-25; Fred W. Tilney, "What Is the Strong Man's Diet?," *Athletic World*, August 1924, 10, 45.

28. *Athletic World*, October 1923, 53; August 1924, 45; January 1924, 53; June 1924, 47. These ads and many more like them appeared regularly in this magazine. Italics from source.

29. *Athletic World*, February 1924, 65; October 1923, 53; May 1924, 61. Kevin White traces similar images in the pages of *Physical Culture* magazine ("The Masculine Image in an Age of Cultural Revolution, 1910-1930," in his *The First Sexual Revolution*, 16-35).

30. They also marked a distinction between producer and consumer, athlete and fan. *Athletic World* soon dropped its muscular emphasis in favor of a "field and stream" approach to men's sporting activities. The move seems to have been promoted by reader interest, for a 1925 article on fishing got a huge reader response and moved the editor to add more such articles. Eventually these articles came to dominate the magazine, which changed its name to *Outing* in December, 1924 and slowly dropped all the body building ads. Perhaps the magazine's readership was always older than the editors had realized and thus less interested in building muscles; perhaps *Physical Culture* magazine had cornered the market on the body building niche. I hope that future research will allow me to explain these issues.

31. In Roy P. Churchill's "The Hidden Powers of 'E. T.,'" aging clerk Ellery Tilford finds business success after purchasing a good pair of shoes and socks and walking back and forth to work. *American Magazine*, January 1919, 10-14, 68.

32. Roland Marchand's *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity*, 1920-1940 (Berkeley, 1985) remains the standard against which interpretive studies of advertising should be judged, and I borrow from it the periodization of advertising's modernity and all that that entailed. See also: Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York, 1976); Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York, 1994).

33. *American Magazine*, January 1919, 85.

34. *American Magazine*, January 1919, 101.

35. *American Magazine*, January 1919, 90.

36. *American Magazine*, March 1919, 84-85.

37. *American Magazine*, October 1923, 161, 169.

38. In the unsigned article "What is Personality?" (*American Magazine*, January 1920, 32-33, 131-133), the author concludes that one's true personality will always be revealed, that real personality must emanate from within. Such was true of the heroic Teddy Roosevelt and Abe Lincoln. False personality was characterized as false advertising.

39. "Men Who Over-Advertise Themselves," *American Magazine*, May 1919, 47, 110-119; "He's Slipping," *American Magazine*, October 1920, 15, 86-100. My hunch is that these unsigned articles are written by Siddall himself—they have his tone.

40. Siddall is eulogized in a profile worthy of those done of corporate captains, and the editors vowed to follow in his footsteps; "John M. Siddall," *American Magazine*, October 1923, 7.

41. M. K. Wisheart, "Personality—Its 20 Factors And How You Can Develop Them," *American Magazine*, April 1924, 9-10, 74-78.

42. French Strothers, "Cut Loose, And Give Your Personality A Chance," *American Magazine*, February 1928, 42, 171.

43. Medical doctors seemed to concur in this evolving notion of the malleability of the self, and joined the magazine's efforts to show men how to create the self they wanted. See William S. Sadler, M.D. ("Pep," *American Magazine*, October 1924, 29, 178-184), who advises that "clean living, loyal affection and devotion to those who have the highest claim on you ... [are] a marvelous help in conserving the power of your personality engine"; and Edward H. Smith, "Your Emotions Will Get You If You Don't Watch Out," *American Magazine*, August 1925, 32-33, 72-74.

44. Harry Emerson Fosdick, "America's Biggest Problem," *American Magazine*, May 1929, 86. For editorials that support my statements about the overall conservatism of the magazine see: Robert Quillen, "Men must speed up to hold their time-honored rank," *American Magazine*, January 1927, 25; Quillen, "There is less chance of mutiny if Dad is captain of the ship," *American Magazine*, August 1926, 55; Merle Crowell, *American Magazine*, July 1928, 3. For articles in support see: Albert Payson Terhune, "They Are Hell Bent!" *American Magazine*, June 1928, 11-13, 108-112; Harry Emerson Fosdick, "What is Happening to the American Family?," *American Magazine*, October 1928, 20-21, 96-102. For stories in support see: Priscilla Hovey, "The Father Who Didn't Understand," *American Magazine*, April 1925, 57-59, 109-110; Robert Buchmann, "Boys Will Be Boisterous: The Story of Two Sentimental Sailors and a Pair of Sophisticated Flappers," *American Magazine*, February 1927, 52-55, 179-182.

45. Brighton Perry, "Our Esteemed Contemporaries: The American Magazine—Tabloid Edition," *Vanity Fair*, April 1919, 51. Idiosyncratic punctuation and spelling from source.

46. "Careers for Young Men," *Vanity Fair*, July 1921, 35; Stephen Leacock, "How I Succeeded in My Business," *Vanity Fair*, September 1921, 46; Patrick Kearney, "The Great American University," *Vanity Fair*, April 1923, 45, 110. See also Frederic C. Nelson, "Can You Resist Salesmanship?," *Vanity Fair*, March 1920, 116, 118, 120.

47. What was at issue, however, was the notion of taste, and advertisements in this magazine were carefully crafted to appeal to readers who wanted very much to distinguish and differentiate themselves based upon their discrimination.

48. Robert C. Benchley, in his review of Thorstein Veblen's *The Theory of the Leisure Class* ("The Dullest Book of the Month," *Vanity Fair*, April 1919, 39), mocks Veblen for coming so late to the idea that consumption drives the culture of the upper class. His comment is worth quoting at length:

It is the private opinion of the reviewer that Dr. Veblen wrote this originally for *Vanity Fair*, to be used as the advertisement for the magazine which is usually run on the page immediately preceding the frontispiece. Or, perhaps Dr. Veblen has been writing the *Vanity Fair* advertisements all along, who knows? Listen:

"The growth of punctilious discrimination as to the qualitative excellence in eating, drinking, etc., presently affects not only the manner of life, but also the training and intellectual activity of the gentleman of leisure. He is no longer simply the aggressive male—the man of strength, resource and interpidity. *In order to avoid stultification he must also cultivate his tastes, for it now becomes incumbent upon him to discriminate with some nicety between the noble and ignoble in consumable goods. He becomes a connoisseur in creditable viands of various degrees of merit, in manly beverages and trinkets, in seemly apparel and architecture, in weapons, games, dances, and the narcotics.* This cultivation of the aesthetic faculty requires time and application, and the demands made upon the gentleman in this direction therefore tend to change his life of leisure into a more or less arduous application to the business of learning how to live a life of ostensible leisure in a becoming way."

"A copy of *Vanity Fair* each month will do all this, and more, for you," is the logical ending to that paragraph. (Italics from source.)

49. M. K. Wisheart, "Extra! Who's Who and What's What in the News," *American Magazine*, January 1930, 92.

50. In the April issue alone there are stories titled "About the Length of Skirts" and "Goddess in the Car," and articles titled "Men Wanted" and "Living for the Fun of It."

51. Merryle Stanley Rukeyser, "The Kind of Men who Get Along Today," *American Magazine*, January 1930, 66, 133.

52. Emil Ludwig, "What Makes a Man Stand Out from the Crowd," *American Magazine*, May 1930, 15, 163-166. Such views again counter the notion that the Depression was the pivotal event in changing American masculinity; these writers assume that men had changed *prior* to their realizing the full import of the Crash.

53. Peterson, *Magazines*, 143.

54. Bruce Barton, "Out of a Job, What Would You Do?," *American Magazine*, December 1931, 49-50, 104-107; Edgar C. Wheeler, "What Can You Do to Make Money?," *American Magazine*, July 1932, 44-45, 70-72. See also John T. Flynn, "What Chance Have You in a Small Business?," *American Magazine*, November 1932, 11-13, 86-88.

55. Edmund M. Littell, "Men Wanted," *American Magazine*, April 1930, 46-51, 115-122; Frank Knox Hockman, "White-Hot," *American Magazine*, October 1931, 22-25, 90-96; Stanley Paul, "A Bit of Brass," *American Magazine*, November 1933, 46-49, 122-124. More needs to be made of the emergence of working-class images in large circulation magazines in this era, though I raise the issue here only to note the marked change from early representations of masculinity in this particular magazine.

56. Hubert Kelley, "Youth Goes into Action," *American Magazine*, February 1935, 12-13, 110-112. The equation of masculinity with youthfulness is an important component of the development of Modern masculinity, reflected in each of the magazines I have examined. But space necessitates my leaving it out of this paper.

57. Paul Gallico, "Why They Get the Crowd," *American Magazine*, April 1935, 51, 146-148.

58. "A Young Man Speaks His Mind," *American Magazine*, February 1934, 44-45; Jack Dempsey, "He-men wear Aprons," *American Magazine*, July 1935, 16-17, 100-104.

59. A good example is Agnes Sligh Turnbull's "She Doing Her Own Work." (*American Magazine*, August 1933, 30-31, 84-86), which validates the woman who can't hire household servants and does her housework herself. A recipe is provided, and the editor claims to like it. See also: "How to Get Along with the Neighbors," *American Magazine*, January 1936, 69, 82-83; "I Hate Housework," *American Magazine*, January 1936, 63, 142-143.

60. Ruth Burr Sanborn, "His Endurance Test: A Week-end Party . . . a Wild Night Ride . . . and at the end, Romance, Superb and Unforgettable," *American Magazine*, June 1930, 22-25, 142-148; Margaret E. Sangster, "The Way of a Man," *American Magazine*, March 1936, 28-31, 90-93.

61. "Editor's Box," *Esquire*, Autumn 1933, 4. Gingrich's untitled comments customarily appeared on the contents page, but also in an untitled box elsewhere in the magazine, thus the appellation "Editor's Box." *Esquire* was a quarterly for one issue only, becoming a monthly with its second issue in January of 1934.

62. Hugh Merrill does a superb job of locating the founding of *Esquire* at the point where changing masculine norms, rising consumerism, and a shifting magazine market converge in his *Esquire: The Early Years at Esquire* (New Brunswick, 1995).

63. "Editor's Box," *Esquire*, January 1934, 15; "Editor's Box," *Esquire*, November 1935, 5. The query about Hughes produced a huge number of responses both for and against publication, reported Gingrich the next month, and in April of 1934 he printed the story, "A Good Job Done."

64. One letter writer called *Esquire* the "magazine for lechers," complaining bitterly about the nudity in cartoons and smutty stories (November 1935, 8). Gingrich's responded indirectly in June of 1936, saying "Morality does not, as most of these letter-writers seem to believe, consist of attempting to remake the world in your perhaps slightly sour image" (5).

65. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (New York, 1929, 1957), 177.

66. My study of low-brow men's publications is at this point very limited, but the material found in *Esquire* is quite comparable to that found in *Captain Billy's Whiz-Bang*, a satirical magazine that included "French postcards" and "artistic studies" of nude women, which I examined for the years between 1921 and 1933.

67. E. Simms Campbell, *Esquire*, January 1936; April 1936.

68. And sometimes she was—see especially *Esquire*, August 1938, 35. I started to think that the degree of nudity found in these two cartoon series was a good barometer of the degree of heat Gingrich was getting for the ribaldry of his magazine.

69. *Esquire*, October 1935, 19, 135. Petty's independent cartoons almost never contain male figures, but his ads do. In this ad, the aging man appears more interested in his newspaper than in the girl.

70. *Esquire*, May 1936, 212.

71. Merrill makes the point that the very purpose for starting the magazine was to sell clothes to men.

72. The emphasis on leisure might lead one to conclude that *Esquire* is aimed for an elite audience. This seems not to be the case, however, for Gingrich's 1936 survey places readers in what appears to be the middle class and advertising matter is far more humble than that found in elite publications like *Vanity Fair* and *Fortune*; "Editor's Box," *Esquire*, September 1936, 5.

73. Some of the best scholarship on this period has worked within some variant of what I will call the tragic paradigm, which in some cases derives its narrative impulse from the belief that there were greater possibilities for the "autonomous individual" prior to the rise of corporate consumer capitalism. At the same time, configuring this cultural transition as tragic makes victims of all those who must accept modernity and urges us to attempt to reclaim some past golden day rather than to create a golden present. Ideally, one should be able to sustain an acknowledgement of the passing of cultural norms while celebrating and embracing the emergence of the new. James Livingston has attempted such an approach in his recent *Pragmatism and the Political Economy of Cultural Revolution, 1850-1940* (Chapel Hill, 1994). The unresolved problem with such a pragmatic narrative is that it lacks the compelling moral vision of the tragic narratives. In this lack of moral vision we may see the emergence of a distinctly postmodern historical narrative. Are we ready to embrace such a narrative? Can we avoid it?

The scholarship to which I refer includes: Richard Wrightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, eds., *The Culture of Consumption* (New York, 1983); Lears, *Fables of Abundance*; Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916* (Chicago, 1963); William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the New American Culture* (New York, 1993); Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations* (New York, 1979), and *The New Intellectual as Social Type* (New York, 1965); Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*; Martin Sklar, *The Corporate Reconstruction of American Capitalism, 1890-1916: The Market, the Law, and Politics* (Cambridge, 1988); James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900-1918* (Boston, 1968).