

Recreating men: Postmodern masculinity politics

Author: Bob Pease

Sage, 2000 £17.99

This is a book from Australia, based on original research conducted by the author in pursuit of his doctorate. Consequently it is very up-to-date and also quite academic. The author has a profeminist orientation.

To oppress others, it is necessary to suppress oneself, and systematic male dominance not only oppresses women, it deforms men themselves: for example, men die more frequently from stress-related illness and violence and have a shorter life expectancy. In this view, the reason for men to change themselves is to save their lives. (p.16)

The motivation is good, then. What we also find in this book is that the thinking is good, too. There is an up-to-date appreciation that the old simplicities of men versus women and women versus men have gone for ever:

If we question the constituency of 'women' then we must equally question the constituency of 'men'. If there is progressive potential in unpacking the term 'women', why not unpack 'men' too?... We should always keep in focus *which* men and

which women we are talking about. (pp.28-9)

And this leads on to the issue of masculinity. What do we mean when we say that the question of masculinity is an issue for many men? And here the answer given is that we stop talking about masculinity at all: "Thus we cannot speak of masculinity as a singular term, but rather should explore masculinities." (p.29)

This pluralism then gets taken further. Not only are there different groups of men, not only are there different types of masculinity, there are also different motives and tendencies within each man:

There is a connection between marginalized and oppressed people and 'marginalized and oppressed parts of ourselves' (Ingamells 1994: 3). The more people acknowledge multiple parts of themselves, the more they will be able to identify with different positions. (p.31)

But it is important not to run away with this idea too much, either. If we lay too much stress upon the multiplicity of all this, we run a risk of not doing justice to the major and almost

monolithic structures of our society. And Pease gets the message and does justice to this aspect of the matter as well:

Thus emphasis on diversity and difference 'ought not to degenerate into a diversified pluralism that gives insufficient attention to structured patterns of gendered power, control and inequality' (Collinson & Hearn 1994: 10). Differences among men can only be understood with reference to the structure of the gender order and the recognition of multiple masculinities does not reduce the sociology of masculinity to a postmodern kaleidoscope of lifestyles (Connell 1992a: 736). Clearly we must avoid the danger of losing sight of patriarchy. (p.31)

Being a man in the midst of all this is clearly not a simple or easy matter. And Pease recognises that for a man to cope with all of this requires strength and determination, and the support of other men, perhaps through conscious groupings and campaigns. Is one ever going to get the approval of feminists, no matter what one does? Pease give his answer to this:

I believe that the resolution of this problem resides in praxis. As a man, I can be involved in fighting sexism and still be viewed as sexist by women, which is an understandable perception for women to have about men. The dilemma can be resolved as profeminist men's activities reveal that they are not as sexist as some women thought and, through their anti-sexist practice, they discover elements of

sexism still with them that need attention. (p.37)

All this is in the first three chapter, and it is good to see the groundwork being laid so thoroughly and well.

The next chapter is a good solid account of constructing profeminist subjectivities, using his own research for the purpose. The essential multiplicity of human subjectivity again comes in here. And Pease says that consciousness-raising groups are not enough.

The next chapter again is a good discussion of the whole question of sonhood, questions about fathers and sons and mothers and sons, with some very strong conclusions being reached through the use of a research method called memory-work.

Chapter 6 is on heterosexuality, and here the ground gets a bit more soggy, simply because this is such a difficult area to deal with adequately.

Part 3 of the book goes into the whole question of politics, again with a vast number of good points being made. In the end this is a hopeful book, with a real sense that the work of being a profeminist man is feasible, even if difficult and sometimes painful. It seems to me that anyone interested in sexual politics would find something of value in this book, and I would strongly recommend its use in courses on gender politics or critical psychology.

John Rowan



Politics on the Couch: Citizenship and the Internal Life

by Andrew Samuels

Profile Books, 2001 £10.99

To begin with a quote from the Preface to Andrew Samuels' new book, 'Politics on the Couch: Citizenship and the Internal Life' is 'an extension of the attempts [made in Samuels' previous writings] to map the links between our inner and outer worlds, between the seemingly opposite worlds of psychotherapy and politics'. Of absolutely direct interest to everyone, not just psychotherapists or those interested in the work of PCSR, this really is a 'must read' book. It argues for the value of a radical approach to politics deriving from psychotherapy and explains the main principles of what Samuels has come to call 'transformative politics'.

In Chapter 10 'The Political Clinic' he reviews 'some explicit links between how psychotherapists work in practice and a new approach to the emotional dimensions of politics. Developing a psychological take on politics that encompasses feelings and sensibilities is not just an issue for the educated, chattering classes or for New Agers. Many people want to know how they can translate into effective and healing action their heartfelt, emotional, imaginative and bodily responses to political scenarios'. He uses gender, sexuality and the 'internal family' to chart and advocate new attitudes to the political process and to enquire into the origins of political change with great force. His fresh thinking is a delight to read and takes us away from the cynicism and negativity often associated with politics which puts so

many people off even broaching the subject. Aimed at a wide audience, his accessible and pragmatic ideas could readily be taken up in very practical ways and make a serious attempt at breaking through the stale impasse in political life. I read this in December as the farce of the American elections played itself out and wondered (using Samuels' ideas) what would happen if, to resolve the stalemate, George Bush invited Al Gore to become his deputy (perhaps even swapping places half way through the term) since there was in effect a tie. What message would this have sent out to the world about mature conflict resolution and an ability to compromise? In political (and sometimes personal) terms, compromise is often considered failure.

In Chapter 11 'Psychotherapy, the citizen and the state' Samuels' enormously refreshing lack of cynicism addresses the underbelly of politics when in truly subversive style he boldly says 'My intention is to do something positive with the incorrigible competitiveness and argumentativeness within society, mining it for the tension-rich gold it might contain.' This is no idle statement. Samuels fleshes out these statements of intent with hard thought-through visionary ideas. To quote at some length from Chapter 13, 'A goal of this book is to achieve recognition of the ways in which psychotherapeutic virtues could be

useful to politics and politicians. If people in positions of power, and those in a position to influence public opinion, such as journalists, add perspectives like those outlined in this book to the bank of ideas that they already draw on to formulate and critique politics, therapy will finally have succeeded in changing the world at least a little bit.'

This is indeed beginning to happen. On Monday 15th January 2001 Madeleine Bunting, writing in her column in *The Guardian*, argued that 'happiness is a political issue'. As she rightly contends, the state just cannot afford to ignore happiness and the emotional well-being of its citizens for even the most conventional of reasons, that is that it is costing the state a fortune in NHS bills and in lost days at work. Depression is an enormous financial burden on the state. We cannot divorce the personal/subjective/emotional from the political and it may well take such 'base' motives to finally persuade society to adopt the sorts of ideas Samuels propounds.

Then Samuels elegantly links the personal to the transpersonal when he

states: Transformative politics is also a profound form of self-expression, perhaps on a spiritual level, and requires a new understanding of social action as part of the citizen's individuation... Transformative politics aims at a resacralization of culture, an attempt to generate a sense of meaning and purpose not only in private but also in public life. Power will always be the political issue but, in transformative politics, political power is complemented by the concept of political energy.'

Most people these days are jaded and disillusioned with mainstream politics which always seems to fail to deliver and disappoint. Samuels realises in his book that: 'the spectre that haunts materialist and constitutional moves in the political world is that they only ruffle the surface and do not (because, alone, they cannot) bring about the transformations for which the political soul yearns'.

Ruth Williams

A version of this review also appeared in *Transformations*, the journal of Psychotherapists and Counsellors for Social Responsibility.

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Qualitative Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy

John McLeod

Sage, 2000 £16.99

If you want to know what Qualitative Research is, and how to do it, you need clear information and helpful advice. One of Professor McLeod's earlier books, 'Doing Counselling Research', was a detailed manual, small and informative, which was a reference book for me when I was contemplating some research work. This new book is larger, easier to read, more comprehensive, and introduces the philosophy underlying Qualitative research, as well as showing the way to begin it. You start with writing a Journal, then choosing your methodology. I enjoyed the way the author makes Qualitative research sound like something that all of us could do.

Perhaps some Therapists may think that research is dry, that it is about numbers and statistics, as in Quantitative research, but this book should remove such assumptions. Qualitative research involves meeting and talking to people, and connecting to them in the same way as one connects to clients, using similar Rogerian skills. The chapter entitled How to do Qualitative Research is a gem, full of information for the would-be researcher. The author takes the reader through Seventeen steps, from Choosing the Topic, Formulating a research Question, and ending with Writing and Theorising, managing to make the whole process of producing Qualitative research appear not only manageable, but exciting, comparable to producing a piece of Art.

It is helpful to read examples of PhD researchers who used a combination of Qualitative methods, starting off with Grounded Theory and then adding in other approaches. For example, the

Human Inquiry method in research in counselling and psychotherapy is usefully linked to William West's research work into therapists as spiritual healers, which could be a model for Transpersonal Therapists wanting to know where to start with their research. The author brings in his own considerable experience of students' research studies as examples., and makes clear the limitations and difficulties of each method, and the issues and controversies associated with them. He says that Qualitative research is still undervalued, while Quantitative research in this field is not giving a true picture of how therapy can change lives.

The author does not assume that the reader will automatically understand the specialised vocabulary of Qualitative research, which is clearly explained, helped by eye-catching type fonts and attractive layout for headings and tables. Professor McLeod aims to 'build some bridges between the world of therapy and the world of qualitative inquiry' and so he has emphasised examples of how researchers have actually done their studies, and what methods they are using and why.

A critical analysis of work by Rennie and others will be useful for those with a philosophic turn of mind, and informative for anyone deciding to use Grounded Theory for their research work. The chapter on the Phenomenological approach introduces Edmund Husserl, Mathematician and professor of Philosophy, and contemporary of Freud, and explains his influence on this

particular research method, which 'is one of the basic tools of Qualitative research'.

One of the themes running through the books is that relatively little qualitative research has been published in the area of counselling and psychotherapy, and is badly needed. New researchers are pointed towards important skills - such as using the findings of previous studies, writing clearly and becoming familiar with examples of qualitative research in other fields, and also using research to show Outcomes - what was the effect of the research on clients having a particular therapy? Therapists considering taping their sessions for research purposes will find transcripts of Conversational analysis and

Narrative Analysis and discussion of the strategies for analysing them.

This book will guide researchers through the whole process and hopefully encourage more Therapists to do research into their work. Some current courses for Counsellors/Psychotherapists include information on research methods and for their students this book would be an ideal back up for Qualitative research in more depth. Those embarking on M.A. theses on Psychotherapy and Counselling issues, whose courses did not include such training, will find a vast amount of information as well as practical advice.

Vivienne Silver-Leigh

Supervision in the helping professions (2nd edition)

Peter Hawkins & Robin Shohet

Open University Press, 2000 £16.99

Many of us have been looking forward to this publication. The first edition appeared in 1989, and went through many reprints in the following years. It was regarded as a humanistic classic. Now here is a new edition, sixty pages longer. Is it better, or just fatter?

There is a new chapter on transcultural supervision, and many other references to working across cultural differences. This is a valuable addition, which will be much appreciated. There is more on ethics, and more on training. The emphasis on the importance of the organization is retained and expanded.

However, the book seems to me to have become much less humanistic. Instead of breathing humanity, as the first edition did, it breathes control. There are copious lists, many distinctions and

definitions and bullet points, truckloads of advice, containers full of technical remarks and questionnaires, but the spirit seems to have evaporated.

In view of the interest I know Peter Hawkins has in the transpersonal, I would have expected there to be at least an acknowledgement of this dimension in supervision, but the word is not even in the index, nor is the name of Petruska Clarkson, who has been responsible for putting this question on the agenda for all therapists.

So for me this is a highly respectable and worthy book, containing material which is of concern to all those engaged in supervision; but just not very humanistic. I was disappointed.

John Rowan