The distaste of boys for the school environment becomes more apparent if you look at behaviour and attendance records. Last year, boys were responsible for 79 per cent of expulsions and 72 per cent of suspensions. That’s over 230,000 boys who had such severe problems with school that they were thrown out.

This is bad news for everyone involved in trying to raise educational standards. But it seems clear to me that the problem with boys at school is a symptom of a bigger issue: the rapid feminisation of developed societies. There are three main ways in which what one might call traditional male virtues have been downgraded or delegitimised. They are the rising importance of emotions and feeling in modern life, the delegitimisation of risk and competition, and the declining relevance of physical strength.

First, the world of education and, increasingly, of work requires more “soft” interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence than in the past. I do not want to venture too far into the debate about whether female superiority in this area is cultural or “hard-wired,” but it is, for now, true that average performance in the “fact” world and the “feeling” world differs markedly between the sexes. Simon Baron-Cohen at the Cambridge Autism Research Centre has even suggested that autism is an “exaggeration” of the normal male brain.

Second, the explosion of the litigation culture and the tyranny of health and safety rules in the education system discourage risk-taking and physical competitiveness, and this bears down more heavily on male forms of behaviour.

Finally, muscle doesn’t count for much any more. Changing technology and work patterns mean that men’s historical advantage — their physical strength — is increasingly an obsolete currency in the workplace. This is felt with special keenness in parts of the country formerly dominated by heavy industry, where there are a high number of underperforming schools.

These factors comprise the three-way assault on male virtues: feeling over fact, safety over risk and the downgrading of physical strength. There has been reluctance to broach the subject of the difference between males and females for fear of being accused of gender stereotyping. But we are now seeing the tangible results of that inhibition.

It is not by chance that girls are staying on at school more than boys. The trend towards exam questions that concentrate on subjective interpretations over factual analysis, favours girls. The anti-risk culture is manifest in the introduction of endlessly retakeable modules. The proliferation of coursework tends to favour conscientious girls over boys who prefer the one-off risk of the exam.

If we are going to force children to stay at school until they are 18, we have to think hard about what those extra years will entail, otherwise the difference in achievement between boys and girls will only become more ingrained. Any extra compulsory school years must start to reset the gender imbalance. We need a greater appreciation of analytical skill, more competition and rewards for risk-taking, and more development of sport and practically demanding qualifications.

If our world is becoming more feminised and masculinity is being recast, that’s all the more reason to give boys the best start we can. Particularly for anyone who believes in the equality of the sexes.

Anderson’s article reveals a lot about what’s wrong with leftist thinking about Europe

Marxist populism

By Andrew Moravcsik

Perry Anderson, Britain’s most respected Marxist intellectual, has embraced Euroscpticism populism

The sad saga of European institutional reform continues. Having initially spun the reform treaty as a “constitu­tion,” many of Europe’s leaders have been obliged to re-spin — telling the public that they have fundamentally revised the document, transforming it into a mere treaty amendment. The Eurosceptics are correct to insist that the document remains largely unchanged. But the deeper truth is that the reforms are modest and pragmatic. Euro-sceptic has piled up so thick over the past six years, however, that no one believes ministers when they say this.

Even smart guys are confused. Take Perry Anderson, one of the most creative of British Marxists in recent decades, who recently tossed a handful of Euroscepticism out the window of his ivory tower on to the pages of the London Review of Books. His critique is aimed at those—among them Mark Leonard, Tony Judd, Jeremy Rifkin, Jurgen Habermas, Marcel Gauchet and myself—who argue that Europe is emerging as a model of world-historical significance. Despite our differences, all of us believe that the old continent strikes the most admirable balance to be found in today’s world—superior to the US, Japan, Russia or China—among the three fundamental elements of modern democracy: market economics, social democracy and multilateral institutions.

Anderson’s response reveals a bit that’s wrong with Europe, but a lot more that’s wrong with leftist thinking about Europe. To be sure, he displays some of the virtues of old-fashioned Marxist history — a hard-headed, fact-based focus on material interests. He shows, for example, how the single market, the single currency and even enlargement, while important achievements, are often oversold. He exposes the distributional conflicts that underlie the EU: Europe is about national interests, and the bargaining is tough. Just ask German car workers about Slovak competition, or Poles why their subsidies are smaller than Spaniards.

Anderson devastatingly dissects naïve left-wing geopolitics, notably Habermas’s 1968-er scheme to forge a European identity around an anti-American crusade. Leaving aside the obvious lack of pan-European consensus, European governments in fact broadly support US military intervention everywhere, except...
Iraq is compounded by the fact that it is пытались бы называть "предательство." Это не
их интерес. Европейцы и американцы
face the same challenges from terror and
to learn from foreign workers desperately
rogue states. Divisions over Iraq are not
needed by European economies is
the rule, but exceptions were made by fool-
impeded by popular concerns about
Blunders in Washington.
So far so good. Yet Anderson goes off
the rails when he moves from material
reality to politics and institutions—from
care of the nation state or, more prop-
base to superstructure. Like many Euro-
Lion's, he is haunted by the spectre of
nentialist, essentially state-based multilateralism that
the genre divide
BY TOM CHATFIELD

Despite the latest efforts of John
Banville, the gulf between genre
and literary fiction remains wide.

The genre divide
BY TOM CHATFIELD

Evel since Edgar Allan Poe laid the
foundations of horror and detective
fiction in the 1820s—and was soundly
reviled for this impertinence in his native
land—genre and literary authors have
been wary of one another. The history
of high literature is also the history of
genos; of the Shakespeares and Byrons
whose unique talents have bewildered
the world. Throughout genre fiction’s
briefer lifetime, however—from Poe to
le Carré via Verne—the contract
between audience and author has always
been the most important matter. This is
what genre signifies: you aim to please
them at least as much as yourself, and
aim to sell. In a history thick with pulp
and penny dreadfuls, no area of fiction
has been more thoroughly commercial
in its instincts than genre fiction; and
when audience is the bottom line, this
means sales. The number one slot on the
New York Times’ bestseller list is to a
genre writer what the National Book
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ultimate respectability. Literary books
sometimes sell well, of course (though
certainly not as well as genre works), and praise
is sporadically warded from the ivory
towers towards deserving outsiders.

Tom Chatfield is assistant editor of Prospect

EU wonks are pursuing
policies they dislike because
voters make them do so

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