

forces training, returns to Vietnam to rescue prisoners of war, using Asian fighting techniques to defeat the Vietnamese and reasserting white American male dominance over Asia. In these films, Vietnam became a training ground for the white protagonist, rather than a place of subversive Asian power, and the physical feats themselves were presented in a radically different cultural context. Traditional American male action heroes—typically soldiers or policemen—now starred in martial arts films, with Asians confined to roles as villains to be vanquished, or as aging, desexualized masters who impart secrets to their more virile white charges.

The multicultural trend in late-twentieth-century American society generated both a revival of the Asian martial arts film and a revision of the genre's depiction of Asian masculinity and sexuality. Perhaps the most significant example has been Ang Lee's *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (2000), which features an all-Asian cast, both male and female protagonists, conspicuous romance and sexuality, and narrative and production values far beyond those of traditional martial arts films. Although Asian female protagonists have long been a mainstay in Hong Kong films, they had largely been excluded from those released in the United States before *Crouching Tiger*. The film significantly revises the traditional martial arts film's desexualization of Asian men, for while the stereotypical chaste warrior who has renounced love in favor of duty is still present (in both male and female incarnations), the film is openly critical of this choice. In addition, the happy ending reunites the rebellious princess with her outlaw lover, thus placing the rebel male hero in a newly sexualized context. The popular and critical success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* may indicate a new openness to depictions of Asian maleness in martial arts films.

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#### RELATED ENTRIES

Antiwar Movement; Asian-American Manhood; Body; Cold War; Ethnicity; Hollywood; Race; Reagan, Ronald; *Shaft*; Vietnam War

—Anthony Wilson

## MASCULINE DOMESTICITY

Male domesticity emerged as a distinct aspect of male identity, particularly among white middle-class men, when the market revolution of the early nineteenth century began to separate social life into private and public spheres. As income-generating labor was removed from the home, and as the home became redefined as a place of consumption and child-rearing (both associated with women), middle-class articulations of manhood became differentiated into two aspects—domesticity and breadwinning—that were both oppositional and mutually dependent.

The separation of private and public spheres benefited men by creating a "private" domestic space devoid of economic, productive function, which assured men a place seemingly free of financial pressure and yet completely dependent on the support of a male provider. However, men also resisted, and sometimes even resented, this separation, for they perceived domestic life and its affectionate, sentimental characteristics as key components of male identity. After midcentury, middle-class men appear to have largely come to accept this separation, thus putting pressure on themselves to be breadwinners.

But by the early twentieth century, the predictable career paths and increasing leisure time provided by white-collar

corporate jobs, combined with the onset of suburbanization, led middle-class men to take a renewed interest in domestic life. Changes in family life and gender roles, such as the rise of an ideal of the “companionate family,” and of men as “companionate providers,” as well as an emphasis on emotional and sexual fulfillment in marriage, involved men in at least some aspects of domestic life. Alongside these developments, home ownership was increasing and floor plans of houses became more open than previously, leading to a merging of male and female spaces and activities in the home. Publications such as Gustav Stickley’s *The Craftsman* (1901–12) urged men to reintegrate domesticity into their definition of masculinity.

While the Great Depression increased pressure on men as wage earners, the New Deal helped ease the demands on men to provide for their families and plan for retirement (particularly through the Social Security Act of 1935), thus enabling them to take a greater interest in parenthood and family life. World War II and its aftermath further encouraged interest in masculine domesticity. During the war, public commentators blamed an increase in juvenile delinquency on the absence of fathers and urged paternal engagement as essential to national social stability. After the war, social scientists lent their support to arguments that the proper psychological and emotional development of children depended upon the domestic presence of men as fathers.

The 1950s witnessed a celebration of masculine domesticity as American men and women, confronted with the possibility of nuclear annihilation, sought security in family life and looked to paternal influence as a source of national strength. *Life* magazine declared 1954 the year of “the domestication of the American Man,” and television shows such as *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriett* (1952–66), *Father Knows Best* (1954–63), and *Leave It to Beaver* (1957–63) showed men as domestic, nurturing beings closely involved in child rearing. At the same time, however, television fathers also spent much less time at home than did the mothers, suggesting the continuing tension between male domesticity and the male breadwinner role. In real life, too, men continued to wrestle with conflicting obligations. For most men domesticity remained difficult to realize. While experts called on fathers to take their place at home, their roles and obligations as providers limited their ability to become active, involved parents.

The most convenient way for a man to be both manly and domestic, if not an involved parent, was to join “the age of do-it-yourself,” as *Business Week* called the 1950s in its June 2, 1952 issue. By 1960 there were ten times as many privately owned homes as there had been at the end of the nineteenth

century. As a result, Americans increasingly perceived the home as a public manifestation of a man’s economic success, and home improvement became both an appropriate extension of men’s role as providers and a way to reconcile the conflict between breadwinning and domesticity. Through do-it-yourself tasks, a confluence of suburbanization, growing homeownership, and consumerism, many men began to reintegrate manliness and domesticity.

In the 1960s and 1970s, several developments further encouraged men’s attention to domestic tasks and involvement. The counterculture and the gay rights movement helped to destabilize notions of “natural” gender roles, while the feminist movement and the growing number of women in the workforce challenged the idea that public politics or breadwinning were exclusively male purviews. By the 1980s, a new generation of American fathers emerged far more at ease with showing affection and being involved with child rearing. Public acceptance of male domesticity had also crossed racial lines, as indicated by the highly successful *Cosby Show*, starring black actor Bill Cosby in the role of successful surgeon and domestic man. However, the 1980s witnessed both corporate downsizing and a rapid increase in low-income jobs, which, by threatening men’s economic security as providers, increased the pressure they felt as breadwinners and complicated their domestic involvement.

Since the emergence of male domesticity as a distinct part of masculinity, men have enjoyed an ambivalent and at times conflicted relation to domesticity. Initially resenting the functional separation of private and public spheres, men came to accept this reorganization of gender roles over the course of the nineteenth century. During the first half of the twentieth century, with the onset of suburbanization and increasing home ownership, men rediscovered the domestic sphere as a masculine realm—a development encouraged and celebrated by the media. Although there was an increasing interest in fatherhood among American men, they also continued to find it problematic to become involved fathers. An expanding twentieth-century consumer culture offered a new outlet for the domestic longings of American men: do-it-yourself. The expansion of home-improvement store chains and the popularity of such television shows as *This Old House* (which premiered in 1979) and the satirical sitcom *Home Improvement* (1991–99) suggest that “Mr. Fix-it”—a man both involved in home life and providing for his family’s welfare—seems to have become the most widespread and socially accepted manifestation of the domestic male.

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## RELATED ENTRIES

Advice Literature; African-American Manhood; Arthur, Timothy Shay; Breadwinner Role; Bureaucratization; Cold War; *Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care, The*; Consumerism; Cult of Domesticity; Divorce; Fatherhood; Father's Day; Fathers' Rights; Great Depression; *Home Improvement*; *Kramer vs. Kramer*; *Leave It to Beaver*; Leisure; Market Revolution; Marriage; Middle-Class

Manhood; Momism; *Mr. Mom*; Nuclear Family; *Odd Couple, The*; Promise Keepers; Sentimentalism; Suburbia; Work; World War II

—Thomas Winter

## MASTURBATION

From the colonial period to the present day, masturbation—popularly known as *onanism* throughout the nineteenth century—has been particularly associated with male sexual behavior. Over the centuries, the definition of masturbation has changed from a religious and moral framework to a physiological and psychological one. At the same time, attitudes toward masturbation have shifted from anxiety and fear—especially during the nineteenth century—to a more relaxed and accepting approach during the twentieth century.

Colonial Puritan ministers understood masturbation, as they did manhood, within a biblical framework of sin and salvation, and occasionally used the pulpit to condemn the sin of Onan (his wasting of seed, as described in the Old Testament). For clerics like Samuel Danforth, masturbation was a manifestation of deeper human corruption, though it was considered less egregious than sodomy. In his formulation, "self-pollution" was a form of fornication, not unlike adultery. It was less dangerous because it did not cause one to violate the social order, but it was still understood as immoral behavior.

By the early nineteenth century, warnings against masturbation began to stress the physical, as well as the moral, costs of masturbation. In his 1812 text *Medical Inquiries and Observations Upon the Diseases of the Mind*, the physician Benjamin Rush theorized that masturbation caused a stimulus that reverberated through the body and produced ailments by exhausting the nerves and other organs. Similarly, the beliefs of Jacksonian-era sex reformers emphasized the dangers of bodily stimulation in any form. Perhaps most fully articulated in Sylvester Graham's 1834 *A Lecture to Young Men*, the belief of most sex reformers was that stimulating one portion of the body would cause a "sympathetic" response in other organs; agitation of the genitals would thus cause disease throughout the body. While a few authors, such as the Reverend John Todd, retained some elements of European author Samuel A. Tissot's concern with the retention of semen, all of these writers grounded their thought on the physiological principles of bodily "sympathy." Whether framed as a fear of depleting precious semen or, more commonly, as a fear of exhausting the body of its energies through overstimulation, masturbation was believed to drain and weaken the body. Reformers