



Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of Playboy

Carrie Pizulo

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For a lot of people, thoughts about the sexual politics of *Playboy* run along the lines of what Gloria Steinem reportedly once told Hugh Hefner: “A woman reading *Playboy* feels a little like a Jew reading a Nazi manual.” Hefner’s magazine celebrates men as swinging bachelors and women as objects of desire; ergo, it’s sexist.

Not so fast, says Carrie Pitzulo. With *Bachelors and Bunnies*, she delves into the history of the magazine to reveal its surprisingly strong record of support for women’s rights and the modernization of sexual and gender roles. Taking readers behind the scenes of *Playboy*’s heyday, Pitzulo shows how Hefner’s own complicated but thoughtful perspective on modern manhood, sexual liberation, and feminism played into debates—both in the editorial offices and on the magazine’s pages—about how *Playboy*’s trademark “girl next door” appeal could accommodate, acknowledge, and even honor the changing roles and new aspirations of women in postwar America. Revealing interviews with Hugh Hefner and his daughter (and later *Playboy* CEO) Christie Hefner, as well as with a number of editors and even Playmates, show that even as the magazine continued to present a romanticized notion of gender difference, it again and again demonstrated a commitment to equality and expanded opportunities for women.

Offering a surprising new take on a twentieth-century icon, *Bachelors and Bunnies* goes beyond the smoking jacket and the centerfold to uncover an unlikely ally for the feminist cause.

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