

Encountering Masculinities: The Display of Self and Others at Chicago's 1893 World Fair

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This is an article about the social construction of gender, or more specifically, the social construction of bourgeois man, based on an analysis of a North American World Exhibition that took place towards the end of the nineteenth century. The article focuses on the construction of masculine gender: how man was opposed to woman, and how the idea of uncivilized was contrasted with civilized masculinity. These ideals of masculinity would have significant social consequences; the political, industrial and military structures of North America and Western Europe were influenced by the bourgeois male ideal that gained recognition during the last decades of the nineteenth century.

My analysis concentrates on the World Exposition in Chicago, 1893, which commemorated the four-hundredth year anniversary of Columbus's arrival on the American continent. This is a particularly interesting time, a formative one for the new mass society.¹ An examination of the United States increases our understanding of this universal Western phenomenon, for the U.S. was a relatively new actor both as empire-builder and world-exhibitor.

Essentially, world expositions served two purposes: individual nations gained a forum for showing off their achievements in competition with other nations; and the contemporary power elite got the opportunity to present its dream of the 'perfect' society. Technology, architecture, colonial conquests and economic strength were exhibited at most expositions, as were – often – those human beings that were seen as being the opposite of the Western male ideal. My analysis of the Chicago Exposition in its cultural context is meant to nuance our picture of world expositions, exploring a world where great men built a 'city' of magnificent edifices, while the world of women was represented separately, by a building positioned between the 'real' Exposition grounds and amusement fair-like area that housed the colonized people from the peripheries of the empires. Everyone was present, but not equal, at this exposition: the masculine, the feminine and the colonized – gender ideology in the making.

¹ For a good description of "mass" society, see e.g., Eric Hobsbawm, *Kapitalets tidsålder* (1994), Chapter 12.

Men and Masculinity

Who were these people, who could represent a whole nation, maybe a whole world, at a world exposition? One might simply term them the male white middle class: the men who inhabited the offices, the editors' and management positions, the universities, the military academies and the political institutions. The wives (a 'real' woman was married) of these great men participated as well, as representatives of their world, gender and nations, but they were not given nearly the same exposure as the men.

Anders Ekström describes this bourgeois culture in *Den utställda världen: Stockholmsutställningen 1887 och 1800-talets världsutställningar* [*The Exhibited World: The Stockholm Exhibition 1887 and Nineteenth Century World Exhibitions*]. Ekström believes that the Victorian era, which epitomized bourgeois culture, represented a certain moral pathos and a regrettable double moral standard, which originated in the discourse and the social customs of the bourgeoisie.² This bourgeois discourse dominated Western public life during the nineteenth century. As Joan Landes and others have pointed out, masculinist bourgeois discourse has its roots in the Enlightenment. In the early bourgeois societies, men with social positions and/or capital gained leading positions. Women were associated with either the decadent monarchy/nobility or with the female domestic reproductive role, and were therefore excluded from the public sphere. Male workers, a fast-growing social group during this period of industrial expansion, were considered much too uneducated to be included in government. While excluding these two large social groups, the ruling men nevertheless viewed the state as an institution that should serve the people.

Bourgeois discourse served to legitimize this distribution of power – by 'inverting' it, i.e., by transforming this essentially cultural and ideological phenomenon into something that was 'natural' and 'historical'. This is how the ideology of a powerful social minority came to stand for an entire nation's history. This history was then constantly re-enacted. Rituals and symbols, such as opening ceremonies and monuments, remain a part of this discourse of power to this day. State and political rites and symbols are almost always associated with something 'historical' – something 'original/natural' or something new and yet 'historical'. New states, elites and eras invent new rituals and symbols, which serve as rhetorical confirmations of the 'original' and 'natural'. For example, during the Enlightenment, republican architecture and the politics of antiquity were celebrated as original and manly – as opposed to the 'feminine' monarchies of the baroque era; further examples are the late nineteenth century cowboy myth of the United States and the Scandinavian

² Anders Ekström, *Den utställda världen – Stockholmsutställningen 1887 och 1800-talets världsutställningar* (1994).

Viking myth. It should be noted that all of these myths enforce a particular masculine ideal.³

Much of this myth-making has been informed by the modern division between public and private. Inasmuch as there was a public sphere – the masculine – there had to be a private sphere. The private sphere was represented by the women, who gave birth to and brought up the children (preferably boys). A ‘real’ woman was a mother and the characteristics that distinguished the woman from the man could be ‘proven’ scientifically – the man became woman’s biological opposite. The natural sciences likewise played an important part in legitimizing the building of empires. Natural sciences could often ‘prove’ that the native peoples of the colonies were inferior, that their subordination was natural. Thus, rational men ‘proved’ that woman was man’s opposite and that colonized people were inferior to the white bourgeois male.

To a large degree, this (bourgeois and male) discourse defined the premises of public debate. However, it did meet opposition. Not everyone agreed that there was *one* public sphere and that everything else either belonged to the private sphere, or was to be banished to the wilderness. During the nineteenth century, for example, two relatively strong discourses questioned the dominant one: the discourse of the growing number of propertyless wage laborers, demanding representation; and the feminist discourse, which demanded equality between the sexes.⁴

During the late nineteenth century, the dominant discourse of manliness was, for this and other reasons, aggressively on the defensive. Michael Kimmel’s *Manhood in America* tells the story of late-nineteenth century American male identity. According to Kimmel, North America’s foremost male ideal was that of the *self-made man*. This male ideal thrived among East Coast

³ Maurice Agulhon describes how, during revolutions, the substance rather than the articulation of symbols and rites are changed. See “Politics and Image in Post-Revolutionary France” in *Rites of Power: Ritual politics since the Middle Ages* (1985). Eric Hobsbawm clarifies the reasons why some traditions are invented: “it is often not because old ways are no longer available or viable, but because they are deliberately not used or adapted. Thus, in consciously setting itself against tradition and for radical innovation, the nineteenth-century liberal ideology of social change systematically failed to provide for social and authority ties taken for granted in earlier societies, and created voids which might have to be filled by invented practices.” Hobsbawm, “Inventing Traditions,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1997). For cowboy and Viking myths see Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America – A Cultural History* (1997), 148 and Uffe Østergård, “The Geopolitics of Nordic Identity – From Composite States to Nation-states” in *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, ed. Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth (1997).

⁴ The opposition to *the* male, public sphere was not always overt. Research shows, for example, that bourgeois women used their “women only”-organizations, such as charity organizations, as ways of getting entry to the public sphere. See amongst others M. Ryan’s and N. Fraser’s articles in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (1996).

entrepreneurs who felt that one achieved manliness by being an actor in the public sphere or in the economic sector. This male ideal supplanted that of the previous century, i.e., the *genteel patriarch*, the rich landowner with his roots in the European aristocracy. According to Kimmel, this new male ideal encountered its first transformative crisis right at the time of its inception, around the middle of the nineteenth century. At this time the white middle-class male felt secure in his masculine identity – when acting in the public sphere. However, in the private sphere, in the home, he felt threatened. Here the woman ruled.⁵

This crisis led to the formation of a male cult that celebrated the wilderness and the noble savage who, supposedly, had escaped the feminizing effects of the home – adventure stories about the West and the actual demographic move to the West contributed to this cult. The men who chose to stay in the East confirmed their masculinity by, to an ever greater degree, using the economic market as a refuge from the feminine home. The male ideal, which existed in a European context as well, had moved further away from the feminine and closer to the wilderness of the romances.⁶ This longing included a relationship to the ‘colored’ and ‘uncorrupted’ guide or noble savage; homoerotic, maybe, but never egalitarian. Women, insofar as they occurred, were passive and weak; while the concentration on male socialibility could emphasize violence, fistfights and drinking, all of which were taboo in the Victorian home.⁷

After the Civil War, the male ideal went through further serious crises. There were now new threats such as ‘crowds of uneducated workers’, ‘loud-mouthed women’, ‘homosexuals’, ‘emancipated slaves’, ‘immigrants’, and ‘hoodwinking aristocrats’ from the South. If one were to keep one’s dominance in society, these groups would have to be excluded from the public sphere; they became ‘the Others’, the *self-made man*’s opposite.⁸

The *self-made man* now began to find refuge in homosocial, antifeminist and racist societies. Around 1900, the various brotherhoods and men’s clubs

⁵ For the “powerful” Victorian woman, John Tosh, “New men? The bourgeois cult of home.” *History Today*, Dec. 1996, Vol. 46, Issue 12.

⁶ For the masculination of the wild Northern landscape, see Tallack Moland, “Kontruksjon av mandighet i det nordlige landskapet – Om Fritjof Nansens polferder ved århuddresskiftet,” in *Manligt och omanligt i ett historiskt perspektiv*, FRN Forskningsnämnden Rapport 99:4. See also Kimmel, 14–78.

⁷ Kimmel, 61–64ff, 124ff, 141ff.

⁸ These masses also included the unmarried and/or unemployed men, who, in a Swedish context as well, were abhorred by the bourgeois middle class. In the 1890s there was a motion in the Swedish Riksdag to institute a bachelor tax on unmarried men over 25. A bourgeois middle class family was the norm; the concept family was considered synonymous with virtue and morality, and the family father was considered the best proponent of law and order. See Maja Larsson: “En förgörande ensamhet – Om ogifta män och det moderna livets sköra gränser”, *Manligt och omanligt i ett historiskt perspektiv*, 99:4.

could boast five million members. These all-male societies would occasionally be organized around leisure activities such as baseball and golf. According to Kimmel, this focus on physical activities was a result of a fear of ‘feminine weakness’, which shifted the male ideal towards physical appearance – a muscular body.⁹

George Mosse’s *The Image of Man* gives the European version of a similar process. Kimmel traces the incipient focus on the manly body to the last turn of the century. Mosse locates it much earlier, and establishes it as a running theme in what he terms the “normative society’s” (the dominant discourse’s) view of the manly.¹⁰

According to Mosse, this ideal was formed in mid-eighteenth century, in part thanks to the influence of the art theoretician Johann Joachim Winckelmann, himself inspired by antique Greek statues of athletes. This idea of the manly body fused with the knightly ideal propounded by, for instance, Sir Walter Scott, to compose the manly ideal of the early nineteenth-century middle classes. It was strengthened by authorities such as Rousseau – who considered woman weak and helpless – and the paintings of Jacques-Louis David (who was an admirer of Winckelmann). This background helps us understand the dedication to men’s gymnastics that swept Sweden, Germany and England during the middle of the nineteenth century – the male body was to be molded in the image of the Greek athlete of antiquity.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, national militarization and the advance of natural science added nuances to this ideal. Using the methods of natural science, anatomist Robert Knox managed to equate the antique Greek athlete to the ‘races’ of northern Europe, while Friedrich Ludwig Janh, a central figure in the gymnastics movement, was instrumental in creating the conception of the conscript soldier and army, being of the opinion that men should be “chaste, pure, capable, fearless, truthful and ready to bear arms”. These characteristics were articulated not only in the (unarmed) individual gymnast, but perhaps even more so in the (unarmed) male community of the soccer field and (armed) soldiers in the trenches. In his deconstruction of this ‘modern masculinity’ Mosse further postulates that it, like the modern nation-state, needed enemies to keep going.¹¹ A ‘we’ implies a ‘they’.

The late nineteenth-century’s supposed decadence, i.e., the growing cities and industrialization, provided a group of ‘others’ of massive proportions. Mosse postulates that dominant men saw ‘women’, ‘workers’, ‘homosexuals’ and ‘Jews’ as their opposites – something that could supposedly be

⁹ Kimmel (1997), 82–171.

¹⁰ George Mosse, *The image of man* (1996), 12.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12–55.

scientifically proven.¹² The natural sciences, which were mostly practiced by the dominant men, constantly focused on the man's physical appearance – men were healthy and strong, like the athletes of antiquity, not like the 'others', nervous and sickly.¹³

These are some of the masculinities, and their opposites, that influenced the 1893 World Fair. Crises or no crises, in Chicago 1893 the white, heterosexual middle-class male evidently still made up the dominant social group, as he had during most of the century. Before discussing the Chicago fair, however, some mention must be made of its background and genre.

World Fairs as Genre

By 1893, world fairs were nothing new. In his work on the Stockholm fair of 1897, Anders Ekström sees world fairs as one of the industrialized world's most important manifestations, a contemporary expression of the "the exuberant joy" of human reason, mirroring order and social hierarchy. He likens the expositions to positivistic churches celebrating progress, optimism and rationality.¹⁴

This was the apex of an exhibition tradition initiated by England and France during the late nineteenth century. These exhibitions nestled within an earlier well-established tradition, anchored in the Enlightenment, of offering a profusion of much-frequented museums and cabinets, permanent as well as temporary, which exhibited everything under the sun – folk art, 'freaks' and 'exotic peoples'. Their modern roots lay in didactic national industrial exhibitions; as exhibitions of industry, the fairs soon expanded in symbolic, national and economic importance.¹⁵ At world expositions, nations scrutinized each other's exhibitions; an ongoing "peaceful competition" was carried on with "war metaphors".¹⁶

¹² Ibid., 80–91. It should be mentioned that Mosse also describes the emerging labor movement's view on masculinity (122ff), and reaches the conclusion that it might have found nuanced alternatives to the prevailing ideal, but that, ultimately, labor embraced an existing hyper-masculine ideal.

¹³ Mosse (1996a), 78-82.

¹⁴ Ekström 20ff, 57ff.

¹⁵ In 1837, the Mechanics' Institute in England introduces didactic exhibitions in order to "civilize" the nation's workers by aid of rational sciences and esthetic edification. The entrance fees were adjusted so as to attract the working-class. Ekström, 28ff.

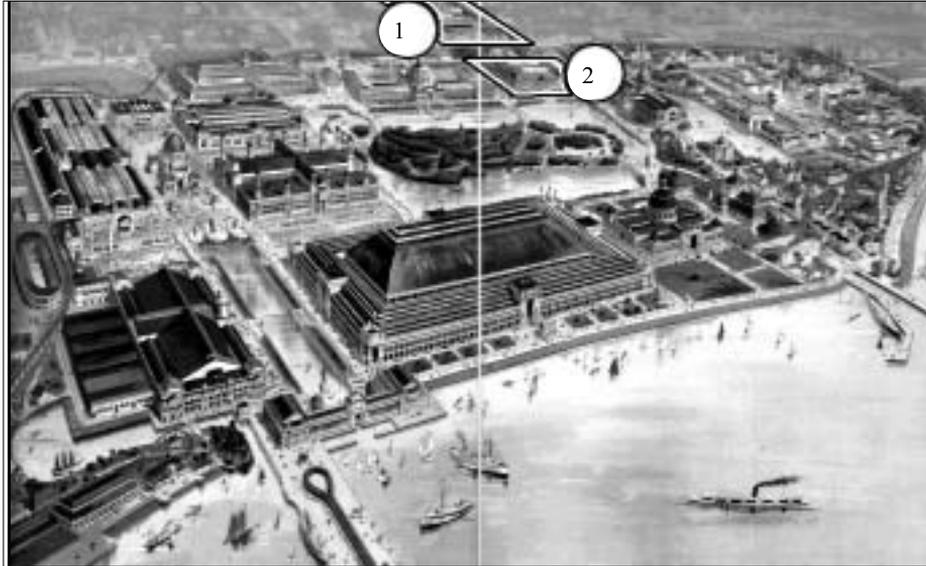
¹⁶ In "Rituals and representation: Ethnic stereotypes and colonized peoples at world's fairs" in *Fair Representations – World's Fairs and the Modern World*, ed. Robert W. Rydell & Nancy E. Gwin (1994), Burton Benedict expresses the opinion that the tradition of exhibiting human beings might have its roots as far back as Roman times. According to Benedict, there are four ways in which humans can be exhibited as objects: they can be curiosities ("freaks"), craftsmen ("the German blacksmith"), objects of conquest (colonized peoples – this tradition has its roots in antiquity) and/or objects of science (these may also be colonized peoples: "wild", "wilder", "wildest").

Between 1855 and 1900, France assumed the role of patron of world culture. It was in France that the encyclopedical exposition was created, i.e., an exposition that presented an amalgamation of all the new insights of the time, a meeting-place for knowledge. The combination of classically constructed buildings, modern technology – specifically, electricity - with exotic peoples, all contained within defined national identities, became standard features of expositions to come, and would draw great crowds of people. In the late nineteenth century, the American elite made its debut on this international exposition arena.

In Philadelphia in 1876 and Chicago in 1893, the North American elite defined its vision of the world with the aid of symbols, mythology and esthetics. Both expositions were informed by an evolutionary ideology. Classical buildings were juxtaposed to exotic peoples, in order to emphasize the difference in degree of civilization between the industrialized world and its colonies. In *Fair Representations*, David Scoby analyzes the gender aspects of these expositions.¹⁷ He emphasizes two gendered features of the 1876 Philadelphia Exposition. One was “Election Day”, when men participated in parades and ‘voted’. Women, meanwhile, were termed “the key-stone of civilization”, but kept to the background – they stayed in their pavilion and socialized amongst themselves. The Philadelphia Exposition’s Women’s Building was comparable to an ideal middle-class home, a place where women were not only virtuous, but where they were also trained to be mothers, to willingly nourish and serve the Republic (although this Women’s Pavilion simultaneously and anomalously displayed women’s achievements in various economic professions). A second feature of gender division was the controversy over the presentation of the exposition’s ‘ideal home’. As Scoby describes it, the competition was between two architects, Andrew Jackson Downing – who saw it as his task to preserve male authority – and Catherine Beecher. Downing wanted to protect middle-class men against feminine influence and to create a home that primarily served as a place of recreation for men – a place where they could recuperate after a hard day of acting in the public sphere or in the world of finance. Esthetically his house was not unlike the castle-like hotel edifices of the era. Beecher, however, was of the opinion that Downing’s luxurious buildings were too costly and that their kitchens were impractical. In other words, Beecher envisioned the home as a work place for women, which should be designed accordingly. Downing built his house around a masculine library while Beecher built hers around a feminine kitchen. Downing’s model won out. All of this mirrored current pictures of – as well as challenges to, and negotiations within – national gender stereotypes,

¹⁷ See David Scobey’s article in *Fair Representations*.

oppositions, articulations and hierarchization. In the following, we shall look for similar symbolism in the Chicago World Fair.



Map of "the Chicago Fair". Circle 1 is Midway Plaisance, 2 is the Woman's Building. White City at the water, in front.

Source: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/mdbquery.html>. Key word: Bird's eye view of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893.

A Tour through the Chicago Fair

Tools of gender and discourse analysis allow us to uncover the normative manliness displayed at the 1893 Chicago World Fair. Our analysis will be based on seven contemporary primary sources: four illustrated albums / periodicals (*Martin's World Fair Album*, *Portfolio of Photographic Views*, *Svenska Tribunens Pictorial Guide* and *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*), one newspaper (*The New York Times*), and three sources chosen to nuance the dominating masculine voice: the Swedish cookbook *Hemmets Drottning* [*The Queen of the House*] and the pamphlets *Reports from the Swedish Ladies' Committee* and *The Social Conditions of Swedish Women* (all of which were published in conjunction with the fair).

Our tour will work on a geographic principle (see the map of the fair). We shall start at the fair's outskirts – the pleasure grounds and freak shows of the extremely popular Midway Plaisance, situated at the border of the fair. From here, we will work our way inwards, past the Woman's Building, in order to end up at the fair's power center, White City.

Midway Plaisance: Displaying the Uncivilized

As Burton Benedict pointed out, the provision of a public pleasure ground was nothing unique to the Chicago Fair. This was the area where the general public could amuse itself with carousels – and where the civilized world would exhibit ‘its’ savage and exotic peoples. It is the latter aspect we shall focus on here. In Midway, the colonized peoples were exhibited in such a way as to indicate that they were outlandish, odd, primitive and simple – and also savage and dangerous. At the same time, it was emphasized that the exhibited people were kings and queens from the wild regions of the world – this demonstrated the superiority of the white race, which could make use of royalty in an exhibition. It was here, at the amusement fair-like part of the exposition, that the imperialist world demonstrated its power – to both visitors and the local population.

Stereotypes were constructed and reproduced at Midway. For example, Bushmen were shown forth as the missing link in the (social-darwinistic) evolutionary chain, while Native Americans were displayed in a manner indicating that their future depended on their becoming civilized by the American administration. These people were not considered persons.¹⁸ Certain types of Europeans were displayed, as well. According to Benedict, the display of European peoples served a specific purpose; they gave the American public an understanding of its own cultural background.

Posters, post cards and pamphlets reproduced both sorts of stereotypes. For the arrangers of the exposition, both provided a lucrative business. Benedict warns against simplifying the relationship between the exhibited people and the public. It should not be seen as a simple power relationship. Often the relationship was purely



Picture 1: "Types of Navajo character, Arizona". Photo and caption from Martin's World's Fair Album-atlas and Family Souvenir, Illustrated

¹⁸ See Judy Sund, "Columbus and Columbia in Chicago, 1893: Man of Genius meets Generic Woman" *Art Bulletin* Sep. 1993, Vol. 75, Issue 3.

commercial: the public paid for watching and the exhibited people took their fees – neither audience nor performer would have recognized our version of the underlying power relationship.¹⁹

The various ‘natives’ were meant to interest and intrigue. We find the ‘native’ American portrayed as an object of some respect in a popular publication picturing the Exhibition, *Martin’s World’s Fair Album-atlas* (see *Picture 1*). Here he appears with a woman, carefully placed in an exotic wilderness. The woman is scarcely feminine by Victorian standards; but she is certainly less manly than the ‘savage’, who appears complete with gun between his legs.

Respect for the manly savage was integral to the part he was supposed to play in the elite’s theater of power. *The New York Times* reported on the inauguration of the fair, during which a parade carried President Cleveland through the streets of Chicago. The inauguration ceremony included living decorations:

Along the front of the Administration Building, just below the spring of the dome, stood fifty Indians in full war paint and feathers, silent and immovable, waiting the coming of the great white chieftain.²⁰

The noble savage, silent and immovable, is here acknowledging his superior. His occurrence does more than connote the conquest of North America by Europeans. It is also reminiscent of the longing away from the home to virgin territories of homosocial sociability described by Kimmel. The native’s self-discipline and manly silence is also reminiscent of Winckelmann’s classic athlete; during the First World War the male ideal would be the silent, strong men who were sent to the Front, so self-disciplined and manly as to prefer fists to weapons. This silent, strong male can be contrasted to some of the other figures that met the President on his way through the exhibition (to continue with *The New York Times*):

There was a sharp contrast between the crowds of the [Michigan] Boulevard and the quaint figures in their bizarre dress, of the denizens of the Plaisance. Arabs, Egyptians, Javanese, Nubians, Congolese, Soudanese, Moors, Chinese [...] were grouped on either side of the roadway ready to do obedience to the ruler of the great American Nation.²¹

Here we have on display peoples who were less savage, less noble, and less

¹⁹ Benedict, 28-44.

²⁰ *New York Times* May 2nd 1893.

²¹ *Ibid.*



Picture 2: "In the Bedouin encampment". Photo and caption from *Portfolio of photographic views of the World's Columbian Exposition Chicago 1893*

manly; more funny and bizarre (see *Picture 2*). This corresponds to a contemporary hierarchization of colonized peoples – all seen from the viewpoint of the colonizing white male, who sees and describes, while himself giving physical proof of the strength, self-discipline and self-sacrificing rationality necessary to the colonizing male.²²

In the popular *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, an article on Midway Plaisance in fact comes close to being a replica of the colonial travel account, rather like a distillate of an entire discourse. In the article, the author 'travels' through Midway Plaisance and reports on the simulated colonies and their inhabitants. Each people, each culture is given its expression and place; the women appropriately grouped in the Beauty Show, the men doing their various fantastic things (and note the passing insertion, in this motley company, of the American Working Man):

²² The historian Koht writes about Fritjof Nansen: "Ingen mann kan vel hete en mann i så full og dyp mening som Fritjof Nansen. Manns mot, manns vilje og manns styrke, manns djervhet og manns [...] ofervillighet – alt er samlet [...] i Nansens [...] gjerning[...]" Quoted from Tallak Moland's "Kontruksjon av mandighet," in *Manligt och omanligt i ett historiskt perspektiv*. See also, in re colonialism, Mills, 100, 109ff.

Let us take a walk through this nearly a mile of separate entertainments and see what we can find. [...] [W]e will boldly enter the Beauty Show where forty ladies from forty nations are said to be dressed in their native costumes, singing their native songs and doing such work as represents some of their native industries. Passing a small model of the Philadelphia Working Men's Home, we come to the Hindoo jugglers, snake charmers, and prestidigitators, who performed many feats never before seen in America.

The more primitive peoples, such as the Javanese, are displayed as whole villages.

The Javanese Village with its population of 125 strange little people was very interesting. Some twenty bamboo cottages encircled the space assigned to them, and in the center they had a theater with native orchestra and dancing girls. A few steps further west we saw a man beating a drum on the back of a camel.

The Orient, of course, can only be displayed as a bazaar; here, in a mode that Edward Said would recognize, we find not only odd men, children and animals, but also still more "dancing girls":

Going with the crowd we found ourselves in the "Streets of Cairo," not Cairo in Egypt, but an exact reproduction of one of their streets, shops, bazaars, hotels, private residences, theaters, wrestlers, jugglers, camels, donkeys, donkey boys and dancing girls. [...] While great crowds were enjoying a ride 262 feet skywards in that monster Ferris Wheel, we filled our pockets with trinkets from the Algerian merchants and heard the story of their theater attractions. The Japanese bazaar was full of the skill and cunning of that people in native wares and no wonder they found good patronage.

As the mention of the Ferris Wheel indicates, all this is interspersed with a 'fun' and 'boyish' masculinity. In the midst of the civilized writer's report on all the peoples of the world we find Tivoli-like attractions that are evidently the most fun for the boys, and perhaps even for the adult male writer:

[...] after looking for a moment at the encampment of American Indians, we visit the Ostrich Farm, pick a feather from one of those twenty-six mammoth birds, tarry a moment next door to hear the native Brazilians sing [...] The Ice railway [...] fun for the boys.

Such fun is interspersed with additional Oriental delights (as well as Oriental

greed), of a colorfulness and variety that makes the observer question the idea of a Single Creation.

[Then] we have the Mohammedan Temple, Turkish Village and Bazaar, full of everything interesting, from that far away land and here also the Turkish theater with a full troupe of performers, dancing girls, wrestlers and jugglers, Armenians, Turks, Persians, all mixed up together, and all striving to fill their pockets with American dollars [...]. [L]et us inquire how it is, that all these strange people could have been descended from Adam and Eve.²³

The article's sometimes exuberant tone (which gives the impression that the author participated in the amusement) does not hide the fact that he feels a certain suspicion towards the "odd peoples". There is little mention of the noble savage here. Rather, timeless, half-civilized and exotic peoples seem to cluster around the author, dancing, juggling, bargaining and singing. One catches a glimpse of the uncivilized workers, as the author passes a model of a worker's home.²⁴ The novel's manly savage – he who is silent and immobile – is not the subject here. The unmanliness of those portrayed might, rather, serve to confirm the masculinity of the 'manly author'.

The masculinization of the gazer, when confronted with these slightly effeminate peoples (among whom one could enjoy oneself, as were one a child) can also be tied, in some contemporary descriptions of Midway, to the conflation (mentioned by Kimmel and Mosse) of the feminine with the encroaching masses. In an earlier issue of *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, some of the Midway's exhibited inhabitants were described as "people of Oriental extraction [...] a commercial race from their very foundation". The writer saw these commercial (feminine) people, who evidently shared so regrettably little with the literary world's male savage, as a threat, as "a large number of them are planning to become permanent citizens."²⁵

This brings us to the role immigrants played in the construction of contemporary white North American manliness. The large numbers of immigrants in

²³ *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*. Vol. III no. 11, "Features of Midway Plaisance."

²⁴ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when masses of workers flocked to giant factories, there were expressions that stamped untrained labor and laborers as unmanly. The dominant middle- and upper-class men often felt that manliness inhered, to a large extent, in one's profession; the new jobs in the giant factories implied an arbitrary subjugation which was scarcely manly. See, among others, Kimmel (1997), 83ff. The same point is mentioned in Inger Humlesjö's "Manlighetskonstruktion i arbetarhistoria och fackföreningar" and Kimmel's "Manlighetens 'osynlighet' i amerikansk samhällsvetenskap" in *Manligt och omanligt i ett historiskt perspektiv* 99:4.

²⁵ *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* Vol. III no 8, "Influence of the Exposition."

Chicago, quartered right next to the exposition, some of whom were even to be found amongst its visitors, might occasion a certain apprehension. Not all immigrants were equal. Northern Europeans, the descendants – as one writer puts it – of Vikings, were much to be preferred to (feminized, Oriental, Southern European, Catholic) riffraff. For an expression of this view, see Martin's *World's Fair Album*, "Discourses on the life of Columbus," subheading "Columbus and Washington." Here, a number of Christian ministers were invited to describe their vision of Columbus's life and the effects he had had on the present. They obviously wish he had been Protestant.

Although we cannot fail to admire his intrepidity, let us not forget the Norsemen who settled in the borders of our own territory, and to them belong the first honors. We are their descendants. At the beginning of our second century of national life, we are beset with dangers arising from the presence of the inferior races of southern Europe. These races desire to rule, and if they should gain that power in this country, we would rapidly find ourselves in the same position as the countries of South America. We have lost much of the zeal which belongs to the Catholic Church of this nation. That which our forefathers cast aside we have taken up, and we have taken much which we ought to have left alone [...].²⁶

The people from Southern Europe were considered inferior, and were therefore less welcome as immigrants. Northern Europeans, by contrast, if still sometimes ethnic and colorful (as, in the quote below, peaceably and merrily singing), were received with more benevolence. *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* described Chicago's "German village" as being jovial and pleasant,²⁷ and *Svenska Tribunens Pictorial Guide to Chicago and the World's Fair* viewed the very large numbers of "Cousin Hans" in Chicago with pleasure:

With a population of at least 390,000 Germans resident in Chicago [...]. Peaceable, merry, and musical as our best citizen the German is, his biergarten is worthy of a visit to watch him, home again in Vaterland in spirit, in beverage, and in song.²⁸

The fair, and Midway in particular were, in short, places where the male gender was constructed. A couple of principal signifiers emerge: 'the manly savage', who seemed to hold a certain place within the bourgeois male community, and

²⁶ *Martin's World's Fair Album-atlas*.

²⁷ *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*. Vol. III no 1, "Features of Midway Plaisance."

²⁸ *Svenska Tribunens Pictorial Guide to Chicago and the World's Fair*, 42ff.

‘the unmanly, exotic creature’, who accentuated the white man’s masculinity by functioning as a contrast. The ‘manly savage’ who was even allowed to be present in the White City’s gala hall (if merely as an ornamental extra) during the inauguration, was seen as determined, strong and potent and, at the same time, of noble, innocent and uncivilized character. The others, ‘the unmanly, exotic creatures’, were considered nervous and agitated. They would be dancing and juggling and would be loud and perhaps even sly. The ‘unmanly, exotic creature’ did not appear to be sufficiently savage to be noble. He already belonged to a sort of civilization – an inferior (feminine?) half-civilization.

These discursive identities may be expressions of the ideology described in Mosse’s *The Image of Man*. With growing urbanization and industrialization, the “others” began to be perceived as the ‘masses’. The ‘others’ were the homosexuals, the women, the Jews and the workers. They were the opposite of the dominating man. He was healthy and strong like the antique athlete – or like the silent immovable Indian. The “others” were nervous, agitated and maybe even sickly.



Picture 3: "The Woman's Building". Photo and caption Portfolio of photographic views of the World's Columbian Exposition Chicago 1893.

But Midway also seemed to allow the expression of a playful manliness. It functioned as an amusement park where men were allowed to act like boisterous boys, among its many attractions. Midway was a place where the male gender was constructed, but it was not a place informed by a didactic, civilizing spirit. Rather, it was the place where strict bourgeois control was somewhat loosened. This is not the case for the next stop of our journey from the periphery, to the center of the fair – the Woman’s Building.

Bourgeois Woman as Civilizing Male Antipode

When members of the public walked from Midway to what a writer in *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* called "the real exposition", their first encounter with the latter was probably the Woman's Building (see *Picture 3*). This bastion of civilization, which was explicitly didactic and civilizing in character, could be seen as a sentry between the chaotic Midway and the White City with its high culture. And, insofar as the man was the opposite of the woman, this building added characteristics to the desirable types of manliness.

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Women's Buildings at world expositions illustrated middle-class women's multifaceted struggle to gain access to the public sphere. The Chicago Fair was no exception. The fact that candidates for the leading positions in *The Board of Lady Managers* were chosen by men hardly made this struggle less complex.²⁹

Here, the separation between the women's and men's spheres was clearly demonstrated. The Woman's Pavilion symbolized 'the ideal home' – a place where women not only remained virtuous but also developed their abilities to be mothers and to fulfill their role as carriers of civilization, their ability to nurture and serve the Republic.³⁰ If one imagines that a visitor to the exposition had started out by visiting Midway Plaisance and then made his way by foot towards the White City, the first building he would encounter would be a strong contrast to the amusement fair-like Midway.

Fair publications both pictured, described, and commented on the Women's Building. *Martin's World's Fair Album-atlas* describes the building as "mellow decorated [...], bathed in the bright sunshine, grace and harmony are depicted from all standpoints."³¹ *Portfolio of photographic views* informs us that "[i]t is considered noteworthy that the female sex, celebrated for its love of ornament, placed in Jackson Park the plainest of its buildings. The style is called Italian Renaissance [sic]".³² The *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* wrote further on feminine beauties (see *Picture 4*) and women's ability to organize. Of course, the women were to be congratulated on this organizational ability:

The advancement of this work from the start, has reminded one of the science with which a weighty body is started to roll, guided by a steady hand [...] perfect management and a clearly directed course. The ambiguousness that characterizes the business system of the majority

²⁹ Gilbert, James: "World's Fairs as historical events" in *Fair Representations*, 22. See also Judy Sund's article in *Art Bulletin*, Sep 93.

³⁰ But, as I mentioned above, the Pavilion combined both the conservative knitting and cooking and, to some degree, the radical – in celebrating the increased fields of paid work, women's increased access to professions earlier "forbidden". See Scobey, 95-101.

³¹ *Martin's World's Fair Album-atlas*.

³² *Portfolio of photographic views of the World's Columbian Exposition Chicago 1893*.

of women's associations,
has been noticeably
exempt here [...].³³

Martin's World's Fair Album, meanwhile, further particularized the Pavilion by describing it as containing "such things as women are particularly and vitally interested in, and which do not properly belong to the general competitive classification" (this is, the competition for awards between industrial products, machines, art, etc., which otherwise characterized world fairs).³⁴

These male writers clearly perceived a polarization between male and female. This polarization is only somewhat modified by the contemporary publications of visiting and participant women. Articles in the fair-related pamphlets *Reports from the Swedish Ladies' Committee* and *The*

Social Condition of the Swedish Women and in the advisory cookbook *Hemmet's Drottning* both enforce and nuance this picture of polarization. Most of all, these publications articulate woman's duties as a carrier of civilization – civilizing the entire world, it would seem, as the publications deal with "exotic peoples", "workers" and "the entire family of man" in turn. *Reports from the Swedish Ladies' Committee* explains the duties and responsibilities of public women in Sweden. Here, we find areas where "Swedish women" held



Picture 4: "[...]This figure is one of the most attractive and calls forth many words of praise and admiration".

Text and Photo World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated vol II no 5.

³³ *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated Vol II no 8*, "The Illinois Woman's Board."

³⁴ *Martin's World's Fair Album-atlas, "General information"*. However, some of the objects shown in the Women's Pavilion seem to appear in other places, as well; at the exhibition of Manufacture and Art 62 Swedes displayed their products – which included embroidery, curtains, plaster figurines, water-colors, laces, dolls and table-cloths. See Manns' appendixes VII-XI. On the division, stemming from the mid-1700s, between "manly" and "womanly" art, Mosse (1996a), 28ff and idem., *The nationalization of the masses* (1996b), 52. For Rousseau, e.g., Landes, 46.

significant positions. Under the heading *Philanthropy* we find them promoting civilization. One of Swedish women's duties was to mold the 'wild' northerners, as is apparent in the list and description of various women's organizations:

The Lapland Mission Friends of Stockholm, established in 1880 by Princess Eugenie [...] for bringing up the children of Laplanders into useful Christians. [...] The Five Farthing Society for establishing Charity Boarding Schools in Lapland, founded at Stockholm in 1864 [...] to bring up the children of Laplanders into Christian members of the community.³⁵

Laplanders, on the one hand; but workers were an object, as well. We remember passing (in the article on Midway in *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*) "a small model of the Philadelphia Working Men's Home". The workers, uncivilized, seem to be presented like an exotic people. They were not present in the 'salons' of the White City, but rather in the fairground-like area of Midway. But these, the masses, were not hopelessly lost to civilization. Rather, it was the duty of bourgeois women to civilize them. One way to achieve this goal was to make working-class women adhere to bourgeois styles of housekeeping. In the following quote from *Reports from the Swedish Ladies' Committee*, we find special schools that attend to this:

After this model, and generally, on the same principles, with modifications, schools [of Practical Housekeeping] have been founded in several towns of Sweden. [...] At Gothenburg the largest brewery, Carnegie, founded in 1891 just such a school for daughters of workmen of the brewery, with the special purpose to teach them everything necessary to become good and useful housewives for workmen, and, if unmarried, good servants.³⁶

General education would, indeed, make 'truly womanly' civilizers (or servants) out of females of all classes. To be sure, civilized women were to be properly patriotic, as well, which entailed education beyond rough housework:

The object of the People's High Schools for Women [*Folkhögskolor för kvinnor*] is to develop the mental faculties of the pupils, to make them comprehend true womanliness and excite an interest in subjects

³⁵ *Reports from the Swedish Ladies' Committee to the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago 1893*, 36.

³⁶ "Philanthropy", 21, in *ibid.*

relating to: 1. General education and 2. Training in manual work. It is no housekeeping school and does not want to be considered as chiefly aiming at imparting such knowledge to the girls as exclusively belongs to the province of housework. The object in view is principally to develop the mental faculties of the girls as far as this can be achieved by a knowledge of the language, history and character of the native country, by acquaintance with the laws of nature, and by reading the best that our literature offers. [...] The schools is [sic] however far from overlooking the importance of the rougher housework most women have to take part in.³⁷

The girls were, further, given exercise. It seems that much attention was being paid to physical exercise, since "[a]ttention has been drawn to the danger of intellectual over-exertion and attempts have been made to arrange school-work so as to allow the pupils out-of-door exercise during the earlier part of the day".³⁸ However, only boys were subjected to the Ling gymnastics' system of 'military drill'.

Of course, as *The Social Condition of the Swedish Women* pointed out, other types of women's initiative would have to be shown in cases when civilization through schooling did not work. Those of the European working class who did not allow themselves to be civilized, of which the majority were probably the "by nature, unwilling men" mentioned elsewhere in the publication,³⁹ should at least be neutralized.

The Swedish women's association for the defence of their country [...] inspired by patriotism [...] to oppose certain tendencies of cosmopolitan and nihilistic character regarding the defence of the country, to be met with in Sweden as in other parts of Europe.⁴⁰

Here we find a didactic, conservative national discourse, with its roots in the Enlightenment and natural sciences, which valued open engagement on behalf of hierarchical nationalism. This was by no means a gender-neutral discourse. Rather, 'the real woman' was the goddess of the nation and 'the real man' was her protector; organized workers were therefore unmanly and, sometimes, anti-national nihilists.⁴¹

³⁷ Ibid., 31.

³⁸ "Education," 49-55, in *ibid.*

³⁹ *The Social Condition of the Swedish Women*, 26.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴¹ For "unmanly" workers, Kimmel (1997) 83ff, 138ff. For workers as cosmopolitical nihilists, see Kurt Johannesson et al., *Heroer på offentlighetens scen* (1987), 260. For nationalist discourses with masculine rhetoric, Mosse (1996b), 127ff; also Jens Ljunggren, "Mellan kultur och natur," in *Rädd att falla* (1998).

The woman described and defended in these pamphlets was the teacher of the nation's children (both child and adult); a morally superior person, with a particular nature that limited her, but provided her with significance. Special women's organizations and schools would channel women's 'natural' ability to civilize anyone – the heathens of the wilderness and the workers of big cities (directly, through general education, or indirectly, through their wives and daughters).⁴² The powerful woman (the specter, if Kimmel is right, haunting late nineteenth-century masculinity) was emerging from the home. In the home, meanwhile – according to books such as the Swedish *Queen of the Home* – her power was near-absolute. Here, her mission extended to those men who, although supposedly at the forefront of civilization, were still to feel the bourgeois woman's civilizing hand – for even the noble, manly savage was an inappropriate inhabitant in the woman's domestic realm.

The *Queen of the Home* gives us a good picture of this realm, the realm that the men described by Kimmel were attempting to flee. Here, the war of civilization was taken into the very bed-chamber. "Night caps are a relic from barbarous times."⁴³ Nineteenth-century advisory publications for women often reproduced the image of 'the weak woman': she could not cope with a job on the masculine labor market, nor did she have the strength to travel in the colonized regions.⁴⁴ But in *Hemmets Drottning*, she appears as a mighty ruler. One of the major weapons wielded only by woman, a weapon that allowed her to control and civilize "the entire masculine gender", was, it seems, her physical appearance – combined with good dinners. In the introduction to the chapter *Toilette*, the writer stresses the importance of looking good – through beauty 'we' gain power and become capable of governing the men – these men who were considered 'creators in a new world':⁴⁵

Ever since the memorable day when the Queen of Sheba paid a solemn visit to Solomon [...] beauty has decided the fate of dynasties and

⁴² Concerning the Republic's, and all the reformed monarchies' "national, real woman", see Landes 169-205 and M. P. Ryan's article in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (1996). *Reports from The Swedish Ladies Committee*, "Public Service, Trade and Business", says about woman's "natural" limitations that "[she] seldom makes any inventions"; in "Literature and Art", that "[i]n Sweden, as elsewhere, outward circumstances often put a check on the artistic activity of women. Her physical strength is inferior to man's, she is subject to domestic restraints". The same section also described "the real man". The pamphlet does include accounts of women of importance to Swedish literary history, but not only as successful authors, but also as married. Saint Birgitta's husband is described as "a man of high standing and noble qualities".

⁴³ *Hemmets Drottning*, 587. Translation, throughout, by editor.

⁴⁴ Scobey & Mills 88ff, Kimmel (1997) 96.

⁴⁵ *Hemmets Drottning*. In the Introduction, the goal is described as "the government's great home for unprotected children": the boys should be taught educated to be creators and the girls "should be endowed with an intelligence that should follow her from her earliest childhood to her last, dying day (the late day of old age)."

men's lives. To become beautiful and thus powerful is therefore for women a more important issue than predestination, the origin of the species or the question of tariffs. If women are to govern and guide men, fathers, brothers, lovers – in short, the entire masculine gender – and to keep their admiration, then they must always and under all conditions stay as lovely as possible.⁴⁶

This fits well with the (male and female) tradition of women achieving power through sexual attraction. In this case, however, less through vanity and make-up; that was not worthy of the bourgeois woman. Rather, through a somewhat puritanical attention to cleanliness:

Any woman can look good, and it is possible, to a large degree, to make up for physical defects and to develop the figure. The first step towards a beautiful appearance is good health, and the foremost condition for good health is cleanliness. Wash often, bathe regularly.⁴⁷

The book's presentation of feminine gender identity links an advantageous appearance to health, water, and artfully arranged meals: beauty civilized – with the aid of good dinners. Indeed, sometimes the link between food and the female exterior seemed intimate. Before the food was consumed, the fair teacher could use it for so much else: "pimples", "blackheads", "beauty-spots" and "freckles" could be kept down with amongst other things "honey", "salt", "lily bulbs", "flour", "horse radish", "lemon", "water [!]", "whiskey", "Bay rum", "oil of bergamot", "root of violet" and "carbolic acid".⁴⁸

Once her exterior had been attended to, the woman could concentrate on exerting her civilizing effect at the dining-room table. This was women's domain, according to a strict division between (masculine) science and (female) civilization: for, as the *Queen* admonishes us, "[o]ne can be an excellent scientist and yet lack proper table manners."⁴⁹ The chapter *Table Manners* provides all the necessary instructions. The surroundings were to breath order, symmetry, pleasant harmony, and a sort of kindergarten atmosphere of domestic tolerance:

A table can be set tastefully and elegantly as quickly and effortlessly, as when platters and plates are just thrown on, so to speak, without the least consideration of order or symmetry. The dining room should be

⁴⁶ Ibid., 580.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 580.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 587f.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 39f.

joyful and pleasant, its mistress should show her most joyous countenance. All questioning, worries and unpleasantness should be banned from the table.⁵⁰

This was to be combined with the actors' own internalized, moderate, easy, polite and graceful self-discipline, all part of the instructive performance of civilization ("noblesse in action"):

Furthermore, one must not wolf down the food in five or ten minutes. [...] Act in a relaxed manner at the table, neither too free nor too forced; one must not show any conscious anxiety about following the rules of good table manners, and yet one must be guided by them, both at home and abroad, and thus show true nobility of character, where so often the opposite is being demonstrated. One must avoid appearing "particular" and affected, be it in clothing or behavior, and must take pains to overlook other people's faults.⁵¹

Seen from the perspective of woman being superior in terms of morality and refinement, even the bourgeois, civilized man was presented as a supposed pupil of the real woman. No wonder men fled to the Wild West, or – at world fairs – to the public and powerful world of the Great White Chief.

Next Stop: White City

In Midway we met the man who perhaps had something 'wild' in him. He was comparable to both the noble savage, and an amusing and somewhat unruly boy. In the Woman's Pavilion and in contemporary literature on women's roles and nature we find one antipode: the civilizing woman, who in schools did publicly what the *Queen of the Home* instructed her to do at the dining room table: she tamed both barbarian and boy. It is time to turn to "the real exhibition", as *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* puts it, a place aptly described by Anders Ekström as

An articulation full of meaning, a didactic and educational show that called for the consent of the public and the socialization (of the public) in a collective project [to] create a broad and stable foundation for a new social system – the bourgeois-capitalist industrial society.⁵²

Women might seek to domesticate men; but in the fair's White City, white, middle-class, ethnically centrist men sought to establish their political power.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ekström 215f. Translations by the editor.

Others became national subjects, worthy objects of openly articulated male power. Or, as Ekström put it,

World's fairs performed a hegemonic function precisely because they propagated the ideas and values of the country's political, financial, corporate, and intellectual leaders and offered these ideas as the proper interpretation of social and political reality.⁵³

In the White City one found the great monuments, the exhibition halls for art, agriculture, machinery, woodworks, etc. The White City was a shrine to positivism – here ruled rationality, progress and optimism. This was an encyclopedical exhibition, a great amalgamation of the era's knowledge. Here one found the classical-style buildings and the electricity. But not everyone was included in the White City – one did not find the strange peoples here, those were confined to the distant Midway Plaisance. The Woman's Pavilion was only slightly closer.

The White City was used, not unexpectedly, for the display of archaic rituals of national power – wedded, incongruously, to positivistic celebrations of technology. On the day of inauguration, the first of May, President Cleveland accompanied Chicago's Mayor, exhibition arrangers and organizers and other dignitaries in a carriage-driven, police- and cavalry-supervised procession through Chicago. They had entered the Fair by way of Midway Plaisance. This provided contrast enough, as we have seen above, according to the writer in *The New York Times*:

The route lay down the boulevard to Washington Park and through the Midway Plaisance to the Administration Building. There was a sharp contrast between the crowds of the [Michigan] Boulevard and the quaint figures [...] of the Plaisance [...] grouped on either side of the roadway ready to do obedience to the ruler of the great American Nation.⁵⁴

When the President and the other dignitaries were all present, the inauguration ceremony could commence. By pressing a button, President Cleveland started the machines and the fountains, and the public streamed in. *The New York Times* portrayed the great and manly President in the midst of his combined archaic and technocratic symbols of power:

Grover Cleveland, calm and dignified, in a few eloquent words

⁵³ Ekström 215f.

⁵⁴ *New York Times* 2 May 1893.

delivered in a clear voice, which was heard by a great multitude gathered before him, declared the World's Columbian Exposition open a few minutes after noon to-day and touched the ivory-and-gold key which alerted the machinery, gave play to the fountains, and unfurled the flags and banners of the "White City".⁵⁵

The calm, dignified and articulate President seemed to have attracted other men, who were also of the opinion that manliness was a virtue that was distinctive to the public sphere. Indeed, there was some competition for this (media-heralded) stage of manliness and power. The *New York Times* reporter described men on the platform who did not seem to pay enough attention. This was not the case of Chicago's mayor, Carter H. Harrison:

He pushed himself forward and spoke to president Cleveland, so that by no possibility could he be overlooked. His strategy was successful. He got a magnificent reception.⁵⁶

The quotes describe male rites that highlight positions of power and, in extension, produce subordination. The use of 'historical' public rituals was a conventional method for consolidating power. Its grammar was well-known – public rituals had been well established during the Middle Ages, and further refined during the era of Absolutism. Throughout, the coronations of kings and their associated ritualized tours of the country had served to legitimize them as rulers. In Chicago in 1893, these articulations appeared to be deeply rooted in tradition. However, their *content* was not particularly traditional. Rather, rituals and symbols developed by monarchies were used to legitimize a new, masculine and Republican order. In order to demonstrate their power, the bourgeois elite employed traditional rites of power.

We can trace the mixing of signs, traditional and modern, in this articulation. According to *The New York Times*, the dignitaries rode in solemn procession, while regular people took the streetcar: this was filling old bottles of aristocratic ritual with manly, republican wine. The inauguration ceremony itself could be seen as a coronation. However, this was not the coronation of some effeminate monarch. Rather, this was the celebration of the ideal masculine world where everything was in its right place: there was Midway Plaisance, an amusement fair-like area for the 'others', not part of "the park proper"; there was a Pavilion for the women, built in a somewhat unmasculine architecture "called Italian Renaissance." In the White City, one found all the innovations of the positive sciences exhibited in halls that resembled antique

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.



Picture 5: "The heroic statue of the Republic".
Photo Portfolio of photographic views of the
World's Columbian Exposition Chicago 1893.

temples, presided over by a giant statue representing idealized Republican womanliness – Republica. (See *Picture 5*.)

These ceremonies of power were, of course, reported, narrated and amplified by that new and powerful actor, the mass media. Indeed, the (male) journalists seemed to be interested, not only in reporting, but also in getting in on the act. This was certainly true of the journalist from *The New York Times*. During the inauguration, the crush of the crowd had been such that the press lectern had become virtually a camp hospital. And imagine what would have happened to the poor audience, had the press not been there! "[I]f they [including fainting women] had not been dragged out of the crowd by the newspaper men [they would have succumbed]".⁵⁷ The journalist becomes a manly hero, saving the helpless, at the same time as he describes the rituals that constructed and reproduced

the male, public power that created subject-citizens. On the whole, male order reigned over (feminine) weakness; that is, as the *New York Times* journalist put it, "[i]f the terror of the crowd could be forgotten for a moment".⁵⁸

Rites, Monuments and Authority

Social domination was articulated through rites, ceremonies and pomp. But it was also articulated through symbols, and in this case the great buildings can be seen as the dominant men's symbols of power. The monuments of the White City fit into a grammar that has its roots in antiquity. Monuments were

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

buildings that, in ancient times, served to communicate the ruler's demand for compliance to an illiterate people.⁵⁹

Republica, the gigantic statue, could be a representation of the virtuous, pure woman who knew that her place was in the home where she could produce soldiers for the nation. As the most grandiose of all the statues in the White City, the goddess Republica could be seen as a contrast to the frivolous femininity of Midway. The White City was, to a great extent, the men's exhibition, and the statues of women were ornaments on the masculine Republic's uniform, as was, to some extent, the Women's Building.

The White City exhibited, however, some variations on the themes of archaic and classic masculinities that may be primarily American – in particular, that of the self-made man. The character of the buildings, as well as their cost in dollars, was a recurring topic in several of the sources. According to *The New York Times*, the entire exhibition had cost three million dollars. *Martin's World's Fair Album-atlas* mentioned that the foreign contributions, counted in dollars, so far were the greatest of any world exposition.⁶⁰ In *Portfolio of Photographic Views* calculations were likewise made. For example, the author described the *Administration Building* (Picture 6) and *The Statue of Republic* as follows:

The administration building. This structure nobly sustained the expectations of the public, and held a sovereign position among all the wonders of the Fair [...] serving as headquarters for the chief officers of the Exposition [...]. The rotunda was ornamented with panels that bore the names of nations and celebrated men, with didactic inscriptions; and the upper part of the vault were Dodge's allegorical paintings. At night the dome was lighted with incandescent bulbs so as to define its panels, and a corona shone on its crest, making a memorable illumination - the chief beauty of the Fair. The total cost was \$650,000.⁶¹

This description can be contrasted both to the words used by *Martin's World Fair Album-atlas* to describe the *Woman's Building* – it was "mellow decorated [...], bathed in the bright sunshine, grace and harmony are depicted from all standpoints", and to another description of the *Statue of Republic* – a male-created female symbol, which likewise cost a lot of money:

⁵⁹ For political rituals and symbols, see Agulhon, "Politics and Image in Post-Revolutionary France", and Clifford Geertz, "Centers, Kings and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power" in *Rites of Power*, op. cit., as well as David Cannadine, "The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition'," in *The Invention of Tradition*.

⁶⁰ *Martin's World's Fair Album-atlas*, "Foreign Participation."

⁶¹ *Portfolio of photographic views of the world's Columbian exposition Chicago 1893*.



Picture 6: "The administration building" Photo Portfolio of photographic views of the world's columbian exposition Chicago 1893.

The ancients delighted in heroic statues, such as the Colossus of Rhodes, the Egyptian Sphinx and Memnon, and the statues of Jupiter at Athens and Olympia, which made the fame of Phidias. But the moderns, until the day of Bartholdi, did not undertake great effigies, and the success of Daniel C. French in creating the figure of a woman [The Statue of Republic] for the central statuary of the Fair [...]. The sculptor received \$8,000 for his services, and when it came to the gilding of the statue – for it appears as a golden image, after the methods of Phidias – it was found that no less than \$1,400 worth of gold-leaf was required for the labor. The total cost was about \$25,000. The face is fifteen feet long, the little fingers a yard. The total height from the water is one hundred feet.⁶²

Here masculinity was constructed, a masculinity that created grand wonders

⁶² Ibid.

and tiny subordinates. And in this context the dollar seems to be of importance.

As discussed above, the bourgeois ideal of the *self-made man* was he who had earned, rather than inherited, his money. Money certainly takes an important place in the discourse quoted above. According to Kimmel, the *self-made man* was, when in public, on a market where his masculinity was to be steadily proven, and this masculinity was equated with monetary riches. This was especially true of the American North-East, where, during the Civil War, the "silly Southerner", who was contaminated by European aristocratic ideals, was opposed to the "*self-made Yankee*" – who (with the help of industry) won a victory over the ineffectual patriarch.⁶³ But the *self-made man* also had his opposite in the slums of the city, where one could find those unmanly men who had failed in the market of manliness – 'those' who drank, not as an antidote to femininity, but rather to unemployment – 'those' who could not live up to the dominant male ideal and therefore were not 'real men'. Maybe this latter category was envisioned as the proper subordinates of the male White City – the working, or unemployed, lower classes.⁶⁴

'Real men' abounded in descriptions of the White City, indeed in descriptions of the import and significance of the Fair. They had (a lot of) money; they paraded down streets in horse-driven carriages; they gilded enormous statues of female Republica; they stood on center stage during opening ceremonies. They created order; they raised great buildings, scientifically envisioned and militarily described; their works were legion, rooted in antiquity, and building towards a uniquely, gloriously progressive future.

The *Svenska Tribunens Pictorial Guide* and the two photo albums describe the monumental buildings' dimensions in great detail – the entire exhibition, almost, was measured in feet and inches, in an ostentatiously scientific language. And for readers who did not think in numbers, there were always the military metaphors – yet another male discourse: "the building for Manufactures and Liberal Arts [...] is the largest in the world [...]. It is theoretically possible to mobilize the standing army of Russia under its roof."⁶⁵

The ideal character of the great man is further illuminated in the introduction to *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*. The author seems to think that this journal would, much like a family father, provide for the future. And as 'the creators of a new world', it was, moreover, groundbreaking. "The

⁶³ Among others, owners of factories and industry, financiers, engineers and practical scientists.

⁶⁴ For the "real" self-made man, Kimmel (1997), 17, 23, 75ff, 101; for the "manly" public market, *ibid.*, 96f. Kimmel cites *The Ladies' Home Journal* of 1893: "The number of women in business who lose their gentleness and womanliness is far greater than those who retain what, after all, are woman's best and chief qualities."

⁶⁵ *Svenska Tribunens Pictorial Guide to Chicago and the World's Fair*, 115f.

complete volumes will be handed down to generations to come. As a work of art alone it stands without a peer.”⁶⁶

But while one was awaiting this grand future, one had to think commercially, and spread customs and laws. The author in the *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* was of the opinion that the exposition had helped put the nation on the right course:

The Centennial Exposition of 1876 was the beginning of commercial relations that have since grown to gigantic proportions. The Columbian Exposition of 1893 will give those relations an impetus that will result in the commercial supremacy of the United States before the dawning of the twentieth century. By careful examination of the amount of space occupied and the extent and variety of exhibits made by the different foreign countries it will be found that they take the lead.

The rest of the world apparently wanted to 'imitate' the United States, something that had to be pointed out to the ordinary man:

The average man can not realize the great changes that have taken place in the relations between this country and foreign countries during the past fifteen years. [...] Remote countries and provinces, semi-civilized islands and people and inhabitants from all corners of the earth have come to the Exposition and are taking an active part in making it a success. [...] It is not only the commercial relations that will be enlarged and broadened by the Exposition, but the political and social. Our customs and laws, at least many of them, will appeal to the intelligence of foreign nations and the result will be a desire to imitate.⁶⁷

Other nations – insofar as they possessed (manly) intelligence – would strive to imitate the United States; while superior men ruled their subjects at home. Here was the President, described by *The New York Times* as “calm, dignified, well-expressed and with sufficient vocal resources”, a “modern patriot” who with the aid of machines handled flags and fountains, occasionally accompanied by the Mayor of Chicago, “a successful strategist”. If woman's civilizing function was relatively diversified, then man's character was strictly disciplinarian. In White City, the signifiers linked to the master signifier *man* were associated with the execution of power. Rites, processions and inauguration, symbols, giant buildings and monuments all carried connotations

⁶⁶ *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated* vol II no 4.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, “Foreign Countries at the Exposition.”

to the men who governed the nation and demanded obedience of their underlings. In the White City, man was neither boyish, nor a noble savage, nor was he restricted by the the feminine home. In the White City, man was modern (associated with new technology) and eternal (associated, as well, with archaic rituals and symbols).

Shifting Signifiers in a Possible Life-World: Three Examples

In the above analysis, I pictured the dominant masculinity as being openly opposed only by the moralistic and civilizing woman of the Women's Building, an opposition that could be incorporated into the dominant masculine discourse – the 'real' man could feel secure in himself vis-à-vis the woman. Or could he?

At this point, I would like to turn to previous scholarship to nuance the picture of the strict power hierarchies delineated above. According to one important thread of analysis, the exhibition included several expressions of significant opposition to the dominant discourse – threatening to transform master signifiers into *shifting* signifiers. This antagonism could be very complex; it was certainly relevant as an expression of additional challenges to the dominant paradigm of manliness.

Above, I tried to show how Midway Plaisance and the Woman's Building constructed 'manliness', to a certain degree, in contrast to the colonized people and 'lovely and unpractical woman'. But Midway contained more than 'noble savages' and 'odd half-civilized creatures'; nor were all women at the exhibition 'real women', fit companions for the 'real man'.

In his article "Theaters of contact: the Kwakwaka'wakw meet colonialism in British Columbia and the Chicago", Paige Raibmon (using letters and contemporary documents) gives a more nuanced picture of the colonized people in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century – and of their participation in the exposition in Chicago 1893.⁶⁸ According to Raibmon, the Kwakwaka'wakwes, who come from the North-Western Territories of Canada, did not let themselves be subjected to the Christian church and the colonial state. In Chicago, they made use of their 'traditional ceremonies' as a means of resistance.

At Midway, the Kwakwaka'wakwes performed the "potlatch", a performance of which the Canadian authorities did not approve. The potlatch comprised ceremonies for various occasions, such as marriage, public penance, rites of passage, payment of debts and a winter ceremony. Both church and state had been trying to eradicate these ceremonies because they were considered to contain elements of "cannibalism", "prostitution" and an all-together "uncivilized" relationship to private property. Some of the

⁶⁸ Paige Raibmon, "Theaters of contact: the Kwakwaka'wakw meet colonialism in British Columbia and the Chicago," *Canadian Historical Review*, June 2000, Vol 81 Issue 2.

Kwakwaka'wakwes were dressed up in "real" uniforms adorned with the Union Jack and were given the task of preventing these ceremonies – nevertheless, the potlatch continued to take place. According to Raibmon, Kwakwaka'wakwes benefited from the fact that the potlatch was of great interest to anthropologists. The anthropologists from Harvard University, who had their own department at Midway, invited the Kwakwaka'wakwes to perform the potlatch. In a non-national context and in spite of the protests from the Canadian authorities the ceremonies were performed – arguably, as an articulation against the Canadian state. The official Canadian exhibition, by contrast, consisted in a mock classroom where native children, who had previously been 'savages', did handicrafts.

However, I believe that the Kwakwaka'wakwes' performance can also be seen as a protest against something else, namely the male image that was being constructed at Midway with the aid of images such as 'manly, noble savage' and 'odd, half-civilized colonized creature'. The Kwakwaka'wakwes had been invited to be wage-laborers at an exposition that carried a political message – among others, the idea of 'the silent immobile Indian' described in *The New York Times*. However, they used the occasion to question this ideal image of the 'noble savage'. And when the Kwakwaka'wakwes – nine men and five women, amongst these Chief Johnny Wanuk and his wife Doqwayis – performed, they attracted audiences in the thousands, which shows that some aspect of their message found some resonance in the public. But, according to Raibmon, *The New York Times* journalist seemed confused by the Canadian uniforms: "Several thousand visitors were quickly drawn to the scene. The throng of spectators could not understand why the British flag should be floating over such a fierce and savage looking lot."⁶⁹

This renders the Midway, as a space to be enjoyed by real men, more complex. The Kwakwaka'wakwes seem to have been neither noble nor odd. Here, we may be approaching the 'irrational' (or counter-hegemonic) experiences ascribed to the Habermasian life-world. The "life-world", as described by Jürgen Habermas, consisted of direct experiences, in turn created through the communication, physical and emotional experiences of the practical activities of every-day life. These stand in contrast to the dominant discourses' indirect re-representation of experience; and this may have been part of what was communicated by the Fair's Kwakwaka'wakwes.

A similar direct confrontation with unmediated, experienced reality seems to be recorded in *World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated*, in an account of the author's conversation with some of the 'savages' on display. These did not really fall into place as either 'noble' or 'strange' – some of them seemed almost sexless, spoke English and were intelligent. They lived in

⁶⁹ *New York Times* of May 25, quoted in Raibmon.

a country without railways, a mail system, banking, stores or trading shops of any kind whatever. [...] Their mode of dressing is in the warm, soft furs of the reindeer, seal and sable. When they are dressed for out-of-doors they are so completely bundled up in furs there is no possible way of distinguishing the sexes. They all look alike. [...] Surely, of all the exhibits ever offered to a civilized visitor, this is the most marvelous and wonderfully interesting. [...] They are intelligent, interesting people and many of them talk very good English. It is a rare treat to converse with them.⁷⁰

Here, the author encountered a ‘real’ experience, one that destabilized the manly discourse. But only to a degree: ‘they’ were devoid of individuality and stood outside of time, furthermore ‘they’ did not understand what a ‘real man’ understood so well: that some clothes are fitting for women while others are for men.

My third example of Exhibition articulations that destabilized the dominant male discourse is taken from Judy Sund’s article “Columbus and Columbia in Chicago, 1893: Man of Genius meets Generic Woman.”⁷¹ Sund writes that at the World Exposition in Philadelphia, in 1876, the conservative representation of woman had led to protests from suffragettes/feminists such as Susan B. Anthony. According to Sund, Anthony had consequently started, in 1889, to try to entice Congress to exert its influence on the Chicago National Exposition Committee, in order to induce it to grant men and women equal rights as individuals at the coming exposition. During the preparations for the exposition, and before the National Committee had reached a decision concerning women’s possible representation, a number of suffragettes/feminists, amongst these Anthony, founded the *Isabella Association* – named after the Spanish queen who financed Columbus’s journey. A sculptor was entrusted with the task of making a statue of the queen. In other words, Sund describes the celebration of a Southern European, Catholic monarch who was, moreover, a woman. Would this be permissible amidst the discourse of Northern European/American manly republicanism?

According to Sund, it was not. Almost in reaction, it would seem, to the foundation of the Isabella Association, the all-male National Exposition Committee founded the *Board of Lady Managers*. The Board’s leading echelon was made up of women from the white upper middle-class. This eliminated any chance for a more nuanced representation – the president of the Board of Lady Managers, Bertha Palmer, supposedly declared that she was not interested in “politics, emancipation or other irrelevant issues.” But, according to Sund, the

⁷⁰ *World’s Columbian Exposition Illustrated*. vol III no 5.

⁷¹ *Art Bulletin* September 1993, Vol. 75 Issue 3.

statue of Isabella did appear at the fair – in an out-of-sight place, however, in diminished scale and in plaster, as there was no money for casting it in bronze.

What did such expositions have to say to those who fought for the right of people to be seen and treated as individuals? The Chicago Fair's White City can be seen as strictly a man's exhibition where the statues of women, like the far-off Women's Building, primarily functioned as ornaments on a masculine, republican uniform – 'the uncivilized' were placed at the periphery, like Isabella, the diminutive plaster statue. The gender-loaded world of the Exhibition did, however, encompass actors who articulated opposition to the dominant discourses, and in both success and failure, communicated their life-world of individual, personal experience. In the world outside the fair, Chinese immigrants experienced institutionalized racism, while industrial workers experienced monotonous labor in giant factory halls. In Midway, 'others' such as 'Chinese' and 'workers', etc., were presented as a contrast to 'man'; but outside of the exhibition area 'they' could not be treated as exhibition objects, nor as easily serve to nourish the hegemonic discourses on gender identities.⁷²

But, irregardless of attempts to communicate the real experiences of life-worlds, the Exhibition served, down to its very geography, as an articulation of a very dominant male discourse. The map provided by semi-official publications (reproduced as *Picture 1*) gives a very clear picture of the viewpoint of the dominant male – the chosen perspective places Midway in the remote background, where it appears tiny; the Women's Building is somewhat more visible, but still in a miniature scale. The White City, the 'real' exhibition, functioned as a stage for the white, well-to-do men. The women had their building at the outskirts of the 'real' exhibition, in juxtaposition to Midway where the colonized non-white people could entertain the masses with dancing and juggling. This obvious ghettoization of the non-white males might, indeed, have been experienced by them as an accurate, symbolic representation of their real-life experiences – the Chicago Exhibition's geography mirrored the physical and emotional experiences of their everyday activities.

Conclusion

I have shown how an image of masculinity, a masculine ideal, was articulated at the World Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Even the physical layout of the Exposition grounds demonstrates gender ideology: the centrally located White City (the 'real' exposition) was preserved for the important 'white' male and the peripheral areas were preserved for the Women's Building and for the colonized peoples. The Women's Building was the feminine home and school, to which the male could flee, to find security in his firmly non-male opposite; or from which he could flee, to Midway, to reinforce his manliness by other

⁷² On Chinese immigrants and industrial workers outside the fair, see: Kimmel (1997) 82–85.

means. In the Exhibition, the arrangers tried to create a Utopia, capable of materializing and thus stabilizing the eternal contingency of identities. The subject position man was forced into a congealed position of eternal strength, while woman became the domestic goddess – certainly not a co-founder of an Isabella Association; just as the ‘half-civilized exotic creature’ was a funny juggler, certainly not capable of a performance that embodied protest against colonization.

This materialization of discourse was, of course, powerful. It drew an enormous public, and was well covered in the international mass media (which spoke, more or less, for the white male elite). Just as London exhibitions had had “shilling” entrance days, in order to attract and influence British workmen, so did the Chicago Exhibition seek to civilize the masses – in this case, into appropriate subjects-citizens.

White City buildings were very masculine, and here masculine rites and symbols were articulated. It is hard to tell to which degree these rites and symbols appeared natural to the visitors. However, the fact that a number of critics had made an attempt to answer the dominant language with a statue of Queen Isabelle, indicates that the dominating discourse had not become universally accepted as natural.

But it was not easy to frame, let alone materialize, an oppositional discourse. The publications available in the Women’s Pavilion might have envisioned a publicly active, organizing, powerful woman; but simultaneously were so caught in the division between the ‘creative’ male and ‘domestic’ female, that they seemed rather to reinforce the idea of natural differences between the sexes. Women Pavilion pamphlets seemed, on the whole, to celebrate the ideal that placed the real man in the public sphere (supplied, in addition, with a wilderness he could both flee to and from), while placing woman in the home; and, by implication, agree that Isabella was scarcely an appropriate ideal for a republican goddess.

I have, at the end of the article, attempted to trace an alternative vision, deriving not from dominant discourse, but from the life-world of direct, active experience. Scholarly studies have indicated that the Exhibition’s discourse of manliness could be challenged by direct experiences and confrontation – particularly in the case of the Isabella Association. Thus, even in the artificial world created by the Exhibition, the contributions of diversifying articulations were so intense that the artificial included the real. This forced the Exhibition, despite itself, closer to its ultimate goal: the representation of an entire world.

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