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Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920 (Gender Relations in the American Experience)

John Pettegrew

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Are men truly predisposed to violence and aggression? Is it the biological fate of males to struggle for domination over women and vie against one another endlessly?

These and related queries have long vexed philosophers, social scientists, and other students of human behavior. In *Brutes in Suits*, historian John Pettegrew examines theoretical writings and cultural traditions in the United States to find that, Darwinian arguments to the contrary, masculine aggression can be interpreted as a modern strategy for taking power. Drawing ideas from varied and at times seemingly contradictory sources, Pettegrew argues that traditionally held beliefs about masculinity developed largely through language and cultural habit?and that these same tools can be employed to break through the myth that brutishness is an inherently male trait.

A major re-synthesis of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century manhood, *Brutes in Suits* develops ambitious lines of research into the social science of sexual difference and professional history’s celebration of rugged individualism; the hunting-and-killing genre of popular men’s literature; that master text of hypermasculinity: college football; military culture, war making, and finding pleasure in killing; and patriarchy, sexual jealousy, and the law. This timely assessment of the evolution of masculine culture will be welcomed and debated by social and intellectual historians for years to come.

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