Braudy, Leo. *From Chivalry to Terrorism*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Biological difference, male and female, is consequently not directly equivalent to masculine and feminine, unless a lot of crucial details are left out. Sex, in other words, is not the same gender. The causalities of the body, eagerly seized upon in a scientific age as ways to understand male and female, are scarcely so simple or direct. Biochemistry may initiate behaviour, but environment reinforces it and keeps it going. There are other signals – a mother’s smile, a ritual dance, or a heroic story – that encourage individual expressions of both male and female behavior. Communal life in all its aspects, the life of others, is as much a stimulant as are hormones. In the branch of recent developmental research that emphasizes upbringing, it appears that such factors as absentee parents and brutality actually have the potential of altering brain chemistry. The common computer metaphor of the hardware of genetic predisposition and the software of cultural setting (so similar to Marx’s distinction between economics as base reality and culture as mere superstructure) needs to be dropped in favor of one that emphasizes a complex reciprocity.

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No longer would orgasm be the virtually exclusive property of men. At the same time, postwar research into endocrinology had led to the development of a contraceptive pill that could be taken by women. With this scientific innovation, some control of the results of sexual behavior passed into women’s hands, engendering a greater degree of sexual equality between men and women: the fear of unwanted pregnancy could be removed, and the erotic side of sexuality distinguished decisively from the procreative.

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-links with the withdrawal of pornography from the messes

\*behavioral transformations after customs change – women now have weapons, act more like “men” (re M Mendes’ suicide)

It is as often fought for abstract ideas and symbols as it is for tangible gain, and especially in modern war those abstractions are particulary important for inspiring soldiers to battle. This is the prime function of propaganda, which awakens personal concepts of honor and attempts to tie them to the larger structures of nation and ideology. But as nations become more ethnically varied, the casual line from biology to instinct to individual behavior to social action to global concerns becomes more and more complex, if it can be said to exist at all. Like racialist theories of blood nationalism that aim to maintain the cohesion of the in-group through hostility to the out-group, theories of innate human nature seem doomed to vanish in a more pluralistic world. Like Hitler’s assumption that an ethnically pure Germany would easily defeat the “mongrel” United States and its immigrant armies, they presume to explain everything by a few basic principles, and end up explaining not very much at all.

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It was later, after what appeared to be American victories, that the more bellicose rhetoric took over, including the effort to expand the war to the “axis of evil” – an obvious attempt to apply the language and the emotional associations of World War II to the perceived new threat.

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Is it possible to separate the rhetoric of heroism, honor, and masculinity from the specific arena of warfare and weapons? The idea of the military hero as the man on whom all other men must pattern themselves infects the tangled nexus of war, masculine honor, and sexuality as well.

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Instead of the monolithic states of interwar fascism, the world has in the last half century moved toward a greater number of multicultural states, whose diverse makeup reflects the new waves of immigration for economic interests that followed World War II. More than ever before, the populations of the industrialized countries represent not racial purity but a rainbow of the rest of the world, and the conflict is not so much between nations as it is between the forces of commonality and the forces of exclusion. But this diversity, which has nurtured the acceptance of racial, religious, and ethic difference, has become the enemy for the most militant groups. In a changing world, not changing becomes the mark of virtue. Rigid styles of masculinity that have evolved for cultural situations that no longer exist and for reasons that are no longer functional are brought back as the ideological core of a refusal to engage with the present.

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