

Doyle & War: Save the Males. By R. F. Doyle. Forest Lake, Minnesota: Poor Richard & Press, 2013. www.amazon.com. No price stated on book, but website gives price for book as US \$9.95, for download US \$5.50. 238 pages. Review by J. Steven Svoboda.

Richard Doyle, longtime editor of the *Liberator* newsmagazine (may it rest in peace), is a revered veteran who has been toiling away for a good half century on behalf of men's rights. Among other recognition he has received, the National Coalition for Men has honored him for his considerable achievements. In recent years, Mr. Doyle has turned his efforts to pen the book *Save the Males*, which has gone through title changes and almost continual revisions by the author since its first appearance. (Full disclosure: I have spent some brief yet treasured time with Mr. Doyle and am deeply impressed by his commitment, achievements, and persistence. This review of the latest edition updates my 2006 review of the first edition and my 2007 review of the fourth edition.)

What you will not get in this book is the most smoothly written, balanced, open-minded book in the history of writing about men and masculinity. Doyle is his own man and calls things as he sees them. Few readers are going to agree with the author on all particulars. What a relief! Instead we get an often delightful, occasionally short-tempered, and definitely opinionated writer prepared to challenge even those of us who have been working for genuine gender equity for many years. Such a commitment to truth and justice that has endured so long is truly worthy of our admiration.

Unfortunately the author leads with a somewhat abrasive introduction that is a bit lacking in nuance. Readers should hold on and have faith because there is plenty of gold to be panned from this book.

For an esteemed old-timer, Doyle has done an impressive job integrating recent developments into his book. He points out the ludicrousness of the 2013 repassage of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in a context in which rates of sexual violence have fallen by 64% (!) in the past decade. (This fact was not noted by mainstream press, perhaps because it fails to support prevailing prejudices.) Just the new examples the author has collected of certifiably insane sentences pronounced against men by various courts are in themselves worth several times the exceedingly modest price of admission.

The senselessness of prosecuting prostitution customers ("johns ") but not prostitutes is exposed amidst a more general context of the criminalization of sex and of male sexuality. Some dreadful stories are offered up of an eighteen-year-old boy working at a carnival being convicted for literally doing his job of buckling children into a carnival ride, and of a boy convicted for urinating in a girl's presence. Also included are a number of updated stories regarding female criminals and the courts' willingness to bend over backwards to avoid punishing them for their crimes.

Mr. Doyle has a knack for deftly crystallizing the essence of a thorny situation. For example, he points out that under existing no-fault divorce law, "a person could lose an ancestral farm worked by his family for generations to a tramp mate of a few years and not even be permitted to raise the issue of her conduct in the marriage." On the next page, he succinctly sums up the confluence of diverse forces that have teamed up to put

countless men through the living hell of divorce and lost contact with children: “An unholy alliance of the divorce system and feminist philosophy has been instrumental in relieving women of marriage obligations, while assuring them of its advantages and denying them to men.” Later we learn of an unbelievably sad and unfair yet all too typical eight ball that one man confronted: “It’s crazy; one branch of the human services department told him he could no longer see the girl [his daughter] because he was not the father, while another said he owed over \$10,000 and couldn’t have a driver’s license because he was the father.”

I can’t think of another book I have read that so effectively addresses so many areas that are generally neglected by authors and are swept under the rug by society in general. One is the high cost of divorce, which must be a compelling topic in these financially challenging days, even for those who manage to avoid compassion for the sad victims caught in the jaws of divorce court. Over a decade ago, we learn, the annual cost of American divorces was over \$30 billion, and doubtless that figure would be much higher today. A second usually overlooked topic is female police officers, who, the author tells us, participate in several times more shootings than do males. A third issue that many folks have stopped talking about is the pro-female discrimination that facilitates female participation in the military. The same performance level earns women higher grades than men and promotions over men who may in fact be superior officers.

Mr. Doyle provides generally excellent if intermittently grumpy and idiosyncratic summations of pertinent issues, reading somewhat like a ruffled, less erudite (but who isn’t?) version of the late Daniel Amneus. The author’s proposals near the end of the book are often fresh and engaging, and frequently provocative, while varying in practicality for actual implementation. Mr. Doyle suggests creating defaults for custody awards that are based on the age and sex of the child. Younger children will tend to be placed with Mom, while older kids, particularly boys, will live with Dad, while some room is included for consideration of individual circumstances.

Mr. Doyle and I will never fully agree on politics, and that’s fine, but I do wish he would curb his tendency toward partisan shots across the bow, as it will needlessly limit his audience. The same goes for his strong views on abortion, which I respect and which I enjoyed reading and found thought-provoking up to a point. It still strikes me as somewhat sophomoric to list one’s supporters in an attempt to strengthen one’s credibility, and even more so to then add “and most anyone with a modicum of common sense.”

On the other hand, what an excellent juxtaposition Mr. Doyle found, contrasting the Florida court’s ruling preventing a man from having a voice regarding his wife’s abortion with many states’ requirements that a man seeking a vasectomy have his wife’s written permission. The author ably justifies his provocative contention that women have a higher obligation to chastity, and makes some interesting proposals regarding marriage a few pages later.

If you have a pulse, you simply must not miss reading this truly unique book for its insightful suggestions and fiery, quirky summary of the current state of males. It offers

the reader a ride worth many times the ticket price and receives my highest recommendation.