



NEWMALE STUDIES JOURNAL

Volume 4 Issue 1 2015

CLASSICS IN MALE STUDIES

Classes of Evil: How the Totalitarianisms of Marxist Thought Gave Birth to Modern Feminism

Neil Lyndon

5

ARTICLES

Philosophy not Ideology: A Response to Ward Jones and Lindsay Kelland

David Benatar

29

The Effect of Father Involvement in Child Rearing on the Psychological Well-being of Adolescents: Japan and the United States

Taisuke Kume

38



PHOTO FEATURE

membrum virile

Jan H. Andersen

52

MEMOIRS

Young Male Spirituality

Matthew Klem

59

A Memoir: Movement, Breakdown and the Body

Duncan Alldridge

70

BOOK REVIEW

Neil Lyndon, *Sexual Impolitics: Heresies on Sex, Gender and Feminism*

Paul Nathanson

89

NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).



EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor

Miles Groth, PhD, Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology, Wagner College, Staten Island, New York, United States

Executive Board

John Ashfield, PhD, Director, Education and Clinical Practice, Australian Institute of Male Health and Studies, South Australia, Australia

Dennis Gouws, PhD, Associate Professor of English, School of Arts, Sciences and Professional Studies, Springfield College, Springfield, Massachusetts, USA; Lecturer, English Department, University of Connecticut, Storrs, Connecticut, United States

Miles Groth, PhD, Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology, Wagner College, Staten Island, New York, United States

Advisory Board

Gerhard Amendt, PhD, Professor of Gender and Generation Research (Emeritus), founder and Director of the Institute for Gender and Generation Research at the University of Bremen, Bremen, Germany

John Archer, PhD, Professor and Research Coordinator, School of Psychology, University of Central Lancashire, Preston, Lancashire, United Kingdom

Timothy M Baghurst, PhD, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology, Henderson State University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, United States

Roy F. Baumeister, PhD, Professor, Department of Psychology, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL, United States

David Benatar, PhD, Professor of Philosophy and Head of the Philosophy Department at the University of Cape Town, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Pelle Billing, MD, author, commentator, Malmö, Sweden

Christopher Blazina, PhD, Professor of Psychology, Tennessee State University, United States

Jon G. Bradley, PhD, Associate Professor, Faculty of Education, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Dean Carson, PhD, Director of Research and Professor of Rural and Remote Research, Flinders University Rural Clinical School and Poche Centre for Indigenous Health, Australia

Don Dutton, PhD, Professor, Department of Psychology, University of British Columbia Vancouver, B.C., Canada; Adjunct Professor, Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University

Warren Farrell, PhD, Independent Researcher, Mill Valley, CA, United States

Craig Garfield, MD, MAPP, Departments of Pediatrics and Medical Social Science, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, IL, United States

Herb Goldberg, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Psychology, California State University, Los Angeles, United States

Dennis Gosse, PhD, Co-Director Northern Canadian Centre for Research in Education & the Arts (NORCCREA); Associate Professor, Schulich School of Education, Nipissing University, North Bay, Ontario, Canada

Robert Kennedy, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Stephen Koch, author of *The Modern Library Writer's Workshop: A Guide to the Craft of Fiction*, two novels, *Night Watch* and *The Bachelor's Bride*, *Stargazer: The Life, World and Films of Andy Warhol* and *Double Lives*. He is curator of the work of photographer Peter Hujar, United States

Celia Lashlie, BA, Independent Researcher, Auckland, New Zealand

Rafael Locke, PhD, Professor, Department of Perceptual Studies, School of Psychiatry, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, United States



John Macdonald, PhD, Professor of Primary Health Care, School of Biomedical and Health Sciences, University of Western Sydney; Director Men's Health Information & Resource Centre UWS; Visiting Professor of Community and Public Health, Birzeit University, Palestine

Marty McKay, PhD, Clinical Psychologist, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Gary Misan, PhD, Associate Research Professor, University of South Australia, Centre for Rural Health and Community Development; and Adjunct Associate Professor (Research), Spencer Gulf Rural Health School (SGRHS), University of South Australia at Whyalla, South Australia, Australia

Steve Moxon, Independent Researcher and Author, Sheffield, United Kingdom

Paul Nathanson, PhD, Researcher, Department of Religious Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Noel Richardson, PhD, Director, Centre for Men's Health, Institute of Technology, Carlow, Ireland, Chairman of the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, and Board Member of the European Men's Health Forum, Ireland

Andrew Smiler, PhD, author, visiting Assistant Professor, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC. Past President of the Society for the Psychological Study of Men and Masculinity (SPSMM; APA Division 51)

Jeanne Stolzer, PhD, Professor of Child and Adolescent Development at the University of Nebraska- Kearney; Advisory board member for the International Center for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology. Commissioner for the International Citizens Commission on Human Rights

Lionel Tiger, PhD, Charles Darwin Professor of Anthropology (Emeritus), Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey, United States

Katherine Young, PhD, Professor of Religious Studies (Emeritus), McGill University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada

Luigi Zoja, PhD, Independent scholar and author, Milan, Italy, member of the Centro Italiano di Psicologia Analitica

Communities Advisory Board

Greg Andresen, Editor of the Men's Health Australia website and Senior Researcher for the One in Three Campaign supporting male victims of family violence, Australia

Rick Belden, poet and author exploring men's issues, masculine psychology, and recovery from abuse, Austin, TX, United States

Dan Bloom, psychotherapist, fellow and past-president New York Institute for Gestalt Therapy, New York, United States

Mike Buchanan, BSc, Independent Researcher and Author, Bedford, United Kingdom

Joseph Campo, Director, St. Francis House, Brooklyn, New York; Executive Producer, Grassroots Films Inc., New York, United States

Jane Higgins, BSW, MSS, CEO of the Odyssey Program, an Australian national program providing in-school workshops for adolescent boys, Australia

Brian Jenkins, M. Math, Director, International Institute for Family Research, Toronto, ON, Canada

Attila L. Vinczer, Senior Executive, Canadian Maltese Charitable Service Trust; Canadian Director of News and Activism, A Voice for Men; Senior Executive, Canada Court Watch; Author and Journalist; Advocate for the rights of children and families, MHRM; Canadian liaison of NCFM; CEO, Premier Canadian Mint; Human rights, medical, domestic violence, family and criminal law researcher, Newmarket, Ontario, Canada

Assistant to the Editor

K.C. Glover, BA, Independent Researcher, Brooklyn, New York, United States

Classes of Evil: How the Totalitarianisms of Marxist Thought Gave Birth to Modern Feminism

NEIL LYNDON



In Chapter 3 of the author's book No More Sex War, the origin of modern feminism is traced back to Marxism. It is a forensic, literary excavation of the origins of modern feminism buried in the classical prescriptions of the far Left, revealing the extent to which the thinking of 1960s feminists consciously imitated the class analysis of Marx and Engels.

Keywords: feminism, Marxism, far Left, class struggle, patriarchy

Introduction

Neil Lyndon wrote *No More Sex War: The Failures of Feminism* in 1991. It was published by Sinclair-Stevenson in 1992 (ISBN: 1 85619 191 5). The book was, claimed Lyndon, “the world’s first radical critique of feminism from an egalitarian, progressive, non-sexist point of view.”

In November 2014, Lyndon included the whole text of that book in a collection of writing on gender from 1990-2010 with the title *Sexual Impolitics: Heresies on sex, gender and feminism* published on Kindle (http://www.amazon.co.uk/Sexual-Impolitics-Heresies-gender-feminism-ebook/dp/BooPBA6ZRQ/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1415374927&sr=8-5&keywords=neil+lyndon#reader_BooPBA6ZRQ). Even though 22 years had elapsed, Lyndon said it was the first time his book had appeared as he meant it be read “unexpurgated, unbowlerised, uncensored”.

In the Introduction to *Sexual Impolitics*, Lyndon explains:

Shortly before that book was about to be published, I wrote to all the authors and bodies whose works I had quoted to ask permission for their words to be reproduced in my text. This has been a completely normal, conventional courtesy in the serene process of bringing a book to fruition ever since the introduction of copyright laws. It never varies. The author asks permission: the authors and bodies whose permission is requested *grant that permission*. It is automatically understood, without question, that the entire edifice of civilised discussion and debate depends upon mutual respect for freedom of argument and that, therefore, you wouldn’t think of withholding permission to be quoted merely because you might not like the author who is asking for permission or you fear that you might not come out smelling fragrant in the book that is about to be published.

Many authors and bodies observed the convention and granted their permission. Others refused that elementary courtesy. The authors and public bodies that refused permission for their works to be quoted in my book were:

Nell Dunn for *Talking to Women* published by MacGibbon and Kee Ltd

Andrea Dworkin for *Mercy* published by Martin Secker and Warburg

London Rape Crisis Centre for *Sexual Violence: The Reality for Women* published by The Women’s Press

Rosalind Miles for *The Rites of Man* published by Grafton Books

Rosalind Miles and Anne Kelleher for BBC2’s *Fighting Talk*

Kate Millett for *Sexual Politics* published by Virago

Robin Morgan (ed.) for *Sisterhood is Powerful*

My publisher, Christopher Sinclair-Stevenson, and my agent, Michael Thomas, were flabbergasted by these refusals. They said they had never known anything comparable. Between them, they had about 80 years' experience in publishing yet the only precedents they could bring to mind when permission had been refused were in a handful of cases where a literary estate was in dispute. It had never happened in their experience that a living author had been refused.

Germaine Greer who comes in for repeated keel-haulings in *No More Sex War* gave her consent to be quoted without demur and, when she was asked why, she said "Of course I gave permission. I always do. I hate the copyright laws as much as I hate the libel laws for suppressing freedom of expression."

I wrote a note at the end of the Acknowledgements page in *No More Sex War* thanking Greer for this characteristically muscular and trenchant defiance and said "When she's right, she's very right". Without consultation or discussion, Sinclair-Stevenson's editor deleted that line from the book they published. I am happy to repeat it here.

At the very last minute before it was due to go to press, therefore, I had to rewrite the whole manuscript, deleting every quotation and turning it into the third-person. Thus, for instance, instead of reproducing, verbatim, an exchange in *Talking to Women* (a work of *oral* history, please note) between Nell Dunn and Emma Charlton about how a woman might behave when meeting a man (she would flirt but just to appease him, as a way of looking down on him, to keep him in his place), I had to write the whole passage out, without quotes, as reported speech.

This indefensible abuse of civilized convention diminished the authority of my text, interrupted the flow of the narrative and marred the rhythms of the writing. The work to which I had given years of thought and months of intensively careful composition was mutilated. One of the main reasons I am reproducing the text today, as I wrote it, is to ensure that my book will finally - after more than 20 years - be published as I meant it to be read. Therefore, every one of those quotations for which permission was refused appears in full on the following pages.

This time, I haven't asked for permission; and I shall be doing cartwheels of delight if those authors complain and issue legal proceedings for breach of copyright.

See you in court, ladies.

The extract that follows here is the entire text of Chapter Three of *No More Sex War* which carries the sub-title "Classes of Evil." It is a forensic, literary excavation of the origins of modern feminism buried in the classical prescriptions of the far Left, revealing the extent to which the thinking of 1960s feminists consciously imitated the class analysis of Marx and Engels.

In foregoing passages of the book, Lyndon had established that:

1) Boys and men in the west shared systemic social disadvantages and political inequalities which were universally overlooked and neglected (in reproductive and parental rights; in education; in employment; in medical treatment; in retirement and in death).

2) These transparent inequalities were ignored because modern feminism (dating from the late 1960s) had arrogated to women all concern for inequality by gender. The central propositions of feminism on the nature of patriarchy precluded any possibility that men's inequalities might be recognised (how could inequalities exist for an oppressor class?)

3) The very existence of those inequalities, however, actually exploded the concept of patriarchy: our society could not reasonably be described as patriarchal given the existence, in fact, of those disadvantages and inequalities for men.

4) The false doctrine could, therefore, only be sustained through an unremitting barrage of intolerant spite about men - through the media, through advertising, in the deliberations of legislatures and courts - which portrayed men as the enemies of women, seeing them as barbaric, unsociable, promiscuous, feral in their violence and selfishness. The atmosphere of intolerance amounted to an incubus. The first two chapters of *No More Sex War* gave numerous examples of that incubus and argued that it amounted to systemic prejudice against males in our own time.

Lyndon concluded Chapter Two with the questions: "What is the origin of this universal prejudice? Where and why did it get started? And why has it become so powerful?"

How the Totalitarianisms of Marxist Thought Gave Birth to Modern Feminism

For one class to be the liberating class par excellence, it is essential that another class should be openly the oppressing class. — Karl Marx, *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie Einleitung* 1844

People of my generation and of our times adore themselves.

We congratulate ourselves upon our accomplishments, our poise and our understanding. We boast about our incomes ("who'd have believed you could get this rich this quick?" as one said in *The Big Chill*), our educated skills with restaurant menus and with opera house programmes. We know our movies, our records, our books and our way around. We greet each other with the post-HIV hug, loving and enduring, as "survivors". We are old veterans from the trenches, out on the other side of the combat lines, grizzled, wearied but still in one piece; and looking good.

My question to my contemporaries is this: if we are such delightful people - audacious, clever, educated, literate, loving and hip - how have we brought a totalitarian evil into being among us? Can we possibly be as culpably gullible, as vulnerable to authoritarian barbarities as any of those immediate ancestors to whom we thought ourselves so superior by enlightenment and understanding?

I reckon so. The feminist incubus of poisonous intolerance and of totalitarian prejudices which has gathered in the atmosphere between the sexes is our creation. We blew it up, gave it shape and released it. We are responsible for its existence and its effects.

Future generations, I imagine, will be astonished to read their history books in school and see that, in the last quarter of the Twentieth century, a generation in the north-west of the planet, in the richest and most advanced countries of the world, took leave of its educated, liberal-minded wits.

Think what we have done.

Consider the intrinsic claims of the feminist propositions to which we have consented and which we see repeated every day in our popular culture:

- 1) That one half of humanity (men) was inferior, by genetic composition and by natural disposition to the other half
- 2) That the inferior half held the superior half in subjection through the use of economic power and brute force
- 3) And that the superior female half was obliged to fight a war of liberation on class lines to emancipate itself from the oppressions inflicted by men and the patriarchal system they enjoyed and supported.

Reading those paragraphs, feminists and their apologists and fellow-travellers would say that their beliefs had been grotesquely caricatured. Feminism, they would probably say, has developed so far and has taken so many different but connected forms that it cannot be discussed as if it was a single body of belief and attitude which can be reduced to elementary, cardinal propositions. Feminism doesn't speak with one voice^[1], they would say (though you will never hear any individual feminist decline to speak on behalf of feminism on the grounds that her own voice was inadequate to the task).

I have often heard those responses. They always strike me as being evasive, as dodges and fudges, forestalling argument.

If we cannot agree basic terms of definition, we are prevented from arguing further over interpretations: that seems to be part of the purpose of those feminists who refuse to agree that common characteristics, purposes and beliefs can be drawn from all strands and forms of feminism.

They don't want argument.

There are others, of course, men and women, who say that men have no business at all to discuss feminism and its terms. They say that this subject is, by its nature, exclusively women's concern.

Those bastards can get off at the next halt. They are saying that the exclusive right to set the terms of argument - and, indeed, to conduct the argument - about the social and political relations of men and women belongs to a particular group of women who are attached to a set of shared assumptions (which assumptions are supposed to be incontestable). Fuck off.

Despite the evasions, dodges and fudges of the contemporary sisters, there must be connecting characteristics between the various forms and styles of feminism, otherwise they could not be grouped together under that umbrella term and the word “feminism” would have no meaning.

In truth, it isn't at all difficult to find and express a common denominator for all the forms of modern feminism.

Here is my best offer.

The common denominator is the belief that women share interests which are distinct from men's and that those interests can best be advanced by women acting collectively. Surely that much can be agreed? No variety of thought or style of attitude could be termed feminist unless it involved these presumptions.

It is tricky to go further; but the consequent assumption of all feminisms which proceeds from the first point is that women's particular interests are and always have been at odds with the interests of men. Most feminists would go further still and claim that men must and invariably will act collectively in defence of their own interests to resist the claims and the advances of women. It amounts to a universal article of feminist belief that women have had to struggle against a political system organised by and for men to achieve freedoms and rights both as a collectivity and as individuals. Many, possibly most, feminists would claim, as triumphs of this struggle, the changes which have occurred in the position of women in the West, especially their emergence as wage and salary earners in the commercial life of the West. You hear these claims repeated every day, as unquestionable axioms and articles of faith.

Each of these presumptions, I want to argue, is false. They are false in logic, false in their assessments of social change and its consequences, false in the deductions and conclusions to which they lead.

If you take the point of view I am going to advance, the glories of modern feminism transmute into that filthy incubus. If you look my way into the bottom of the feminist approach, rooting out its origins in the social history of the West and in the writings and reflections of modern feminists, you will not find there a set of humane and loving principles discerned with noble intelligence and applied with all the finest distinctions of literacy and judgment, to the advancement of civilisation. What you will discover is a mess of pseudo-Marxist crudities, swirling in a pot of terror, cooking up in an oven of unprecedented social change. You find blind panic disguised as clear-eyed militancy; you find rank selfishness disguised as philanthropy; and you find sophistries of base prejudice disguised as political sophistication. Step this way.

Everybody agrees that modern feminism, as distinct from the feminisms of the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries, took its origins in the New Left of America and Europe in the second half of the Sixties. There is no argument about that.[2]

If you comb through the histories of the feminist movement you will find arguments and shades of opinion on the precise degree of influence of one leftist groupuscule or faction against another. Was the SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) more influential than the Communist Party? Did the Trots or the hippies first seize upon the ideas? Where stood Rosa Luxembourg or the Witch collective?

If questions like that hold a fascination for you, there is much interest to be found in the library stacks of that history. But the questions need not detain us here. We can agree, since there is no dispute, that modern feminism emerged from that New Left which was largely composed of student radicals.

The question of much greater fascination for me - one which I would love to explore in writing both as an account of those times and of my own life — is to ask: why did so many of the concerns, protests and disenchantments of the young take focus during the Sixties in the political philosophies and terms of expression of the Old (Marxist-Leninist) Left?

Why did those CND-ers, Civil Rights' marchers, campus malcontents, anti-war protestors, Sorbonne wall-daubers turn in waves and droves to the political analysis of nineteenth-century philosophers and to a world-view whose most powerful advocates were the corrupt old Stalinists in Swiss suits and Italian shoes who occupied the Kremlin?

Here is a question of profound personal, political and historical interest; and I would love to go into it with all my heart. But, again, it is not a question which advances the purposes of this chapter and this discussion. We can agree that it happened. The fact that it happened is not in question.

I cannot resist making an aside on this point: I believe that the radical young of the Sixties turned to Marx and to the Old Left *faute de mieux*. Ignored and despised by the political establishment of the time, by Harold Wilson and his Cabinet as much as by De Gaulle, Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, there was no place for us within the orthodox system.

The opposition between the young and the rest was so absolute on issues such as the Bomb, the Vietnam war, civil rights and “rock culture” — the two sides being mutually uncomprehending and unaccommodating — that we had no place to go but East and no system of belief by which to recognise and organise ourselves other than the certainties offered by the old uncles Karl and Fred. The only other alternative, it is illuminating to remember, was Islam - a path chosen by many black American revolutionaries but one which was not open to the rest of us.]

The greatest problem of political philosophy for those new adherents of Old Left attitudes was to find a class enemy.

Revolutionary Marxism doesn't make any sense unless the woes and deprivations of groups and classes of individuals can be explained by the operation of the class interests of those who take material and social advantage of them.

Marx himself was thoroughly explicit on this point. Even after 125 years, the clarity of his totalitarian declarations was to exert a gripping influence on the minds of the young Westerners who were groping for some systematic account of their own alienations and discontents.

Marx said, “For one class to represent the whole of society, another class must concentrate in itself all the evils of society, a particular class must embody and represent a general obstacle and limitation. A particular social sphere must be regarded as the *notorious crime* of the whole society, so that emancipation from this sphere appears as a general emancipation. For one class to be the liberating class par excellence, it is essential that another class should be openly the oppressing class” (my italics).

He went on to say “A class must be formed which has radical chains, a class in civil society which is not a class of civil society, a class which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a particular redress because the wrong which is done to it is not a particular wrong but wrong in general.” [Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie Einleitung 1844.]

Here is the origin of class war, that pernicious diagnosis that has poisoned politics and social life in throughout the world for nearly two centuries. Could any formulation be more totalitarian in its classifications? You’re either with us or you’re against us. You’re either part of the problem or you’re part of the solution. All that crude, absolutist, tribal bollocks that has been integral to leftist attitudes and beliefs since the French Revolution.

By a singular account (mine) the entire history of the Marxist Left in the last 150 years can, narrowly, be interpreted as a quest for the identification of these opposing classes - the class, on the one side, which embodied “the notorious crime of the whole society” and which was “openly the oppressing class”; and, on the other side, for the class “which is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal”.

Marx’s original analysis identified these classes in economic terms and he construed the industrial proletariat as being the “class which is the dissolution of all classes”. With less clarity, finality and certainty, he identified the “bourgeoisie” as being the class which embodied the notorious crime.

It is worth looking back briefly on Marx’s own difficulties in applying his approach to his own time: those difficulties had become fatal to the analysis as a whole by the time the young radicals of the 1960s tried to apply it.

Marx identified “three great classes of modern society based on the capitalist mode of production”. They were wage-labourers, capitalists and landowners - the “three great social groups whose components, the individual members, live from wages, profit and rent respectively, that is from the utilization of their labour power, capital and -landed property.”

Marx acknowledged that, even in Victorian England where these “great social groups” were readily visible and broadly distinguishable “intermediate and transitional strata obscure the class boundaries”. The working class, dependent upon wage-labour and lacking possession of any other form of

capital or of land-ownership was, indeed, obvious in its identity. As a class, it truly did comprise the “mass” of the people, both in the cities and in the countryside. The existence of this class and the economic circumstances and limitations its members shared were commonly agreed and accepted by all sorts of observers, analysts and commentators. It was not necessary to be a Marxist to subscribe to that common view.

Beyond that consensus, however, lay perplexing complications of analysis and identification, chiefly in the difficulties of pinning down the economic powers and position of members of the “bourgeoisie” who might, simultaneously, appear to be members of more than one class.

A doctor might have nothing to sell but his labour power; but his circumstances could not readily be matched with those of a factory worker, especially if that worker owned property or had inherited capital.

Members of landowning families might be personally impoverished, might be dependent upon their wage-labour as government officials. Were they to be described as members of the bourgeoisie if they lived in rented property and accumulated no capital to bequeath to their children? How could the peasant farmer or kulak be described as capitalist or landowner when the sum of his possessions and “stored-up labour” amounted to a donkey and a hectare of land?

These “intermediate and transitional strata” did present taxing difficulties for Marxists who were looking for an enemy class to oppose and to vanquish.

Marx had said that the general emancipation of society depended upon “a certain class” which “is felt and recognized as the general representative of society. Its aims and interests must genuinely be the aims and interests of society itself, of which it becomes in fact the social head and heart.” The “certain class” was the industrial proletariat, whose existence everybody could agree. The problem for Marx and his followers who sought practical applications of his theories was to identify and extirpate the enemy class, the embodiment of “the notorious crime”.

That effort was more easily done with conviction than said or written with persuasive plausibility. It gave specious reason to many of the most loathsome and diabolical episodes of savagery in this century. Stalin’s massacre of the kulaks and his forced deportations of millions of his opponents to labour camps and to death were accounted for and rationalised on the grounds that those individuals were members of the enemy class. The same totalitarian logic was given by Mao Tse-Tung to explain and to justify the hounding and murder of professional and semi-professional people in the Cultural Revolution. The same barbaric lines of reasoning were given by the Khmer Rouge when they force-marched the inhabitants of Cambodian cities into their killing fields.

Philosophical distinctions presented no obstacle: the tyrants bludgeoned through the “intermediate and transitional strata” which Marx had acknowledged, hacking and shooting a path of expedience through those complications in truth which blurred distinctions of class and might frustrate the application of Marx’s theory.

By the late 1960s in the West, those complications in truth had become thoroughly disorientating for all would-be followers of Marx. The difficulty now was not simply to identify the enemy class. Still more taxing was the task of naming the class of heroes whose “aims and interests must genuinely be the aims and interests of society itself, of which it becomes in fact the social head and heart.”

The industrial proletariat, so readily identifiable in the nineteenth century, had extensively decomposed by the middle of the twentieth century. High-paid workers who had stored-up capital in freehold property, insurance policies, pension funds and shareholdings could not convincingly be portrayed as members of a class whose deprivations have “a universal character because its sufferings are universal”.

Who, in any case, was the proletarian? A dentist’s receptionist could be said to have her hands on the means of production only in the most remote and negligible senses. Her financial standing would put her closer to the factory worker than the dentist; but should she be described as a member of the factory worker’s class rather than the dentist’s - in whose class she would probably prefer to see herself?

Beyond these complications lay the bewildering changes in the technology of industrial production which had, themselves, obscured divisions of class between workers and managers. In car factories, for instance, it was already happening in the 1960s that foremen and even line-managers were expected to share some of the tasks and all of the working conditions of their subordinates. Meanwhile, traditional heavy industries which employed legions of proletarians were entering a visible decline in output and numbers of employees; and, simultaneously, the industries of media production, financial services and sales were calling for ever greater numbers of highly-qualified workers whose salaries and other forms of remuneration were making them into a new class of capitalists.

How to make sense of it all? How could the old axioms of the whiskery uncles be applied to this baffling variety of change and still emerge as the eternal verities and fixed horizons of political landscape for which the young were yearning?

In the early years of the 1960s, when young people in the West first began to edge Leftwards, the old shibboleths were trotted out anew with, frequently, comical or grotesque results. I remember that when I first came across members of the Young Communist League in Salisbury in 1963, when I became a 16 year-old local official of CND, they tried to tell me, in all solemnity, that the Berlin Wall had been erected to keep out the hordes of starving Westerners who wanted to break into the East. I remember, too, the venomous disapprobation of those comrades when I started stepping out with the glamorous daughter of a local publican. To their way of thinking, they told me, I had made a fatally compromising connection with the bourgeois enemy.

The confusions and ideological strangulations of those hopelessly muddled Wiltshire youngsters came out of grander difficulties of abstract thought which were also occupying the minds of bigger thinkers across the West. Herbert Marcuse was one of the first political philosophers of the time to recognise that modern Marxism must respond to an imperative need and adjust its class perspectives.

Marcuse, Ernest Mandel and others argued that, following the disintegration of an industrial proletariat and the blurring of other classical lines of distinction, a new class had to be identified which should be the “class which is the dissolution of all classes”. New skins were needed for the old whine.

Marcuse and Mandel saw the promise of this new class in the immense body of students in institutions of higher learning all across the West. In the second half of the Sixties, many of the more florid and unconvincing effusions of campus radicals took their diction and their style of reasoning from Marcuse’s vision.

The idea that the London School of Economics and other centres of learning might become “Red Foci”, in the style of Maoist and Cuban guerrillas proceeded from Marcuse’s apothegms. It may have been a potty notion but, at least, it was grand in vision and grandiloquent in expression. The least noble effort to apply this style of thought came, to my mind, when Cambridge contemporaries of mine declared that it was a revolutionary act to complain about the quality of the food they were served in their dining-halls.

While the Marxist bottle of theories with its Marcusian cork was bobbing around more or less harmlessly on the seas of student radicalism, it was also lifted as a Molotov cocktail in a far more dramatic theatre of the political world.

Around 1966-7, led by Stokeley Carmichael and Eldridge Cleaver, the idea first got put about that a class division existed between blacks and whites in America, giving rise, in theory, to a revolutionary prospectus in the headquarters of capitalism and at the centre of the liberal world.

Here, for sure, was a potent and compelling application of the old paint. “The notorious crime of the whole society” of the United States was, in lurid and incontestable shades, the second-class citizenship of coloured peoples. The segregations of blacks and the denial of their political rights, the scale of their poverty and extent of their deprivations made a perfect picture for political enlargement. For a brief moment in 1967-8, it was easy to see the blacks as the Black Panthers wished to describe them, as “a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal”. The snag, as ever in this approach, was to find and define the villain. Which class of individuals in the United States could be named as being “openly the oppressing class”? Who was to blame? Who was the enemy?

The enemy, came the answer, is within our selves, not merely a limb of the body politic but an essential component of our very own being. The enemy is “white culture” and whites are, by birth, agents of that culture. It followed that the enemy, honky reader, is your self. Thus spake Eldridge Cleaver and Huey Newton, LeRoi Jones and, to some degree, James Baldwin.

The Black Power movement of the later Sixties was the first overtly Marxist movement of the modern West to express the claim that an ineradicable evil could inhere to groups of individuals who had nothing in common but their birth. Seizing the bludgeons and cleavers of totalitarianism, they carved their way through the problem of “transitional strata” in the enemy class by saying that it didn’t matter what you thought, said or did as an individual: if you were born white you were, ir-

redeemably and unalterably, a member of the oppressor class. You were, by your birth and existence, guilty of the notorious crime and, it followed in the mind of Eldridge Cleaver and some others, any black might revenge himself for that general ill by assaulting you individually.

It was - need it be said? - a monstrous and wicked perversion, an insidious, corrupting and pernicious falsification and falsehood.

Nonetheless and to the eternal shame and disgrace of the nincompoop generation of love and peace, the falsification was enthusiastically accepted: the perversion was given place; it took hold and, with consequences which have done much to spoil our lives and to inhibit our powers, it held.

It is a puzzle now, 25 years later [1991], to account for the impact of that Black Power casuistry, to explain the instantaneous collapse of liberal principle and desire among the white Westerners who endorsed that totalitarian hokum. Why was it found to be so compelling among young liberals who had devoted their energies and their passions to the elimination of disadvantages for blacks and of the brutal and hateful prejudice with which they were surrounded? Why were those educated young whites so willing to declare themselves guilty? Why were they so eager to see themselves as the enemy?

These are, again, questions which contain the most absorbing interest to my mind; but they are, I regret, off the chart of this book and its purposes. If you know the history of that period, you must agree that the Black Power propositions were advanced and were embraced. If that history has passed you by and if you want to check it out, you will find hundreds of books and documents which give its records. You might like, for instance, to look at the writings of Carl Oglesby, Angela Davis and Dotson Rader. Look, especially, at Tom Wolfe's essay "Radical Chic: That Party at Lenny's".

As briefly as I can, I want to offer the suggestion that young whites were eager to see themselves as the enemy because the proposition drew and set the limits on an accessible and comprehensible political universe. Part of the appeal of the Black Power sophistry lay in its implicit claim, soon to be extracted and paraded on placards, that the political realities of the outer world could be discerned in the inner life of the individual and in his or her personal relationships with others.

That outer world was infinitely unmanageable, implacably impervious to protest and to reason. The universally shared feelings and desires of the young were, visibly, held in contempt. It simply did not make any difference to, for instance, the conduct of the war in Vietnam how many hundreds of thousands of the young demonstrated their opposition in the capital cities of the West. Argument over the manufacture and deployment of nuclear weapons made not a jot of difference to the policies which decreed their manufacture and deployment.

In the shining city on the hill of Western democracy, Presidents and presidential candidates were being rubbed out in the most suspicious circumstances, suggesting conspiracy conducted at the highest levels of government, and those murders were being hosed away from public attention from a faucet of official bullshit and lies.

In these aspects of political life and in all others, the young had no power at all to influence the counsels of the elders. They were ignored. It is enormously revealing to see, for instance, that the condensed edition of Richard Crossman's diaries of the deliberations of Harold Wilson's Cabinets 1964-70 record, throughout that period of massive disaffections among the young, only one brief discussion of unrest in British universities. That discussion took place in March 1970 and the Cabinet agreed that Vice-Chancellors should be stiffened by government support in their duty to root out troublemakers.

In retrospect, it is astounding that Labour politicians who prided themselves, above all, on their management of dissent in the party should have been so blind to the consequences for their own party of a mass defection of their own natural supporters among the educated young. But that's how it was, both in Britain and elsewhere. We know that Lyndon Johnson was thoroughly mystified by the militancy and the passions of the young Americans (mostly natural Democrats) who bellowed their opposition to the war in Vietnam over the garden rails of the White House. We know that he and De Gaulle were able to comprehend those passions and the demonstrations they ignited only as evidence that a Red plot was being spread throughout the West. Otherwise, the young made simply no sense to their leaders.

The cardinal tenets of Black Power made the outer world comprehensible, if not manageable, within personal and domestic life. When the Panthers said that their objective was "bringing the war back home", they offered young whites a prospectus of political action within a theatre where their powers were visible and from which they could not be excluded: the family and its psychological life.

The slogan "the personal is political" is broadly assumed, these days, to have been invented by modern feminists, by whom it has certainly been appropriated (see Rosalind Miles above). It was not so. The slogan was drawn from Black Power apothegms which described the origins and the intrinsic powers of racialism within the psychological and family lives of white Americans.

The Panthers set off a spark of unreason which instantaneously caught fire across boundaries of sense and across cultures. It was on the lips of Berlin students at the barricades and it was current among the Parisian Situationists of 1968 some moments before "the notorious crime" committed against women as a whole was identified.

The first time I heard a young radical express the idea that it would be a revolutionary act (and, therefore, in accordance with a desirable theory) to kill your own parents was in October 1968 in Cambridge.

The speaker was a boy, the son of a powerful senior executive in the advertising company J. Walter Thompson. He and a group of his friends were pleased to call themselves The Bash Street Kids. Under the influence of a lot of LSD and other psychotropic drugs, their political interests and concerns had reduced to the aching vibrations within a bursting cranium. Since the "personal was political" it followed that "it's all inside your head, man."

Madness lay that way: we gaily tripped out along the path, declaring en route that madness itself was the only sane response to an insane world.

Gripping as they were, the analytical propositions of Black Power were limited by the special conditions and circumstances of blacks. Those conditions could not convincingly be represented - however hard the imagination of the radical young tried to see them as such - as “a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal”. The sufferings of the blacks were - at length it had to be admitted — particular to themselves rather than universal to the whole of “bourgeois society”. Blacks were excluded, segregated, refused admission to the institutions of state and to all but the most menial and slavish work. We - the young whites - were not. It may have been fun to see ourselves through the clouds of ganja and the thump of soul sharing the universal conditions of the blacks; but it had to be recognised (not least because they told us so) that their particular deprivations and ills were their own special inheritance.

Given this limitation and prohibition, the bogus diktats of old Uncle Karl were discarded on the wayside of American society so far as the plight of the coloured peoples was concerned. Anyhow, the radical young had discovered a much more exciting use and focus for those rusty old blunderbusses.

They were immediately picked up, dusted off and redirected, with infinitely greater power and conviction, as the philosophical and analytical tools and weapons of the Women’s Liberation movement.

In *Sexual Politics*, first published in 1969, Kate Millett[3] wrote: ” In America, recent events have forced us to acknowledge at last that the relationship between the races is indeed a political one which involves the general control of one collectivity, defined by birth, over another collectivity, also defined by birth. Groups who rule by birthright are fast disappearing, yet there remains one ancient and universal scheme for the domination of one birth group by another - the scheme that prevails in the area of sex. The study of racism has convinced us that a truly political state of affairs operates between the races to perpetuate a series of oppressive circumstances. The subordinated group has inadequate redress through existing political institutions, and is deterred thereby from organizing into conventional political struggle and opposition. Quite in the same manner, a disinterested examination of our system of sexual relationships must point out that the situation between the sexes now, and throughout history, is a case of that phenomenon Max Weber described as *herrschaft*, a relationship of dominance and subordination. What goes largely unexamined, often unacknowledged (yet is institutionalised nonetheless) in our social order, is the birthright priority whereby males rule females. Through this system a most ingenious form of ‘interior colonization’ has been achieved.

It is one which tends moreover to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring. However muted its present appearance may be, sexual dominion obtains nevertheless as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power.”

This statement can be taken as the *locus classicus* of modern feminism. It confirms what I have been trying to argue and to show: that the presumptions of the New Left as to the circumstances of blacks jumped the rails and were applied, as articles of canon law, to the circumstances of women.

The long wander of the Marxist Left through the institutions and societies of the modern West, in search of the class which would be the head and heart of society, the class which would be the dissolution of all classes, had culminated in the definition of “the birthright whereby males rule females”. The lost tribe had found its Israel and its new Moses. The totalitarian classifications of the old nineteenth-century big beards had, with a vengeance, come back to roost at home, in the bosom of the family. Karl, meet Kate: Kate, this is Karl: you two were meant for each other.

Kate Millett’s diction, in this passage, is unmistakably that of a Marxian of the old school. To speak of “a disinterested examination of our system of sexual relationship” is to employ the rhetorical devices of doctrinaire Marxists in all generations (Who says the examination is “disinterested”? How do we know that there is “a system of sexual relationship”? On who’s say-so are we to take these terms for granted?)

The last sentences of the passage contain an almost eerily accurate reflection of Marx’s original prescription. He had called for the formation of a class which could be “a sphere of society which has a universal character because its sufferings are universal, and which does not claim a particular redress because the wrong which is done to it is not a particular wrong but wrong in general.”

Millett answers this call with “a most ingenious form of ‘interior colonization’ ...more rigorous than class stratification” and one which supplies “perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power.”

The essential articles of Kate Millett’s opinions swept the Western world. Nothing in our time matches the speed and breadth of the intellectual movement she initiated. Never in our lifetime has a prescriptive analysis - composed in pseudo-academic terms for the sake of a doctoral thesis - caught fire so ferociously in the minds of a general public across international and continental frontiers. Within months after publication of *Sexual Politics*, Millett’s point of view and her specific terms had entered the *lingua franca* of a host of writers in America and Europe and had been accepted, as commonplaces of conversation and observation, by the vast horde of malcontented young radicals across the West.

Heaps of examples can be given of this spread of universal assumptions. My table, at this moment, is supporting 13 texts from that period which overflow on every page with the presumption that Kate Millett and the women she inspired had identified a classical and eternal verity and a dynamic point of departure for a revolutionary prospectus. Let me put my hands on a few of them, just to sketch that scene. In her 1969 essay “On American Feminism”, Shulamith Firestone described the aim of the new feminism as being “Overthrow of the oldest, most rigid caste/class system in existence, the class system based on sex — a system consolidated over thousands of years, lending the archetypal male and female roles an undeserved legitimacy and seeming permanence.” She also spoke of the new feminism as being the “dawn of a long struggle to break free from the oppressive power structures set up by nature and reinforced by man.”

In 1970, in the compilation *Sisterhood is Powerful*, Roxanne Dunbar contributed an essay called “Female Liberation as the basis for social revolution”.

Her first words were:

The present female liberation movement must be viewed within the context of international social revolution and within the context of the long struggle by women for nominal legal rights.

She went on to say: “Black people in America and Vietnamese people have exposed the basic weakness of the system of white, Western dominance which we live under...Black Americans and Vietnamese have taught, most importantly, that there is a distinction between the consciousness of the oppressor and the consciousness of the oppressed.”

In 1969, Margaret Benston contributed to *Monthly Review* an article called “The Political Economy of Women’s Liberation”. She wrote:

The ‘woman question’ is generally ignored in analyses of the class structure of society. This is so because, on the one hand, classes are generally defined by their relation to the means of production and, on the other hand, women are not supposed to have any unique relation to the means of production...In arguing that the roots of the secondary status of women are in fact economic, it can be shown that women as a group do indeed have a definite relation to the means of production and that this is different from that of men...If this special relation of women to production is accepted, the analysis of the situation of women fits naturally into a class analysis of society.

To complete this set of darts, let’s turn to that trusty old quiver, that repository of all that is most contemptibly ego-serving, malignant, posturing and false in the canons of modern feminism, the thoughts and words of Dr Greer.

In her Summary, which was the prelude to *The Female Eunuch* (first published in 1970) Germaine Greer predicted that “the most telling criticisms” [of her work] will come from my sisters of the left, the Maoists, the Trots, the IS [International Socialists], the SDS, because of my fantasy that it might be possible to leap the steps of revolution and arrive somehow at liberty and communism without strategy or revolutionary discipline. But if women are the true proletariat, the truly oppressed majority, the revolution can only be drawn nearer by their withdrawal of support for the capitalist system.”

Ah, Dr Greer: the Lord love you; where should we have been without you? Yours is the Gibraltar of cant from which we can take our bearings to steer through the straits of this argument.

If it is true that “women are the true proletariat, the truly oppressed majority” then all the nightmare excesses, the poisonous hostilities and vicious aggressions of the last 20 years may be excused, even if they cannot be fully justified. Self-evidently the victims of oppression, especially if they are in the majority, cannot be expected to act kindly towards their oppressors, to show tolerance, restraint and goodwill. If their distinct and justifiable interests are thwarted by a class of oppressors who employ totalitarian means to continue and sustain their power, who can object if the oppressed

revolt violently in the advancement of their interests? The sympathies of all right-thinking people must, incontestably and by the rules of natural justice, lie with the oppressed.

In the oft-quoted words of Robin Morgan (editor of *Sisterhood is Powerful* and *Ms Magazine*): “I feel that “man-hating” is an honorable and viable political act, that the oppressed have a right to class-hatred against the class that is oppressing them.”

But what if - let the question germinate - what if it is not true that women are the proletariat? What are we to make of those violent effusions, those hectoring marching songs and rallying cries, if - give way to the doubt - it may not be true that women are the truly oppressed majority? Never were; never have been; never could be? Then what?

Let's inch our way towards those questions. This is a perilous course of navigation, heavily mined with fiendish, submerged devices. The clearest way through to an open Atlantic of argument is to keep your right eye on that Gibraltar of doctoral cant and your left eye on the sure contours of that list of disadvantages which I assembled in the Prologue. Remember, always, that we have seen that institutionalised disadvantages for men are widespread in the formal patterns of domestic and family life in Britain. We have agreed - have we not? - that a society which includes such disadvantages cannot be named a patriarchy. Now let's train our sights on the enemy at hand, while steering for the distant but clear horizon.

In the paragraphs of *Sexual Politics* which follow immediately after her identification of the *herrschaft* between men and women, Kate Millett gave the particular context for that general relationship. An order of sexual dominion obtains, she said: “. . . because our society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political office and finance - in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police - is entirely in male hands. As the essence of politics is power, such realizations cannot fail to carry impact.”

We may agree that the essence of politics is power. Sure. We may not disagree for an instant that, at the time when Millett was writing and still, largely, today “every avenue of power...is in male hands”. No contest. The point of argument and division arrives in the last words of the paragraph. What is and should be the impact of those realizations? Do they truly mean what they mean in Millett's mind - that our society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy?

“Patriarchal government”, Millett tells us, is “the institution whereby that half of the population which is female is controlled by that half which is male”. The institution (is it that?) operates, she says, on two principles: “Male shall dominate female, elder male shall dominate younger”. These points add up to the depiction of a system of control and of oppression which is purposeful, willed, deliberate and intentionally inflicted by males upon females .

According to Millett and to all of the disciples who have followed her down the decades, the direction of every avenue of power was and - to the extent that it remains - is in male hands because that's the way men wish, choose, require and compel our societies to take their shape and exercise their powers.

“Patriarchy” thus became “the notorious crime” prescribed by Marx. Throughout all the writings of the early New Left feminists, emancipation from the sphere of patriarchy, to borrow Marx’s terms again, was represented as a means to bring about a general emancipation.

Germaine Greer was always characteristically emphatic and concise on this general perspective and the specific terms of antagonism it involved. “If women liberate themselves,” she wrote, “they will perforce liberate their oppressors”. In a number of places throughout her writings in the early Seventies, she openly declared war. “Men are the enemy” she said on page 297 of *The Female Eunuch*. “Men are the enemy,” she wrote again in an essay published in February 1970. “They know it — at least they know that there is a sex war on, an unusually cold one.” The justification for this belligerence was held, *per se*, to be the existence of patriarchy. A syllogism of the most brutal (and one may say, anti-Marxist, anti-historical) illogic was the *casus belli* and gave shape to the rules of engagement.

If all power was in the hands of males it must follow that males had chosen to exert those powers over women: therefore it followed, further, that women were obliged to wage war against men and their system of power in order to obtain for themselves their due and just share of powers both political and economic.

The war of liberation to obtain those powers would, necessarily, involve the defeat of the oppressive system and a general emancipation.

The presumption that men chose to operate a system of powers which excluded and took advantage of women is the common coin of modern feminism. It is, in fact, the *sine qua non* of the movement which has been, beyond compare, the most influential and demanding force in our times. The presumption can be seen to run beneath the entire literary landscape of modern feminism. It stretches from Eva Figes and her book *Patriarchal Attitudes* (published in 1970) to Naomi Wolfe and her book *The Beauty Myth* (published in 1990). It leads from the measured, pseudo-scientific terms of Juliet Mitchell in her late-1960s writings in the *New Left Review* to the spit-flecked ravings of the gauleiter Julie Burchill in her journalistic columns today. It is the common denominator of the psychotic denunciations of Valerie Solanas in *The SCUM Manifesto* (published 1968) and of the self-contented vanities of Kate Saunders in her book *Revenge* (published 1990).

Throughout all those writings - and, I suggest, in all the casual and conversational terms by which men are universally described and derided today - runs the presumption that a political system of “patriarchy” is conducted as an elective conspiracy of men for the purposes of sustaining their own powers.

What, the reader must ask, is wrong with the idea?

Self-evidently, women have never, until the present day, been admitted as equals - either in numbers or in powers - in the institutions of modern societies. Even today, it is obvious that women who seek advancement in those institutions face considerable difficulties (I shall want to consider them).

It is beyond argument or dispute to say that all post-nomadic societies have confined women in one form or another of domestic ghetto, usually without material rewards or rights. Nobody can deny - why should they want to? - that in all Western societies down to the present age, political and economic powers, honours and distinctions, titles, perks and pride of ownership have been the sole property of men.

What, then, is the argument? Where is the dispute? If all those points can be so readily conceded, it must appear that the feminist case wins by a walkover. We agree that men have had power and that women have had none. If that division of powers does not describe a patriarchy, what on earth is it?

It is not a patriarchy.

Remember, always: IT IS NOT A PATRIARCHY

The presumptions of Kate Millett and her cohort run along a fault of logic and a rift of sense as wide, deep and potentially destructive as the San Andreas fault. A tremor of scepticism will touch it off and then the citadels of dogma erected by the feminist orthodoxy all along the way may slide into a Pacific of impassive history.

Let me apply the first gentle touch by asking what might have made the post-war generation of women so special that they were able to discern and to vanquish a universal system of oppression to which hundreds of millions of their forebears, in all ages and generations, had submitted? What made them so clever and their sisters through all eternity so dumb?

This is not an original question. It has occupied the minds of many feminist writers and they have produced screeds of answers. One of their answers is to say that women had never, before the post-war era, been educated in great numbers in universities and other institutes of higher learning. Women, goes this answer, had been denied the intellectual apparatus and the tools of analysis by which they might comprehend the wider workings and the true nature of their particular and individual oppressions. This answer seems to imply that you've got to have a post-graduate degree in sociology to realise when you're being screwed.

Another answer, sometimes given by the same people who advance the first explanation, is that women, in all ages, did resist the oppressions of patriarchy but the history of that resistance has been, until lately, kept secret.

In its efforts to establish and to vindicate that history of struggle, the women's movement has created an entire industry of scholarship, both in publishing and in academia. Across the Western world, all the Centres of Women's Studies that have come into being have taken their *raison d'être* from the claim that women had a particular history of their own which women themselves should be entitled to explore and to expand on their own terms.

I want to tear into that specious claim in detail in later pages but, for the moment, let me say that even if it were true that women's particular consciousness and their special history of rebellion had been suppressed by patriarchal powers, it is still rather peculiar that women in all ages down to the nineteenth century should have done so little to protest about or, in organised movements, to

resist those oppressive powers. I mean, 5000 years is quite a long stretch of suffering under the notorious crime without it being universally acknowledged and resisted, wouldn't you say? What, I ask again, was so special about Western women in the Sixties? What was the difference between them and all their ancestors in all times? Allowing for the smart-aleckry of the previous teasings, let me ask this question in all seriousness.

Was there, in the lives of women before 1965, any simple reason - natural, given, intrinsic to their lives and independent of the operations of political institutions - why they could not participate in public life on equal terms with men? Kindly ask yourself further: what changes occurred in the lives of women in the West in the years 1965-70 to remove any obstacle which had previously prevented or inhibited their emergence into public and commercial life on equal terms with men?

Answers: 1. The Pill and 2. Abortion by dilation and vacuum curettage.

The reason why men had all the powers and women had none in all Western societies until the late nineteenth century was that women could not, with any degree of certainty other than by total abstention, control their fertility.

The reason why women were enabled, in the mid-1960s, to emerge from the confinements of their domestic ghetto was that, at precisely that date and for the first time in all of human history, women were provided with a technology which gave them infallible control over their fertility.

What the feminists chose to call "patriarchy" was, in all its expressions (including romantic love and men's systems of clubs and honours) nothing more than a set of social relations and conventions which arose from, expressed and refined a division between men and women which was, until the 1960s, essential, natural and ineradicable. Yes, it did happen that a culture emerged from that division in which the powers of men were celebrated, in which they were widely believed to be superior, in which women and children were defined by law and custom as the property of men. Yes, indeed.

But the reason was not, essentially and primarily, that men invented that culture to suit themselves and to keep women down. The reason was that if women were to have babies, if the tribe was to reproduce, a system of concessions was required which allowed for the cardinal uncertainties of women to know when they might become pregnant and for how many years they might be suckling infants. Marriage, itself, was instituted as one such concession (see the marriage ceremony in the *Book of Common Prayer*).

I will argue, throughout the remainder of this book, that all the social institutions and conventions which had defined the relative positions and roles of men and women had been determined by that cardinal uncertainty. Unless they were unmarried or wholly chaste within marriage, individual women could not be admitted to social life outside the family on equal terms with men.

This wasn't a matter of choice: it simply wasn't possible.

Societies, I will say, had been so extensively organised to accommodate those concessions and the particular needs of pregnant and suckling women that the opportunities they afforded women for activity in the society beyond the family - even for those women who were chaste - were, necessarily, limited and few in number. Until the introduction of abortion techniques by the safe, quick and barely fallible method of dilation and vacuum curettage, pregnant women had never been able to determine, without risk to their lives, whether or not they would carry a baby to term. This incapacity, again, ruled women out for admission to forms of social life outside the family on equal terms with men. I will argue that the introduction of this technology and of the technology of contraception were essential to the labour requirements of modern market economies and that they were falsely, perversely perceived as a vital weapon of liberation in the “sex war” women were required to wage against patriarchy.

The introduction of these inventions and technological innovations marked a division in human affairs which was without precedent. The few years, less than half a decade, in which they became freely available to a broad public throughout the West were a watershed in history more dynamic and divisive than the invention of the Spinning Jenny or the introduction of the steam engine. Those brief years were a moment of history more directly influential in the lives of all individuals than the moment when the geniuses of Los Alamos exploded their first device of nuclear fission. Nothing which went before, in determining the circumstances of women and the general state of relations between men and women need, necessarily, be true for those future circumstances and relations after the introduction of infallible contraception and safe and quick abortion.

The introduction of the pill and of safe abortion has, it goes without saying, occupied a great deal of attention from feminists and has been the subject of much argument and disagreement. Even so, it is very striking that the historical importance of these inventions has not been considered among the central propositions of feminism.

No feminist author, as far as I know, has taken the view that it was the contraceptive revolution rather than the consciousness of women, charged with militancy, which changed everything.. On the contrary, those inventions have been seen as side-issues.

Parts of Betty Friedan’s book *The Feminine Mystique* were first published in magazines in 1963 and the book emerged as a whole in immediately following years. By that time, the existence of the Pill was well-known, even though it was not yet seen as an invention which would rapidly transform all personal and social relations between men and women and would confound, disrupt or overturn all the expectations, traditions and conventions by which they had been accustomed to see themselves and each other. Yet the word “contraception” does not appear anywhere in the index of *The Feminine Mystique*. “Planned Parenthood” gets one entry, in the first pages of the first chapter (where the author muses over the sudden increase in births in America in the Fifties). “Birth Control”, similarly, appears once only; and that in the Epilogue, which was not written and published until 1973.

Betty Friedan takes it as axiomatic that women have “a right” to demand effective contraception and easy abortion. She speaks, as many of her successors were to speak, as if the facilities of contraception and abortion might be withheld from women as ways of keeping them in their place and might only be prised from the ungenerous society by women wielding the crowbars of their feminist consciousness. In other words, Friedan implies that the impetus towards change for women came from the desires of women, rising as a collectivity, rather than - as I see it - that those desires and, indeed, that rising were initiated and facilitated by the technology, without which they could not exist.

Friedan says:

“Society had to be restructured so that women, who happen to be the people who give birth, could make a human, responsible choice whether or not - and when - to have children and not be barred thereby from participating in society in their own right.” This passage thrums with presumptions which I shall want to question further (such as “why would anybody think that having a job equals ‘participating in society in their own right?’”); but I am interested, for the moment, solely in Friedan’s view that “society had to be restructured”, through the provision of contraceptive and abortion technology, to afford women that right.

This is the established view of the feminist orthodoxy, that women had to battle to get the benefits of the contraceptive revolution as an intrinsic, but not fundamental, element of their general war of liberation. It was, in their book, a small pocket of conflict on the long front line of emancipation. As Sheila Rowbotham put it, in her history of feminism entitled *The Past is Before Us* (published 1989):

“In the course of the struggle for the freedom to separate sexuality from giving birth, the abortion campaign involved challenging laws and the structures and practices of medicine, technology and science.”

Of all feminist authors and commentators, only Shulamith Firestone and Juliet Mitchell (so far as I know) took the view that the contraceptive revolution, in and of itself, fundamentally altered the position of women.

Sheila Rowbotham herself quoted from Juliet Mitchell’s 1966 article “Women: The Longest Revolution”, where Mitchell had said: “Once childbearing becomes totally voluntary, its significance is fundamentally altered...The fact of overwhelming importance is that easily available contraception threatens to dissociate sexual from reproductive experience - which all contemporary bourgeois ideology tries to make inseparable, as the *raison d’être* of the family.”

Sheila Rowbotham wrote a line of commentary upon these views which I take to be the prevailing feminist opinion. She said, “In practice, the development of contraceptive technology was to be less transformative than Juliet Mitchell envisaged.”

Well, I suppose it depends what you call transformative.

Whatever that word may mean, I think it must apply to the development of that contraceptive technology as it arrived in the 1960s.

What would we have thought if we had been told in the 1950s, while we were still young, that, an invention would be introduced which allowed any woman to have sex with any man she chose without risk of pregnancy? What would we have thought if we had realised that this invention led automatically to the possibility that women could go to work on equal terms with men and that men could take equal responsibility and power in the home? How would we have viewed the future if it had struck us that this invention made redundant all the laws and taboos, the conventions and the courtliness by which all societies had tried to ensure that the father of a woman's child should recognise the child as his own? All the wooing, the yearning and the romance; all the paraphernalia of infatuation, the promises, the pinning and the ringing? All the particular confinements of women, the ring-fences of convention which secured them in sexless suburbia - their hobbling shoes, their hairdos and their nail-paintings - all blown away? All the guilt and shame and public approbrium which went with a premature loss of virginity or an enthusiastic taste for adultery - all irrelevant, pointless, unnecessary, gone for good and forever?

I think we might have called those visions "transformative".

If we had known it was coming, would we have been happy to know that ours would be the generation to whom it would fall to see and implement that profound, traumatising, unprecedented transformation?

Or might we have been daunted just a little, wishing that this could happen to somebody else instead, that we might just hold up these changes for a while, deny their "transformative" powers at least until the hormonal riotings of our own youth had quietened down a little?

It fell, of course, chiefly to women to bear this weight of change: not all women; just a very big group. Women who were over the age of 40 in 1965 were largely exempted from the changes which were just about to break upon the world. Women born after 1970 would enter a world which had already adjusted very broadly to the convulsive changes which had occurred.

But there was a particular class of women, born around the time of the Second World War, who were caught slap-bang in the middle of the seachange. Their unavoidable, historic task and responsibility was to negotiate personal and social change on a scale that no women in the entire history of human beings had ever had to face.

No wonder a lot of them funk'd it. No wonder they tried to erect an ideological Berlin Wall which would restrain and deny change. No wonder they created an hysterical dogma to keep men in their place and women in theirs, even while it was advanced as a prospectus for revolutionary change by which individuals might be released from the imprisonment of sexual stereotypes.

The people who were to compose and advance this contradictory ideology had already shown themselves capable of believing anything, no matter how nonsensical it might be. Among them, in fact and in truth, were those young nitwits from Salisbury who, a decade before, had told me that the Berlin Wall was erected to keep out the hordes of Westerners who were clamouring to get into the socialist dream state. Now, erecting their own wall and parading their banners upon it, they were going to say that reaction was change, that the tyranny of sexual stereotyping (the one they chose to approve) was emancipation and that hate was love.

Orwell might have called it *Sisterspeak*.

Endnotes

[1] That was meant to be “voice”. The mis-typing is purely fortuitous

[2] Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* both date from earlier years but the words “Women’s Liberation” had not been uttered before the rise of the radical student movement; and the word “feminism” had slipped out of use altogether since the 1930s. Both Friedan and De Beauvoir had been Stalinist Marxists.

[3] Another former Stalinist Marxist



Neil Lyndon is the author of *No More Sex War: The Failures of Feminism* and the recently published *Sexual Impolitics: Heresies on sex, gender and feminism*. He can be reached at neil.lyndon@btinternet.com.

NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).

Philosophy not Ideology: A Response to Ward Jones and Lindsay Kelland

DAVID BENATAR



David Benatar responds to a review of his book, The Second Sexism, that appeared in Hypatia Reviews Online. In the final endnote he explains why the response appears here rather than in Hypatia and reveals that one of the authors of the review has subsequently apologized for the ad hominem attacks it included.

Keywords: sexism, feminism, philosophy, gender, men, males

Ward Jones and Lindsay Kelland's review¹ of *The Second Sexism*², is the nastiest academic review of this book yet to be published³. Its shortcomings suggest that its authors are so wrapped up in the orthodoxies of a particular conception of feminism that they are unable to see the arguments that challenge their deep-seated assumptions.

They raise a series of objections that were considered and responded to in the book, yet with rare exceptions, they are content simply to reiterate those objections without actually engaging my responses to them, let alone even mentioning that I have provided responses. Readers of their review who have not read the book, especially those who share their assumptions, will thus wonder how silly I must be not to have considered those arguments. It is a neat rhetorical flourish, but it is not philosophy.

I cannot reiterate here all the careful, detailed arguments of the book. However, I shall discuss a number of ways in which the reviewers have bypassed rather than actually engaged my arguments.

“Patriarchy”

Professor Jones and Dr. Kelland do not deny that men and boys suffer some forms of disadvantage, although their review suggests that there are only three (main) examples – conscription, criminal (non-sexual) violence and corporal punishment. They ignore numerous other examples of significant disadvantage I provide. In this way they mislead their readers about the full extent of what I call the “second sexism”.

They claim that none of the examples of disadvantage are instances of a second sexism. Instead, they claim, these are all ways in which patriarchy harms men – all examples of “men hurting themselves in the process of hurting women”.

The central problem with this argument is that it assumes rather than argues for an explanatory paradigm – patriarchy (which they describe as “the broad and pervasive attempt by men to control the lives of women and girls”). Those in the grip of current academic orthodoxies will no doubt be happy with that assumption. The job of the philosopher, however, is to step back and question assumptions.

The reviewers have not considered the possibility that patriarchy (as understood above) may be one, but not the only important manifestation of a higher-level phenomenon – gender role expectations. Such role expectations could explain both patriarchy and serious forms of discrimination against men, many of the latter having nothing to do with men attempting to control the lives of women and girls. On this view, the problem is that people are expected to conform to gender roles and that this disadvantages both females and males (although, as I explicitly say in the book, not always to the same extent).

Perhaps the reviewers, in response, will want to suggest that we have no need to postulate a higher explanatory level. They might insist that gender roles are themselves a feature of patriarchy. However, if that were the case, then we would expect that the harms men suffer would diminish as discrimination against women and girls erodes. If men's suffering is a product of their control of women's

lives, then men should suffer less as patriarchy weakens and they lose control over women's lives.

Yet we find that the female gender role has, in some places, broken down considerably without a comparable weakening of the male gender role in those same places. This can be explained, on my view, by observing that the male gender role (and its associated disadvantages) has proved much more stubborn than the female gender role. It is not so readily explained by the patriarchy hypothesis.

There is plenty evidence that male disadvantage often does not decline as female disadvantage withers. Women acquired the vote without then being forcibly sent into battle, as men often are. When societies began sending girls to school they (usually) did not start beating them there the way they did the boys. Women have entered professions previously dominated by males without males entering historically female professions to anything like the same extent. In some cases the position of men even becomes worse as patriarchy declines. When western societies were more patriarchal, men automatically gained custody of their children following divorce. However, as discrimination against women declined, the cards became stacked against a man getting custody of his children.

On this note it is curious that the reviewers draw no distinction – as I do in *The Second Sexism* – between the varying degrees to which women and girls suffer discrimination in different societies. The reviewers see only “patriarchy”. They do not seem to see a difference between Australia and Afghanistan or between Sweden and Somalia. If these are all “patriarchies” then “patriarchy” must be a very thin concept indeed, and accordingly a much less helpful one than the reviewers assume.

This is not to deny that women in Australia and Sweden suffer some forms of discrimination. Instead it is to say that we cannot meaningfully equate the degree of discrimination women experience in those two countries with the degree of discrimination they suffer in Afghanistan and Somalia.

These differences suggest that even if, contrary to what I suggested above, patriarchy *does* explain the origin of gender role expectations, it could be that male gender role expectations have survived the withering of patriarchy. In that case, too, much discrimination against men is not – or, at least, no longer is – a byproduct of men harming women.

Thus it simply will not do to keep trotting out the claim that patriarchy is the explanation not only for all discrimination against women but also for any social disadvantages that men suffer. It may be a widespread assumption in the academy but it would not be the first time that academics have succumbed to dogma.

The reviewers have to contort themselves to make their case that all forms of male social disadvantage are merely instances of “men hurting themselves in the process of hurting women”. About corporal punishment, for example, which is disproportionately (and, in some places, only) inflicted on males, we are told that, given societal assumptions, “the default state—appropriate and effective physical punishment—is applied to men and boys, whereas the patriarchal belief in women's need to be protected exempts them from such punishment.”

Here we are being told that the beating of men and boys is actually part of the way in which men control women and that that female immunity from floggings is a manifestation of discrimination

against women and girls. This strains credulity. Patriarchal men could very effectively control women without beating other men and small boys. They could do so by denying that corporal punishment is the “default state”. That corporal punishment has been – and in many places continues to be – the default state (for males), has nothing to do with the control of women. It has lots to do with (sexist) ideas about the acceptability of treating males roughly.

Moreover, the reviewers ignore that most *domestic* physical punishment of children, disproportionately boys, is inflicted by *mothers* not fathers⁴. Thus we are being asked to believe that women hitting boys is one way in which “men hurt themselves in the process of hurting women”. Only those firmly in the grip of an ideological commitment could believe this sort of drivel⁵.

Perhaps the reviewers will claim that these mothers have simply internalized the views of patriarchy. But this only deepens the impression that the “patriarchy” hypothesis is an unfalsifiable one. Any disadvantage women suffer is, we are told, the product of patriarchy, but so is any disadvantage men suffer. No evidence that is brought against this hypothesis causes those who believe it to revise their views. Are we really to believe that these all-powerful males are unable to maintain their purported control without inflicting all these harms on other males?⁶

Professor Jones and Dr. Kelland exhibit a deep moral insensitivity when they say that we really need not be very concerned, or concerned at all, about the harms that men suffer. Their analogy is this:

If we come across one person unjustifiably hurting another, it is not clear that we should be much, or at all, concerned by the fact that the perpetrator is getting blisters on his hand in the process.

This assumes that (most of) the harms men suffer are the byproduct of harms they inflict on women. Yet this is an assumption against which I have argued⁷. Their insensitive claim makes another mistaken assumption, namely that men are an indivisible unit. The reality is that some men are harming *other* men and we should be no less concerned about male victims just because those harming them belong to the same sex⁸.

The reviewers at least acknowledge that I have made this point. They say that I am

eager to point out that in most cases, the discrimination ... will be a discrimination against certain men (“plebian males”) by other men (“alpha males”).

However, they say that I do not “notice the obvious implication of this claim, namely that we are no longer talking about gender discrimination, but about something like *class* or *race* discrimination.”

There are two problems here. First, I did not say that *most cases* of discrimination against males are cases of discrimination by “alpha males” against “plebian males”. Instead I suggested that there are some such cases.

Second, and more important, the implication that the reviewers allege is not an implication at all. I was quite explicit that just as discrimination against women can intersect with discrimination on the basis of class and race, so discrimination against men can have such intersections. The presence of an intersection does not mean that sex discrimination is not at play⁹. The reviewers see fit to ignore the argument about intersection rather than to engage it.

False attributions

The reviewers falsely attribute certain views to me. For example they ascribe to me the view that some instances of discrimination against men are (quoting them) “to be explained by the widespread belief that men are less valuable than women”. They call this a “jaw-droppingly daft suggestion”.

What really causes the jaw to drop is the sloppiness with which these reviewers represent my claim. I never claimed that there is a “belief that men are less valuable than women”. Instead I claimed – and here I am using my words – that “male *life* is *often* believed to be less valuable than female life”¹⁰. Immediately following this I said:

I do not mean by this that *every* society unequivocally values male lives less than female lives. This cannot be true, because there are some societies in which female infants are killed precisely because they are female. However, even in many such societies, the lives of adult males seem to be valued less than those of adult females.¹¹

My actual claim, which is much more nuanced than the one attributed to me, was defended with abundant evidence, none of which the reviewers mention or dispute.

Trivialization

In a number of places the reviewers trivialize my argument. For instance, they say that some of my “examples of men’s disadvantages—for example, that in most public toilets there are no stalls between urinals, that men’s contraceptive choices are limited to vasectomies and condoms can be set aside as insignificant (and silly)”.

The trivialization effect is achieved by taking these examples out of context. The first was a (minor) example I appended to a long discussion of how male bodily privacy is taken less seriously than female bodily privacy. The main example I considered was cross-gender supervision in prisons¹². The courts have been much more sympathetic to female complainants than to male ones, even when male bodily privacy has been egregiously violated by female guards.

The second example was part of a broader discussion about asymmetrical control over the acquisition of parental responsibility. It was thus not merely about how many methods of contraception men have available to them.

Feminists point to dozens of *relatively* trivial examples of sexism – different connotations to the words “bachelor” and “spinster”, for example, or the use of the male pronoun to refer to somebody of indeterminate sex. Presumably those feminists do not think that those examples are “insignificant and silly” – and would be outraged if they were so described. The invasions of male bodily privacy in prisons and the lesser control men have over acquiring parental responsibilities are *at least* as weighty as these. Moreover, when female bodily privacy is invaded and when women have less control over whether they acquire parental responsibilities, feminists rightly object. It would show some even-handedness if similar concern could be extended to males.

Special pleading

The reviewers engage in much special pleading. Some examples are implicit above, but there is another when they say that “service in the military—conscripted or not—has long been associated not with feelings of shame or hardship, but with feelings of pride, duty, honor, valor, and courage.”

The reviewers elsewhere noted that women often internalize social expectations of them. Yet, here the reviewers ignore the possibility that all the talk about “pride, duty, honor, valor, and courage” may be ways of getting men to internalize society’s expectations of them or is a manifestation of men’s having internalized those expectations.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that even these attempts to have men assume the very serious burdens of battle fail in those many cases in which conscription is resorted to. The unwillingly conscripted men are much more interested in their freedom, their health and their lives. When they are enlisted and sent into battle against their wills they are victims. When similar treatment is not inflicted on women, the victimization is also on the grounds of men’s being male.

Finally, child-bearing and child-rearing are also prized and yet that correctly has not stopped feminists from claiming that women should not be socially or legally pressured into these roles.

More suppressed objections

In addition to the examples I have provided above, there are other cases in which the reviewers ignore responses I actually offered. For example, they say that “for the most part, men are not the targets of violence *as men*”. I gave arguments to show that they actually are often targeted *as men*. These included evidence from the laboratory, showing that both men and women are more inclined to inflict violence on males than on females. It also included many real life examples where men were targeted as men. I was careful to say that this is not always the case³, but I showed that it often is.

In response to my claim that there are “stronger social norms discouraging violence against women”¹⁴, the reviewers say that this “claim is outright contradicted by global rape statistics”.

First, in the place they cite, I was speaking about *non-sexual* violence rather than sexual violence. In any event, I never denied that women are raped, nor that the great majority of rape victims are female.

I explicitly stated that they are¹⁵. The issue is how society responds to rape¹⁶. There are, of course, many places, where it is not taken sufficiently seriously or the response is to condemn the victim¹⁷.

Consider, however, the different attitudes in liberal democracies towards rape of women and towards violence against men. Condemning rape elicits no controversy. However, speaking up for male victims (*qua* male victims), elicits the sort of indignation these reviewers of my book have vented. Consider the annual campaign of sixteen days of activism against violence against women and children. When I suggested (in the popular press in 2012) that we should *also* be concerned about the many male victims, some people were outraged¹⁸.

This, along with other evidence suggests that there are stronger social norms discouraging violence against women. Violence is inflicted on both females and males but the strength of the norms against this violence is asymmetrical.

Ad hominem conclusions

Professor Jones and Dr. Kelland seem to think (or to have thought¹⁹) that *ad hominem* comments are made acceptable by preceding them with the disclaimer that such comments “must be chosen with careful consideration”. They say that in the face of “such weak arguments” as those they have attributed to me, some “personal questions” about me are raised. They then pronounce that I am “motivated less by a concern for men than ... with attacking feminism” and that the *Second Sexism* strikes them “as the work of a man who is nothing short of *jealous* of the attention that feminists give women”.

Their amateur psychologizing is dead wrong, but I doubt that they will put any store on my assurances. Thus I shall appeal to basic academic decency, which requires them to employ the “principle of charity” in interpreting what people say.

What I said in the book was that I endorse feminism’s attention to discrimination against women, but that the commitments of egalitarian feminism require those – myself included – who espouse this view, *also* to give attention to the second sexism. I am critical of feminism insofar as it fails to follow the logic of egalitarianism and instead becomes a partisan advancement of female interests. None of the arguments in the book are inconsistent with these views and thus the most charitable and reasonable reading of me is at odds with their mean-spirited one.

Finally, in contemporary academic circles the *ad hominem* argument that they level has a rhetorical force that a comparable *ad feminam* argument would not have. Impugning the motives of a female who is concerned about discrimination against women would (today) backfire in a way in which impugning the motives of a male who is *also* concerned about discrimination against males does not. Accordingly, my reviewers are part of the very problem I describe. In dismissing the second sexism, they attempt to block the first step to countering it, namely recognizing that it exists. They may think that is a very “progressive” position, but it is not²⁰.

Endnotes

¹Ward Jones and Lindsay Kelland, Review of *The Second Sexism: Discrimination Against Men and Boys*, in *Hypatia Reviews Online*, 2013. (<http://hypatiaphilosophy.org/HRO/reviews/content/174>).

²David Benatar, *The Second Sexism: Discrimination Against Men and Boys*, Malden MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

³Fortunately there have also been a number of reasonable reviews. Links to the various reviews can be found here: <http://www.philosophy.uct.ac.za/philosophy/staff/benatar/selectedbooks/secondsexism>

⁴Many feminists are quick to observe that the explanation of this is that women's gender role thrusts them disproportionately into the child caring role. However, like so many other arguments, I addressed this one in *The Second Sexism* (p. 244).

⁵It does not end here. The reviewers say that it "is telling that Benatar never considers the possibility that women and girls are being discriminated against by the *noncorporal* punishment that they, but not the men and boys, receive." This is an instance of the "inversion" strategy that I discuss in *The Second Sexism* (pp. 174-194). Pause, for a moment, and imagine a world in which girls were routinely beaten, including for such "transgressions" as making spelling mistakes or being "offside" in a sports match, but that boys were exempt. Would Professor Jones and Dr. Kelland really consider it a reasonable possibility that it was the boys rather than the girls in that world who were being discriminated against?

⁶For more see, for example, *The Second Sexism*, pp. 183, 194-199.

⁷*The Second Sexism*, pp. 194-199.

⁸*The Second Sexism*, pp. 123-124.

⁹*The Second Sexism*, pp. 195-196, 251.

¹⁰*The Second Sexism*, p. 78. Emphases not in the original.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*The Second Sexism*, pp. 54-56, 142-152.

¹³*The Second Sexism*, p. 127.

¹⁴*The Second Sexism*, p. 125.

¹⁵*The Second Sexism*, p. 36.

¹⁶Similarly, the fact that there are many murders does not mean there are not strong social norms discouraging murder.

¹⁷I show that there are similar problems when the victims of sexual assault are males.

¹⁸For more details see: <http://www.philosophy.uct.ac.za/philosophy/staff/benatar/debates/victims>

¹⁹Dr. Kelland has subsequently apologized for this component of the review. See the note below.

²⁰This response was written in December 2013 and posted online (<http://www.philosophy.uct.ac.za/philosophy/staff/benatar/selectedbooks/secondsexism>). In August 2014, Dr. Kelland courageously issued a public apology (http://www.philosophy.uct.ac.za/sites/default/files/image_tool/images/160/Lindsay%20Kelland%27s%20apology.pdf) for the *ad hominem* attacks against me, although she reaffirmed her commitment to the other aspects of the review. Her co-author of the review, Ward Jones, has issued no such apology, and the review remains online in the form it was originally published. In

December 2014, I approached *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, to ask whether they publish responses to (their) book reviews. The editor replied promptly and pleasantly, indicating that they do not. While I understand such a policy, it has an unfortunate upshot. Because *Hypatia* is unlikely to publish reviews that are as hostile to *orthodox* feminist books (and the authors of those books) as Ward Jones and Lindsay Kelland's review was to *The Second Sexism*, the policy of not publishing responses to reviews has a differential impact. It also means that *Hypatia* readers are unlikely to read helpful correctives to the excesses of the orthodox views likely to be found in that journal. I am pleased that my response is to be published in *New Male Studies* and I hope that at least some *Hypatia* readers find their way here.

David Benatar is professor of philosophy and head of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Cape Town in Cape Town, South Africa.

NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).

The Effect of Father Involvement in Childcare on the Psychological Well-being of Adolescents: A Cross-Cultural Study

TAISUKE KUME



This study examines the relationship between the retrospective perception of father involvement in childcare, sometimes after divorce, and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress in adults. Participants included 244 and 205 university students in the United States and Japan, respectively; they were asked to reflect on their relationship with their fathers. Results indicated that there were statistically significant positive correlations between father involvement and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and lower perceived stress in the United States; furthermore, there were statistically significant positive correlations between father involvement and life satisfaction in Japan. It was determined that

a high frequency of paternal contact after divorce resulted in higher levels of self-esteem and life satisfaction. Further studies would benefit from classifying the gender of children and examining more data on the variation in the frequency of paternal contact after divorce.

Keywords: fathers, childcare, divorce, self-esteem, life satisfaction, Japan

This study examines father involvement in childcare and its effect on children's psychological development once they reach adolescence. In Western countries like the United States, Europe, and Scandinavia, a father's involvement in childcare is still less typical than a mother's, although it is commonly accepted, since many women work outside the home and have careers. Thus, the study of father involvement in childcare has inevitably appeared in psychological literature. Many studies prove that father involvement with children has a positive effect on a child's development and that a father and mother's involvement are equally significant. These studies focus on gender-effect differences; for example, can a father provide just as effective childcare as a mother? Other studies emphasize father nurturance and how the father's affection is equal to the mother's; overall, they show that father involvement had a positive effect on both children and the spouse. The father's relationship with the child, however, is far less studied than the mother's relationship with her offspring (Lamb, 2000). Moreover, cross-cultural studies are limited, as are studies of young adults; therefore, this study seeks to explore an area where knowledge is lacking.

When measuring father involvement, it is difficult to define what it consists of and when it is done (Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1985). Many previous studies measured children under the age of 16, and most studied children of 4–12 years of age (Lamb, 2000). At such an age it is difficult to procure an accurate reply from the study subjects; therefore, fathers or mothers often reported the children's psychological condition. Studies of these ages are, needless to say, significant, but to produce a more accurate measurement, more longitudinal studies are needed, as children grow into adolescence, adulthood, and middle age. In studies of these older ages, the subjects answered questions on their mental condition and their subjective feelings about how their fathers were involved in their childhood (Finley & Schwartz, 2004). The weaknesses in these studies include the impossibility of accurately measuring childcare provided by the father, but if the adult studies are placed side by side with the childhood studies, a more accurate effect of father involvement through a person's lifetime will be revealed (Allgood et al., 2008).

There are some similarities in family dynamics in Japan and Western countries. As more Japanese women began working full-time, the need for father involvement in childcare increased. In 2006, the childcare organization NPO, Fathering Japan established a partnership with The Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (NPO Fathering Japan, 2011). This organization's purpose was to educate and enlighten citizens on father involvement with newborns and children under the age of 12 years. This movement was first created to help women in careers and raise interest in childhood development. While it is necessary to investigate children's psychological development as it is affected by the father's involvement in childcare, the psychological studies focusing on Japanese adolescent subjects and their fathers are very few. While cultural differences between Western countries and Asia exist, the effect of father involvement exists in all cultures and must be demonstrated. Certainly, psychology is rooted in biology, and therefore, such studies are sure to pertain to any culture or country.

Given the current research and research need, this study's intent is to (1) reinforce the evidence that basic father involvement has an effect on the psychological well-being of adolescent children; (2) provide evidence of how father involvement affected the subsequent psychological well-being of Japanese adolescents who were children during a divorce; and (3) provide a cross-cultural comparison of father involvement and its effects in the United States and Japan.

History of Measuring Father Involvement

Many studies suggest that a father's involvement in the childcare of an infant creates a positive effect on the child and even on the father and mother. When given the opportunities to express affection to their children, men become more expressive and gentle in their relationships with other people as well. The earlier on a father is involved in childcare, the more attached the children will remain in later childhood. Furthermore, if childcare starts at an early age, the father's involvement tends to persist later on (Parke, 1996). The play style of an infant is often different when interacting with the father and mother, and father's play is more often physical. Pederson and Robson (1969) found that in addition to the frequency of the father's caretaking, the intensity of the play interactions between father and infant is important for forming infant-father attachment.

Another effect of a father's involvement is in social relationship ability. In one laboratory study, one-year-old infants whose fathers were very involved in their care showed less stress when left alone with a stranger than those not involved with their fathers. The less frequently fathers bathed and dressed their infants at home, the longer the infants cried when left alone with a stranger (Kotelchuck, 1976). If the primary caretaker is the father, the infant is happier.

According to one study (Doherty, Kouneski, & Erickson, 1998), there are three dimensions in father involvement: engagement, responsibility, and accessibility. Engagement is the extent to which a father experiences direct contact and shared interactions with his children in the context of caretaking, play, or leisure. Availability is defined as a father's presence or accessibility to the child, and responsibility is the extent to which a father arranges for resources to be available to the child, including organizing and planning children's lives (Lamb, Pleck, & Levine, 1985). However, the study did not assess how children and fathers develop a positive relationship.

Finley and Schwartz (2004) developed two measuring scales; the Nurturant Fathering Scale and the Father Involvement Scale, which are completed from a child's or an adult's retrospective point of view. The Nurturant Fathering Scale assesses the effective quality of fathering that a young adolescent perceived while growing up. The Father Involvement Scale assesses the extent to which young adults perceived their fathers to have been involved in different domains of their lives during childhood and adolescence. This study obtained high internal consistency estimates for both the Father Involvement Scale, including both the reported and desired involvement subscales, and the Nurturant Fathering Scale. The factor structure of the Father Involvement Scale was expressive, instrumental, and mentoring, which was consistent with Parsons and Bales' instrumental and socio-emotional dimensions of fathering and family life.

Allgood, Beckert, and Peterson (2012), in studying adult daughters' psychological well-being in relation to their relationship with their fathers, found that retrospective perceptions of their father's active involvement in their childcare was positively correlated with female adolescents' psychological well-being. The retrospective perceptions of father involvement and nurturant fathering had a strong positive correlation to self-esteem and a moderately positive correlation to life satisfaction; there was, however, no significant correlation to psychological distress. The data in this research were of great value in proving the positive effect of a father's involvement in childcare. Before this research on father involvement and father nurturance by Finley and Schwartz (2004), research on father involvement in childcare used children as subjects. The children's psychological status in those studies was determined by children themselves or their parents. Moreover, the question of the degree of father involvement tended to be answered by the parents. The retrospective fathering research, however, was more precise in obtaining data on the effects of fathering. The methodology used in this study will also be helpful to us in conducting our future research because it is easier to obtain larger samples of adolescents than of children. As has already been said, we can gain more exact introspective psychological conditions from adolescents than from children.

Father Involvement after Divorce

Several studies indicate that, as opposed to adults who grew up in intact families, adolescents who grow up in a divorced family have lower psychological well-being, a lower education level, and less satisfaction about their own marriage, with a higher tendency for divorce and behavior problems (Amato & Keith, 1991; Amato, 1994, 2001). Moreover, children whose parents chose joint custody and joint parenting after a divorce became better adjusted to their new divorced lifestyle, when compared to having one alienated parent. Amato (1991, 1993, 2001) suggests that a parental attitude of cooperation and financial support of the child make for better social adjustment of the child.

Wallerstein's 25-year study (1989; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee 2000) traced subjects who had experienced parental divorce and examined the adjustment-related contact with the separated parent. Wallerstein's research found that subjects who had consistent contact with the separated parent after a divorce could most easily adjust to the new life after divorce and experience better psychological conditions overall (Wallerstein & Kelly, 1980; Wallerstein, 1985; Wallerstein & Blakeslee, 1989; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee, 2000).

In contrast, a lack of contact with the separated parent can lead to lower self-esteem, problems of social adjustment, a lack of trust, depression, drug or alcohol problems, repetition of divorce, and parental alienation in the next generation (Baker, 2007). The children who did not have contact with the separated parent had a high tendency to divorce in their own marriages. Moreover, they had more of a tendency to feel alienated from their own children than those who had contact with both parents after divorce. This study (Baker, 2007) found that limiting contact with the separated parent after divorce had negative effects on the child's ability to socially adjust and negatively affected their psychological health and well-being. This finding is important in supporting father involvement after divorce and has great value in proving that the act of parental alienation can be harmful to a child's well-being. Baker (2007) explains features of parental alienation such as bad-mouthing, limiting contact, withdrawal of love, telling the child that the targeted parent does not love him or her, forcing the child to choose between parents, creating the impression that the targeted parent is dangerous, confiding in the child, limiting mention and photographs of the targeted parent, and limiting contact with or belittling extended family.

Bauserman's (2002) comparison of joint custody with sole custody, using meta-analysis, states that children in joint physical or legal custody were better adjusted than children in sole custody settings. However, there was no difference between joint custody families and intact families. Through this research, more positive adjustment, such as general adjustment, family relationships, self-esteem, emotional and behavioral adjustment, and divorce-specific adjustment were found in joint-custody children.

Aoki's research (2011) showed that parent-child contact after divorce has positive effects on adolescents' psychological health. The research evidence further suggests that an absence of contact with the father after divorce was associated with a lack of intimacy on the object-relations scale for young adults and lower self-esteem for adolescents. There was no significant difference in the degree of insufficiency on intimacy and self-esteem when comparing adolescent subjects who had continuing contact with their fathers after divorce and those with an intact family. These results illustrate that contact with both parents after a divorce is important for children and suggests that supporting a consistent visitation and joint custody system is also needed for society.

Research Design

The purpose of this study was to prove that there is a relationship between the father's child-care levels and the retrospective perception an adolescent has of their subjective well-being. The hypotheses of this study were as follows:

There is a positive correlation between American adolescent retrospective perceptions of nurturant fathering in childhood and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress.

There is a positive correlation between Japanese adolescent retrospective perceptions of nurturant fathering in childhood and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress.

Among American subjects there is a positive correlation between retrospective perceptions of father involvement in childhood during adolescence and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress.

Among Japanese subjects there is a positive correlation between retrospective perceptions of father

involvement in childhood during adolescence and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress.

There is a positive correlation between the frequency of contact with a father after parental divorce and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress.

Method

Subjects

The subjects of this study were 244 university students in a Midwestern university in the United States and 205 university students at a university in Japan. American students were selected at random at all levels (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students); 142 students were female and 102 were male, and all were between the ages of 18 and 29, with a mean of 24.69 (SD= 9.36). The response rate was 20%. Almost all the participants were Caucasian (58.7%). Participants with divorced parents were 20.5%.

In the Japanese sample, there were 134 male students and 71 female students, recruited in a social security class. Response rate was 90%. Ages were between 18 and 22, with a mean of 18.86 (SD=.91). The students were all at freshman or sophomore levels. All of the participants were Asian (100%). Participants with divorced parents were 6.3%.

Procedure

The survey in the United States was administered on the Internet by qualtrics. This survey obtained permission by an institutional review board (IRB) in college, and used 1,000 e-mail addresses of students. The response period was one month. The questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete. For Japanese participants, the same questionnaire survey was conducted on paper. This was necessary because the Internet survey was not expected to have a good response rate. The survey was taken in one large social security class and had a duration of approximately 20 minutes. In both countries the researcher informed participants to "Please remember your childhood relationships with parents and answer honestly." In addition, the questionnaire emphasized that, for the purpose of the study, father must refer to biological father, but not stepfather.

Measurement

The Nurturant Father Scale measured participants' retrospective relationship with their fathers. It consists of nine items, each rated on a five-point scale. No items are reversed. Possible scores on this measurement range from nine to 45. This Nurturant Fathering Scale produced a single factor. A sample item from this scale was "How much do you think your father *enjoyed* being a father?"

The Father Involvement Scale measured retrospective adolescent and adult children's perception of their fathers' involvement. This scale consists of 20 items, which are lists of fathering domains. For each fathering domain, participants were asked to indicate the following: (a) how involved their fathers were in their lives and (b) how involved they wanted their fathers to have been, relative to how involved their fathers actually were. Both questions were rated one to five. No items were reversed. Possible scores range from 20 to 100. A sample from this scale is "Intellectual development."

The reported father involvement items produced three factors and subscales: Expressive Involvement, Instrumental Involvement, and Mentoring/Advising Involvement. The desired father involvement items produced two factors and subscales: Expressed Desired Involvement and Instrumental Desired Involvement.

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) comprises 10 questions measuring global self-esteem. Questions are answered on a four-point Likert-type scale. Four items are reversed. The Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .85; that variable is consistent and appropriately high (Crandall, 1973). This scale is very popular for assessing self-esteem. This scale consists of a single factor. A sample item from this scale is "I feel that I have a number of good qualities."

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985) measures psychological life satisfaction of participants according to five items. No items are reversed. The question is answered on a seven-point Likert-type scale. Possible scores range from five to 35. This scale produced a single factor. A sample item from this scale is "In most ways my life is close to my ideal."

The Perceived Stress Scale measures participants' perceived stress by asking whether their lives seemed to be unpredictable, uncontrollable, or overloaded. Cohen et al. (1983) developed the original 14-item English version. The Perceived Stress Scale is also available in two shortened versions of 10 items (PSS-10) and four items (PSS-4; Cohen & Williamson, 1988). This study used PSS-10. This scale consists of six negative and four positive questions. Each item is rated one to five. Possible scores on the measurement are 10 to 50. PSS produced two factors (Positive subscale, Negative subscale). This scale has several different language versions, including Japanese. A sample item is "In the last month, how often did you feel upset by something happening unexpectedly?"

Results

Hypothesis 1

An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare self-esteem in high-nurturant and low-nurturant fathering conditions in the United States. There was a significant difference in the scores for high-nurturant ($M=17.52$, $SD=5.15$) and low-nurturant fathering ($M=19.7$, $SD=6.07$); $t(226)=2.56$, $p=0.11$, $p < .05$. These results suggest that nurturant fathering had an effect on self-esteem in the United States and that American adolescent students who had positive retrospective perceptions of nurturant fathering also had increased self-esteem. When the test was used to compare life satisfaction in high-nurturant and low-nurturant fathering conditions, it showed a significant difference in the scores for high-nurturant ($M=12.11$, $SD=5.57$) and low-nurturant fathering ($M=16.78$, $SD=7.20$); $t(66.35)=4.23$, $p=0.00$, $p < 0.01$. These results suggest that nurturant fathering does have an effect on life satisfaction in the United States and that when American adolescent students had positive retrospective perceptions of nurturant fathering, their life satisfaction increased.

When it came to perceived stress, the t-test showed a significant difference in the scores for high-nurturant ($M=25.86$, $SD=6.90$) and low-nurturant fathering ($M=29.10$, $SD=7.55$); $t(227)=2.89$, $p=0.004$, $p < 0.01$. These results suggest that nurturant fathering had an effect on perceived stress in

the United States and that when American adolescent students had positive retrospective perceptions of nurturant fathering, their perceived stress decreased.

Hypothesis 2

An independent samples t-test compared self-esteem in high-nurturant and low-nurturant fathering conditions in Japan and found no significant difference in the scores for high-nurturant (M=26.05, SD=4.29) and low-nurturant fathering (M=26.32, SD=5.16); $t(195)=-.33$, $p=.743$ n.s. These results suggest that nurturant fathering did not have an effect on self-esteem in Japan. The t-test for life satisfaction showed a significant difference in the scores for those with high-nurturant (M=18.20, SD=5.91) and low-nurturant fathers (M=21.54, SD=7.03); $t(48.39)=2.68$, $p=.010$ $p<.05$. These results suggest that nurturant fathering did affect life satisfaction in Japan and that when Japanese adolescent students had a positive retrospective perception of nurturant fathering, their life satisfaction increased.

The t-test measure for perceived stress showed no significant difference in the scores for high-nurturant fathering (M=30.52, SD=3.94) and low-nurturant fathering (M=31.05, SD=4.33); $t(196)=-.735$, $p=.501$ n.s. Thus, nurturant fathering did not have an effect on perceived stress in Japan.

Hypothesis 3

The t-test for self-esteem in high father involvement and low father involvement conditions in the United States showed significant differences in the scores for high-involvement (M=17.62, SD=5.12) and low-involvement (M=20.26, SD=6.23); $t(206)=2.95$, $p=.004$. Father involvement had an effect on self-esteem in the United States, and American adolescent students who had positive retrospective perceptions of their fathers' involvement had increased self-esteem.

The t-test comparing life satisfaction for high (M=12.12, SD=5.55) and low (M=17, SD=7.70); $t(58.97)=4$, $p=.000$ $p<.01$ father involvement showed that father involvement had an effect on life satisfaction in the United States, and that when American adolescent students had a positive retrospective perception of father involvement, their life satisfaction increased.

When the t-test compared perceived stress in high and low father involvement conditions in the United States, it showed significant differences in the scores for high father involvement (M=25.85, SD=6.99) and low father involvement (M=30.20, SD=7.42; $t(206)=3.68$, $p=.000$). These results show that when American adolescent students had positive retrospective perceptions of father involvement, their perceived stress decreased.

Hypothesis 4

The t-test measuring self-esteem in high and low father-involvement conditions in Japan showed no significant differences in the scores (M=25.71, SD=4.05 for low involvement and M=26.82, SD=4.89 for high involvement; $t(193)=1.74$, $p=.084$ n.s.). Thus, father involvement did not have an effect on self-esteem in Japan. The t-test conducted for life satisfaction showed a significant difference in the scores for high (M=17.87, SD=6.17) and low father involvement (M=20.2, SD=6.15); $t(194)=2.59$, $p=.010$. These results suggest that father involvement does have an effect on life satisfaction in Japan, and that Japanese adolescent students who had positive retrospective perceptions of father involve-

ment had increased life satisfaction.

The t-test comparing perceived stress in high and low father-involvement conditions in Japan showed no significant difference in the scores for high father involvement ($M=30.35$, $SD=3.68$) and low father involvement ($M=31.04$, $SD=4.453$); $t(195)=1.18$, $p=.241$. These results suggest that father involvement does not have an effect on perceived stress in Japan.

Hypothesis 5

Finally, the t-test for self-esteem related to high/low frequency of contact with the father after divorce showed a significant difference in the scores for high frequency ($M=16.63$, $SD=5.47$) and low frequency of contact with a father after divorce ($M=21.82$, $SD=6.55$); $t(34)=2.59$, $p=.014$. Adolescent students who had a high frequency of contact with their father after parental divorce had increased self-esteem. With regard to the correlation of life satisfaction to the same measure, a significant difference in the scores for high frequency of contact with a father after divorce ($M=12.58$, $SD=5.60$) and low frequency of contact with a father after divorce ($M=19.72$, $SD=7.27$); $t(35)=3.36$, $p=.002$ $p<.01$ was found. Specifically, the results suggest that when adolescent students had a high frequency of contact with their fathers after parental divorce, their life satisfaction increased.

When comparing perceived stress in high/low frequency of contact with a father after divorce, there was no significant difference in the scores for high frequency of contact ($M=28.31$, $SD=7.10$) and low frequency of contact ($M=29.12$, $SD=8.63$); $t(34)=-.306$, $p=.762$ n.s. These results show that frequency of contact with a father after divorce did not have an effect on perceived stress.

Discussion

This section presents a discussion of the results along with conclusions and implications for further research.

Hypothesis 1

The results of this research supported the first hypothesis that a positive correlation would be found between the retrospective perceptions of nurturant fathering in childhood during adolescence and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress in the United States. Subjects who scored high on nurturant fathering had higher self-esteem and life satisfaction and lower perceived stress. These results show that the theories of father involvement and closeness in childhood had a positive effect on self-esteem, which is supported by the research of Michael Lamb (1997), Scott (2008), and others. These studies prove that father childcare is important for healthy psychological development. In the United States, a father's involvement in childcare is more common than in Asian countries, and many fathers have more knowledge about effective childcare. Therefore, more fathers in the United States can positively affect their children's psychological conditions.

Hypothesis 2

The research did not fully support the second hypothesis that there would be a positive correlation between retrospective perceptions of nurturant fathering in childhood during adolescence and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress in Japan. A positive correlation was found for

life satisfaction, but not for self-esteem and perceived stress. Perhaps there is no relationship between nurturant fathering and self-esteem in Japan because female students' self-esteem is lower on average, whether father nurturance is high or low. These scores are largely lower compared to those of Japanese male students and American students of both sexes. This may have influenced the average score in Japan and contributed to the findings of no significant relationship between nurturant fathering and self-esteem.

Life satisfaction was positively correlated with nurturant fathering. This has been previously shown in studies of Western countries, but these findings show that similar results can be obtained in Asian countries. The reason that perceived stress was not significantly affected by father nurturance may be due to the fact that Japanese fathers do not generally take an active role in childcare. Japanese fathers do not have the knowledge or education about effective childcare. Moreover, they did not have role models of fathering, and traditional role models are still a strong influence in society. In addition, Japanese subjects who participated in this survey did not know as much about fathering compared to their American counterparts; hence, they may have exaggerated their retrospective perceptions of father involvement; that is, if a father's involvement in childcare is small but existent, people in Japan may perceive it as larger than it is, in comparison to Western perceptions of the same level of involvement.

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 was supported, and a positive correlation was found between retrospective perceptions of father involvement in childhood during adolescence and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress in the United States. These results support preceding research (Scott; Lamb). Scott's study showed that female adolescent retrospective father involvement correlated with positive self-esteem, life satisfaction, and stress, and our research shows that male adolescents may have similar experiences. Our results suggest that in the United States, a father's childcare involvement has certain positive effects on adolescent psychological health.

The reason this result is different in Japan may be in part because in the U.S., a father's role in childcare is supported by society, and thus American fathers can obtain proper knowledge and education to become better caretakers. Men in the U.S also have more role models for childcare. This leads to sufficient father involvement for children's healthy psychological development.

Hypothesis 4

The results of this research partially support the fourth hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between retrospective perceptions of father involvement in childhood during adolescence and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress in Japan. Perceived stress was not correlated with father involvement in Japan most likely because the social norm in society is that a father is not very involved in childcare. Children do not feel stress without their father's involvement because it is natural in their environment. A further significant point is the effect of father involvement on life satisfaction in Japan, which appears similar to the results for hypothesis two. These results, which showed that the level of life satisfaction decreases when father involvement is negligible, illustrate why Japanese adolescents need relationships with their father in childhood. Father involvement affects life satisfaction; however, there is no reverse effect in other psychological factors. It is clear that

father involvement has a positive effect on children's psychological health in Japan.

Hypothesis 5

The results of this research partially support the last hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between the frequency of contact with a father after parental divorce and self-esteem, life satisfaction, and perceived stress. The results held up for self-esteem and life satisfaction, but not perceived stress. These results are mostly supported by Amato (2001) and Baker (2007). Children who have high frequencies of contact and visitation with their separated father have more positive psychological development. Moreover, our research included both Japanese and American subjects, with the results showing that a positive relationship with the father can help to change Japanese children. The results are also supported by the study of Japanese visitation effects on self-esteem (Aoki, 2010).

The reason perceived stress was not affected was probably because stress is limited to a short span of time, or possibly because Japanese subjects have a strong perceived stress on average; these may both affect their score. However, we do know that perceived stress is not changed by frequency of contact with the father.

Limitations of Study and Future Study

The parental divorce sample was very small; if the sample numbers were larger we could see more variation of frequency of contact with father. Moreover, the male and female student ratios were for the Japanese and American groups, and the American sample included many more women than the sample from Japan, which could have skewed the results. This study focused on the differences between Japan and the United States; nevertheless the next study should treat this difference. The father's attitude may also change depending on the sex of the child.

There was a large difference in the scores on self-esteem when comparing countries and genders, so a follow-up study should consider these differences more closely. Moreover, adding other countries, such as China and other Western countries, could provide better knowledge of father involvement effects worldwide.

For Japan, more studies about visitation after divorce are needed, along with more comparisons to Western cultures. Subsequent studies should focus more on detailed divorce comparisons between Japan and Western countries. Changing the subject to children may also be beneficial. However, using adolescent subjects is easier than using child subjects.

Conclusion

This paper contributed to the study of positive correlations between father involvement in childcare and psychological well-being. Nurturant and father involvement resulted in the same effect; therefore these concepts can be considered under one rubric, known as father involvement in childcare. Father involvement has a positive effect on all aspects of psychological health in the United States. Furthermore, father involvement has a positive effect on life satisfaction in Japan, and there is no reverse effect. It is reasonable to conclude that father involvement has a positive effect on Japanese children's psychological health.

It could be suggested that the differences between Japan and the United States are due to the progress made by the United States in fathering education and the recognition of the importance of the father's role in child rearing. If fathers' involvement in childcare was common in Japanese society, the differences in results might be smaller. In Japan more women are moving towards having full-time jobs, which will result in greater involvement of men in childcare. As traditional roles change, more comprehensive effects have appeared in Japan. We should develop proper methods of childcare and more role models for fathers. There is not enough research in the United States and Japan about father involvement, so participation of more Asian and Western countries in the study and research may make for better father childcare worldwide.

In the presence of divorce, a positive effect on psychological health was found with the frequency of contact with the father. Supporting visitation and joint custody is also good for children's psychological well-being for cultures beyond Asia and the U.S. This implies that father involvement is effective even when parents are separated. The Japanese visitation system and family law system is behind Western countries in matters of divorce; this contributes to the evidence that it is a necessity to change the system in the direction of joint custody. Further studies should be done, on divorce and visitation, but they should focus on what Japan and other western countries can do to improve the future. Contact situations could include supervised visitation in cases related to abuse or domestic violence. We can classify domestic violence as mental or physical, and which parent is the abuser. The research that proves fundamental benefit of paternal contact after divorce classifying a case of domestic violence and abuse or normal divorce can help break the stereotypes of a "bad father" and "the father who was not around, except for financial support, after a divorce." In conclusion, this study shows that father contact with children after a divorce has great benefits to children's psychological health.

This approach to parenting is already common in the U.S., Europe, Australia, Canada, and Scandinavia; however it is very rare in Japan. This study provides important evidence that paternal visitations after divorce are necessary and are also in the best interests of children. In Japan there is a stigma that divorced parents are in conflict so that, potentially, if a father meets with his children, the mother may be annoyed. This leads to the children feeling more insecure. This research supports the claim that it is necessary to improve the visitation law system. Clearly, it cannot be assumed that contact with the father after a divorce is negative. Every society should support change that allows both parents to have visitations with their children after a divorce. It is also essential because in developing countries divorce rates are increasing.

References

- Allgood, S.M., Beckert, T. E., & Peterson, C. (2012). The role of father involvement in the perceived psychological well-being of young adult daughters: A retrospective study. *North American Journal of Psychology*, 14, 95-110.
- Amato, P., & Keith, B. (1991). Parental divorce and the well-being of children: A meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 110, 26-46.
- Amato, P.R. (1993). Contact with non-custodial fathers and children's wellbeing. *Family Matters*, 36, 32-34
- Amato, P. R. (1994). Father-child relations, mother-child relations, and off-spring psychological well-being in early adulthood. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 1031-1042.
- Amato, P. R., & Gilbreth, J. G. (1999). Nonresidential fathers and children's well-being: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 557- 573.
- Amato, P. R. (2001). Children of divorce in the 1990s: an update of the Amato and Keith (1991) meta-analysis. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 15, 355-170
- Aoki, A. (2011). A study on the importance of parent-child contact. *Annual Report of the Institute of Counseling*, Taisho University, 34, 5-17
- Baker, A. J. L. (2007). *Adult children of parental alienation syndrome-Breaking the ties that bind*. New York, NY: W.W. Newton & Company.
- Bauserman, R. (2002). Child adjustment in joint custody versus sole custody arrangements: A meta analytic review. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 16, 91-102.
- Cohen, S., Kamarak, T., & Mermelstein, R. (1983). A global measure of perceived stress. *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 24, 385-396.
- Cohen, S., & Williamson, G. (1988). Perceived stress in a probability sample of the United States. In S. Spacepan & S. Oskamp (Eds.), *The social psychology of health (pp.31-68)*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Crandal, R. (1973). The measurement of self-esteem and related constructs. In J. Robinson & P. Shaver (Eds), *Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes*, 45-168.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 49, 71-75.
- Diener, E., Suh, E. M., Lucas, R. E., & Smith, H. L. (1999). Subjective well-being: Three decades of progress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 276-302.
- Doherty, W.J, Kouneski, E.F., & Erickson, M.F. (1998). Responsible Fathering: An Overview and Conceptual Framework. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60, 277-292.
- Kruk, E. (1992). Psychological and structural factors contributing to the disengagement of noncustodial fathers after divorce. *Family and Conciliation Courts Review*, 30, 81-101.
- Finley, G. E. (1998). Parental age and parenting quality as perceived by late adolescents. *Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 159, 505-506.
- Finley, G. E., & Schwartz, S. J. (2004). The father involvement and nurturant fathering scales: Retrospective measures for adolescent and adult children. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 64 (1), 143-164.
- Hetherington, E. M., & Kelly, J. (2002). *For better or for worse: Divorce reconsidered*. New York: Norton.
- Japan Federation of Bar Association. (2007). *Welfare of children and joint custody: Comparison study*

- of custody law in divorce or separate*. Japan: Nihonkajyoshuppan.
- Kotelchuck, M.(1976). The infant's relationship to the father : Experimental evidence. In M.E, Lamb(Ed), *The role of the father in child development* (pp.329-344). New York: Wiley.
- Lamb, M.E. (Ed; 1997). *The role of the father in child development*. New York: John Wiley.
- Lamb, M.E., Pleck, J.H., & Levine, J. A. (1985). The role of the father in child development: The effects of increased paternal involvement. In B. Lahey & A. Kazdin (Eds.), *Advances in clinical child psychology* (Vol. 8, pp. 229-266). New York: Plenum.
- Lamb, M. E. (2000). The history of research on father involvement: An overview. *Marriage and Family Review*, 29, 23-42.
- Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare Japan. (2008). *Heisei 21 statistics of divorce*. Retrieved from <http://www.mhlw.go.jp/toukei/saikin/hw/jinkou/tokusyuu/rikon10/html>
- Ninomiya, S. (2004). Obligation of visitation. *Ritsumeikan Law Review*, 6, 1617-1664.
- NPO fathering Japan*. (2011). <http://www.fathering.jp/>
- Parke, R.D. (1996). *Fatherhood*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Pedersen, F.A & Robson, K.S. (1969). Father participation in infancy *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 39, 466-472.
- Pleck, J. H. (1997). Paternal involvement: Levels, sources, and consequences. In M. E. Lamb (Ed.), *The role of the father in child development* (3rd ed., pp. 66-103). New York: Wiley & Sons.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and the adolescent self-image*, (Rev. ed.). Middeltown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
- Tuckman, A. J. (2005). Supervised visitation—Preserving the rights of children and their parents In L. Gunsberg & P. Hymowitz (Eds.), *A Handbook of Divorce and Custody Forensic, Developmental and Clinic Perspectives*. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Wallerstein, J. S., & Kelly, J. B. (1980). *Surviving the breakup: How children and parents cope with divorce*. London: Grant McIntyre.
- Wallerstein, J. S. (1985): Children of divorce: Preliminary report of ten-year follow-up of older children and adolescents. *Journal of American Academy of Child Psychiatry*, 24 (5), 543-553.
- Wallerstein, J. S., & Blakeslee, S. (1989). *Second chance men, women, and children a decade after divorce*. New York, NY: Ticknor and Fields.
- Wallerstein, J. S., Lewis, J. M., & Blakeslee, S. (2000). *The unexpected legacy of divorce a 25 year landmark study*. New York, NY: Hyperion.



Taisuke Kume is a graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Stout Department of Human Development and Family Studies and Kansai University in Japan. He is the Japanese translator of *The Myth of Male Power*.

NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).

membrum virile

Photo Essay

JAN H. ANDERSEN



Introduction

Works of art—music, paintings, sculpture, and photographs—should not need an introduction. After all, they speak precisely what words cannot, and that is their great power. Nevertheless, given the, alas, still controversial nature of the theme of the following selection of the work of the Danish photographer Jan H. Andersen, some words of introduction are in order.

Mr. Andersen does not title individual images, only collections, including the six images he

has graciously given us permission to reproduce here. The common theme of the photographs—which I am calling *membrum virile*—challenges the eye in each case with candor and humor. A very serious but neglected theme since the Enlightenment is the phallus, the erect penis.

Jung offered that *phallos* is an archetype of the numinous. In its magical transformation from penis (an organ of elimination) to phallus (a temporary extension of the male body), this part of the male body is one of the central objects of myth, art, and of course psychoanalytic deliberation. The Latin medical euphemism, *membrum virile* (male limb) I have chosen, says a lot about how difficult it still is to speak about, let alone look at, what is certainly the defining feature of the male body. Ever controversial, it is part of the everyday as well as the exceptional experience of half of the world's human population. This organ with its accompanying “witnesses” (the testes) is still a surprise when it appears on a statue such as the Michelangelo *David*. It is obscured in paintings and deemed obscene in the media.

Mr. Andersen comments:

The seminude male body is tolerated in the streets where we consider it quite normal for both young and older males to run around shirtless, but photos of nude males and especially male genitalia are considered socially unacceptable or at least connected solely with homoeroticism.

Indeed the erect penis is regularly associated with pornography. The terms well known in slang—cock, dick, prick, schlong, one-eyed monster—have a harsh ring. They are often uttered in anger or derision. Or they are meant to divert our attention by causing dismissive laughter. The words evoke the shame that boys are taught to feel about a part of them that is at the same time overvalued. Yet nearly all of a male's experience of his self and identity is somehow connected with—and what shall we call it, without invoking euphemism, or suggesting the salacious, “dirty” or shame-inducing, or reducing it to a joke?

These images are so important because in our reactions to them lurks evidence of how inexperienced we still are as a culture with the most intimate parts of the life of the male. There is much more to him, but the *membrum virile* cannot be ignored, even if it hidden. Until we are able to overcome the learned sense of foreignness of this most natural and important part of male experience, we will not progress very far in understanding what is unique about the bodies and emotional life of boys and men. Offering these images is meant to open an essential discussion.

It goes without saying that Mr. Andersen's subjects in these photographs have formally agreed to permit the representations of their bodies to be reproduced. The men photographed are of legal age. All images are under copyright by Jan H. Andersen.









Jan H. Andersen is a Danish photographer, software developer, and author specializing in topics surrounding children and teenagers. With a degree in child care and many years experience working with troubled kids and families, he writes with passion about child psychology, boys issues and parenting. You can read more at his website www.janhandersen.com and reach him at jha@jhandersen.com.



NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).



Young Male Spirituality

MATTHEW KLEM



Introduction

The suicide rate for males is four times that of females, especially among young men. It has been one of my major interests as a psychotherapist and teacher to understand this extraordinary fact. The following contribution by Matthew James Klem contains insights that readers his age—22—and parents of such young men will find helpful in understanding the tragic data about male suicide.

I met Matt four years ago, when he was 18 and a student at Gustavus Adolphus College, in St Peter, Minnesota, where I had gone to speak to students of the small but vital men's center there and talk about my book, *Understanding College Men: Discovering What Works and Why*. I knew nothing then of what Matt's story was at that time. He was a freshman at the college and a lively par-

ticipant in the discussion.

The remarkable turn his life took two years ago is recounted by him in our conversations. Matt's willingness to talk about his life and his candor are exceptional.

Tell me a bit about you, your family background, and how you got to Gustavus Adolphus, where we met.

My childhood was something like picture perfect. Wonderful, caring parents raised me in a nice house, took me on extravagant vacations, and provided for me far more than sufficiently. Nearly no health or financial or relational problems plagued the family. From the outside, everything seemed perfect.

As a youth, I had a compelling moral conscience and took religion very seriously. When friends would steal, a burning in my chest disallowed my participation. This conscience, though, derived nearly exclusively of fear; the potential loss of my parents' favor, or maybe more, exposure to their disappointment, sufficiently ordered and enforced the precepts of my conscience. I attended all of the church activities, engaging with a noticeable fervor, but only because God's displeasure seemed more frightening than my parents' did. I was afraid.

In middle school, these tendencies positioned me beneath a relatively mild but nonetheless personally significant array of bullying. Because of my fear of rule breaking and line crossing, I was not "cool." My friends saw me as sheltered, sometimes calling me a "pansy" or "little girl." Herein a new longing for approval, now from my peers, ascended unto power over my life alongside my need to meet my inaccurate conception of my parents' expectations.

During high school, this complicated further when the negative component of my need for approval met its positive counterpart. As I gained moderate status and recognition, my cravings for peer approval were finally gratified. Attention from girls and respect from friends began to meet these needs. Academic success and continued participation in leadership at youth group met my parents' expectations, at least as I perceived them. But it was never enough. I was never actually satisfied. Someone else had cooler friends and a more beautiful girlfriend. Someone else was better at sports – in fact, nearly everyone else – or better at guitar. Moreover, because the staff at church, my parents, and different groups of friends all required of me different things, my strivings to please them all were tearing me apart. I had a dozen faces, and often, eleven enemies. Attention and admiration from others drew all of my energy and pursuits unto satisfaction and fulfillment, and by the end of high school, I was growing empty and miserable.

This only increased in my first semester of college at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. There, a general failure to make friends characterized my time, and thus, the recognition that I had made my god in high school disappeared. A certain numbness and accompanying fear began to over-

shadow me. For this reason, I decided to transfer to a different school. My brother, Jake, and one of my closest friends, Reed, both attended Gustavus Adolphus College in southern Minnesota. As such, it seemed a fitting next step, since I already had instruments by which to enter various social circles. In February, 2011, I moved into Pittman Hall, and classes at Gustavus began.

When I met you in 2011, what was happening in your life?

At Gustavus, through Jake and Reed, I accumulated friends quickly. Socially, everything missing in Madison became a reality at Gustavus. I expected the vacancy in my satisfaction therein to be filled, because, to me, without question the absence of social approval at Madison had been the decisive cause of my emptiness. As my experience in high school should have already taught me, this was a severely mistaken expectation. Its return failed to satisfy my longings; in fact, my depression only worsened. I smoked marijuana nearly all day and night, attempting to escape from the numbness and anxiety. Several nights a week, I would drink heavily, often enough to become sick. My rare appearances in class earned looks of surprise from my professors; academically, my grades plummeted, though in the past I received nearly exclusively A's. Mostly comfort, and never wisdom or prudence, governed my decision-making. Surface level attempts at personal growth proved unsuccessful in bringing about improvement. Though I had all the friends I thought I needed, joy was comprehensively lacking from my life. Because of the numbness (and other reasons explained below), a cycle of self-mutilation by cigarettes and razor blades began. Suicidal thoughts progressively clouded my thinking.

It seems that when we met I was able to mask what was happening. Sometimes I was better at that than other times. On May 1st, 2012, however, with a month left in the semester and just weeks after we met, these suicidal thoughts instigated my departure from the school. I wrote the following note in the Gustavus library that evening. Disassociating-relativism, as you will see, colored much of my processing:

I'm sitting in the library. I have a lot to do, but all I can think about is killing myself and not wanting to be alive. I just cut myself in the bathroom. I'm not sure why I cut myself. Distraction maybe. A fleeting glimpse of feeling in a sea of emptiness. What if depressed people simply have attained the burdensome knowledge that life is not good. The world is not good. Even if this was right, which I find very unlikely, what would be the point. Why choose to leave ignorant bliss for pessimism? A beautiful dream that's real to the dreamer is a beautiful reality. Everyone says I need to stop self medicating and make changes in my lifestyle if I want to feel better. Logically it makes sense. I don't care. Who decided that logic harnesses the ability to make the right decisions? What if the 30,000 in the United States who commit suicide every year are the enlightened ones? The ones who realized that all is not good, and left this terrible place. If this was the case, why should the dreamers be allowed to place judgments? Majority? Because their reality is perceived as positive? What is positive? What if truth is not absolute? What if nothing is real? Who knows if they even truly exist? Why shouldn't I kill myself?

My ideas are contradicting. Why is that bad? Why are connected ideas stronger than broken ones? Unless it breaks a social norm, I feel little remorse. It sounds like it should scare me but it doesn't. I recently had a dream in which I shot two men in the back. I did not feel bad. Even if a social norm is broken by one of my actions, if no one finds out, it does not bother me. I have no guilt in lying. What if this was my suicide note? What effect would my death have? A fairly strong one on my family, the Gustavus community, and my friends. At least as I now perceive them. But is an effect on these people significant? Who am I to say that I shouldn't do something that will bother them? If I grew up in an entirely different environment, it might not. The human mind is so malleable that it is hard to see an absolute in anything. If I was in Nazi Germany during WW2, who am I to say that I would not have killed innocent people? Psychology has proven time and again that people can be nearly under complete control by the social environment. This leaves me questioning my purpose. If my life can be controlled and or radically changed by a social environment for the worse or for the better, and if every second I have a million different options of what to do, picking one of infinite choices on my branching tree of fate, if I am not even sure I exist, if I see no significance in anything, anywhere, anytime, then who is to tell me this life is worth living? If depression is not a personal flaw, and can happen to anyone, then why are people who commit suicide seen as insane by everyone else? If the latter were in the place of the former, what would be different? Why do I have such a hard time getting to class? It is so easy to wake up and go, especially when every minute is costing me more money, yet I do not. Is all of my thinking clouded by my depression, or is everyone else's clouded by a lack thereof? Who is to decide? The only positive feedback I receive comes from getting intoxicated. Logically I can see why, under the assumption that things are the way I am told that they should be, that this is an escape, and not actually solving the problem. Again, I do not care. Am I lazy? If you were in my shoes under the same circumstances with the same mindset would you not do the same? Did I choose my mindset? If not, then no negative qualities can be judged. If my reality was your reality, you would act the same as me. What if I am in a dream, and I wake up in Britain. If that was the case, what would be the difference in my perception at this very moment? Nothing, because I am convinced it is reality. Maybe happiness is not in answering these questions but choosing to ignore them. What leads someone to do so? What is the difference between me and someone else that we choose to live completely different lifestyles? Especially when to each of us we are just living our lives, and taking the most obvious path. How is it that I have been able to stay focused and write this, yet when I start my homework soon after it will take mere seconds for me to want to give up and go get high? Why do I not understand anything? Why do some people have motivation and I don't? Why do I look over high ledges and think about jumping to my death and others don't? Why do I want to do it and others don't? Why am I so controlled by my fear of what people think of me? I go to great lengths to avoid pointless blunders. Why are some people not bothered by that? Why am I? Why are their thoughts so significant that they control my actions? What is life? What if human life is no more significant than any other?

Am I in hell? One cannot put it out of the realm of possibility. If I was a piece of shit in my last life, and that deserved negative punishment, then I would say it's a rather fitting sentence. Why am I at a loss for words twenty four seven? So unsure of everything that I don't even know what to think or say. I can't even describe how I am feeling right now. Literally, so I won't. Why am I a walking disaster? Why would God (again, under several assumptions) devote His kingdom to several thousand years of generations, in a universe that is billions of years old. How could the most insignificant fraction of time hold any importance? I suppose that is where faith comes in. Maybe that is where happiness is also born, from faith. Is depression a loss of faith in everything? Does what you place faith into even matter? Or is it just the comforting feeling? In my psych textbook it said that people of religious faith have less stress, and lead happier lives, regardless of which religion. Is that all it is good for? Would it matter if religion were a dream if it had positive consequences?

Perhaps the only thing keeping me from committing suicide is how large of a commitment it is. What? Would I have said this two years ago? What has changed? What is the significance of the dichotomy in outlooks? Why am I so hopeless? Why do I feel crazy? Am I crazy? Is everyone crazy? Why am I so quick to betray others for my own personal gain yet others are not? Why is life so scary? Is fuck it that bad of a motto? Is fighting depression the way to stay sane? Or finding comfort in something else and accepting it? Why am I miserable and others are not? Why do I make substances my god? Living from one high to the next, one drunk to the next, one immoral endeavor to the next, never feeling fulfilled, yet not doing anything about it. Just continuing on my way to deeper depression. Will it click eventually that this is wrong and I will change my ways and get better and it will be over aside from some short relapses? Why do I not believe that when everyone tells me it is the case? Why do I not believe anyone when they tell me anything? Why do I feel alone? Why do I feel like I am in my own world of pain completely unattached from the world itself in every way aside from when I get super high? Why do I have so much built up aggression? I look around and all I think about is crushing everything in sight with a 33 oz Louisville slugger. I am hopeless, alone, angry, sad, afraid, and at the same time do not care. I want to burn every book in this library, and watch the building fall to the ground. Is that a normal impulse? Why is normal confined to the characteristics of the majority and those on their pedestal? What are those pedestals made of anyways? Nothing important in my opinion. But then again why is my opinion important?

Fuck it

That evening was my last as a student at Gustavus.

The following summer, I accepted a position as a youth intern at a local church. My psychiatrist prescribed five different medications for my various symptoms, but they curbed little to none of my misery, and the substance abuse and depression continued throughout the summer. In July, suicidal ideation brought me to the psych ward for several days. Though thoroughly humbled by the beltless

scrubs and my visitors' pity, the visit changed nothing. I moved into a new apartment in Minneapolis with some friends that fall. Diagnoses of Bipolar Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder given soon after confirmed my already-established self-identification as broken.

On Christmas Day, 2011, I went to my parents' house in the morning, staying only long enough to ruin effectively the holiday for my whole family. From there, a fantasy of hanging myself in my apartment, which I knew to be empty, encouraged my hasty return to Minneapolis, just twenty short minutes away. As my fingers wrapped around the cold door handle to get into my building, the deadbolt frustrated my intentions. Confusion matured into anger as I learned experientially that my key did not work for this exterior door that had never before been locked. To no avail, my fist pounded against the door for several minutes. A friend who lived nearby received me in my frenzy and comforted me for hours in silence. By the end of the night, my composure returned. Within two weeks, however, an ambulance carried me to my second stay at the psych ward.

My life was broken. I was empty and miserable. I just wanted to escape.

Two years ago everything changed. What was that morning like in February 2012?

At my friend's request, a period of nonattendance at church ended in January, 2012. Each Sunday morning after waking up, I would get high and start the coffee. With mind numbed and cup filled, I would step outside and further awaken to the contrast between the hot smoke from my cigarette and frigid Minneapolis air, get in my car, and pick him up on the way to church. For some reason, a certain treasuring of this routine developed within me. Less importantly, the worship service enabled me to check the religious and spiritual off my list and maintain my strange self-description as a "cool, rebellious Christian."

On February 19, everything changed for me. I was high like all the other Sundays. I sang like all the other Sundays. I prayed like all the other Sundays. I listened to the sermon like all the other Sundays. I hid my scarred wrists, bloodshot eyes, and shameful memories of the previous night's debauchery like all the other Sundays. But I came alive. It felt like air had filled my lungs for the first time, like a heart of stone became a heart of flesh and blood. Black and white became color; a third dimension illuminated the other two. It felt like a resurrection, not just from slumber, but from the grave. Three specific thoughts from during the sermon have refused to depart from memory: "I want to actually give my life to God for real this time"; "I want a fresh start, a clean slate. I want to be baptized"; and "I need to start reading the Bible."

Immediately following the service, as I searched the mall for a bookstore intending to buy a Bible, I began to think about my aunt from Colorado, who had not contacted me in months. Strangely enough, she called less than two hours later. Perhaps more strange than the call's occurrence was its content: that morning, she saw a vision of me as a newborn baby, full of potential, loved by God, with a clean slate and a fresh start. Many months later, I came to realize that this fits exactly what the Bible describes as the "new birth," when a sinner becomes alive to God forever by the Holy Spirit, cleansed from sin and stains and changed in heart.

Instantly that morning, my mental health issues and accompanying self-mutilation disappeared, not yet to return. Though I was high when I entered the church, I have not been high since. My life was transformed. Several friends, upon our first encounter after that morning, asked me what changed before they even said hello; the hollow shell they knew had been filled with life. Over the next several months, a new trust in the Bible became apparent. All of a sudden, I actually believed what it said. My hope was fixed on the Savior it celebrated. I no longer wanted to live for myself, decide truth or right and wrong for myself, or build my own kingdom. My desire complex and emotions had been thoroughly renovated and reshaped. Friends benefited from my relationships with them for the first time. Instead of doing whatever felt the most comfortable, I was free to make the best decision. Instead of repeatedly looking for satisfaction in friends and things and approval and experience, things that always failed to provide what they promised, I was able to set those gods aside and find true joy in the God who created me, even in the midst of suffering and imperfect circumstances.

Looking back, I can see that I had been more like a pile of dry bones in a valley than a man. I had been enslaved to broken desires and cravings, unable to escape. Church services and spirituality and religion held insufficient power to break my chains; that decisive morning, something, or someone, outside of me set me free. Now I live, resurrected from the grave. Now I see, my blindness cured. Now I walk freely, released from the puppet strings of sensuality.

I have used the term “existential change” for such moments of complete reorientation. There is a spiritual dimension to every such change, especially since, for me, the spiritual is the hub of everyone’s being in the world. What is the place of spirituality in your life now?

Before that morning, spirituality always had a place in my life. Regular participation in Bible studies, playing guitar for worship services, and prayer surely require engagement with spirituality. So, the change that morning was not an introduction of spirituality; rather, it was a change of spirituality’s intended outcome, and more importantly, its object.

Now, instead of spirituality unto self-fulfillment or the admiration of those who count it valuable, my spirituality is for the sake of Jesus. He is the one who entered my life that morning and changed everything, not spirituality. Since God is spiritual and my life centers on him, my whole existence takes place in the spiritual realm. His word illuminates my path as lamps never will. I walk by faith, not by sight. Further, this new object of my spirituality, because of his nature and power, gives a new *kind* of spiritual life to those who trust in him. In this sense, I am *spiritually alive* in a way that I never was before. The realm, however, is secondary. To confuse realm with object is to treasure marriage and not your wife, or parenting but not your children. Spirituality did not save or heal me; Jesus did.

Nonetheless, the spirituality encouraged in the Bible does not exclude the relational or the physical. It is not that touchable things are evil and spiritual things are good. Physical creation is good, provided we use it rightly. Use of created things in discordance with the purpose for which God created them is what corrupts them. The physical and relational realms are not sinful or evil; sinful people enter the physical and relational realms and express their brokenness within those spheres.

As such, enjoying a Chipotle burrito is often the highlight of a weekend. A friend's smile can brighten my day just like prayer or Bible study. Moreover, these two categories are not separate, as though the switch flips to spiritual when I walk into church and physical when I walk into the restaurant. When I enjoy a burrito, God teaches me more of who he is as the Giver of every good gift. And when I read my Bible, my physical eyes look at a physical piece of paper with physical ink covering most of the page. Thus, spirituality encompasses every aspect of my physical and relational life.

Tell me a bit about what you are currently studying and what you plan to do when you have completed that work?

Currently, I am studying at Bethlehem College and Seminary in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Theology composes most of the subject matter, but it is directional; it is not theology for the sake of theology, but rather theology for the sake of mission, and this theology centers on the central message of the Bible: Jesus died to secure the forgiveness of all those who put their hope in him.

Hermeneutics, or the methodology of Bible study, fills my toolbox with tactics to determine the intent of the original author in each text. Greek classes enable me to translate the New Testament for myself and aptly weigh scholars' arguments employing grammatical considerations. Systematic theology, or the study of what the whole Bible teaches about individual topics in various categories, renews my thinking and worldview and conforms them to those of God as revealed in his Bible. Research writing causes me to communicate clearly, effectively, and persuasively the things I learn about God from his Book, for theology rightly understood is theology shared and explained. Practical theology forces me to apply biblical concepts to daily life. In addition, these classes are shaping my heart and character to be more like what is fitting for an imperfect but faithful man in ministry.

Personally, I intend to train pastors and defend the Bible and its message of reconciliation through Jesus' blood at the academic level. So, while theology should always become mission wherever you are, at the office or at the gas station or in the bedroom, my long-term mission is to serve the advancement of God's kingdom through deep discipleship of men seeking leadership positions in the church.

The reasons for pursuing this task are many. I want to help people; ministry provides a great channel for that. I do not want to waste my life; teaching the Bible, I am convinced, surely reflects prudent stewardship of my gifts and limited time here on the earth. Far more compelling than these things, however, is the worth of Jesus. He deserves my thorough and utter devotion, and nothing sounds more joyful than a life laid down in the service of his kingdom.

Looking at you as a relative stranger, I saw and still see a physically healthy young man. You look well and are OK physically. What would you say was ailing you when you were involved in the self-punishing behavior you described? Was it psychological, emotional, spiritual?

Looking back, several considerations led to my self-punishing behavior. This is especially true when all of my self-destructive behaviors, not just cutting and burning, are in view. Specifically as pertains

those two, though, three main conditions and intentions led to this behavior.

First, I banked all my hope on things that could not satisfy. When I repeatedly came up dry, I just reached further and clasped tighter, failing to understand that I needed a new source of fulfillment and satisfaction. It was like filling broken containers with water, and the more I tried to fill them, the bigger the holes became. I hit a ceiling, not knowing where else to go, and every day the ceiling got lower. Though numbness, in a sense, is the opposite of agony, my numbness was the most miserable component of my experience. I just wanted to feel something. Anything. Even pain. So, I cut.

Second, relationally, stains on my sleeves and blood on my razors brought attention. Even if it was pity or shame, I had their eyes or their thoughts or their words, at least for a moment. But this just led to more brokenness, because the attention of peers never satisfied. Third, guilt weighed heavily upon my shoulders. My conscience cried of my condemnation, and this self-punishment seemed appropriate. Strangely enough, according to the Bible, this sense of guilt was rather rational. The same Bible, though, teaches that Jesus already bled out in my place to remove my condemnation and redeem my conscience. Until that morning in February, however, this freedom was entirely foreign to me, even in the midst of Bible studies, worship services, and prayer.

Many guys your age experience what you have gone through and in the same years (roughly 15 or 16 to 20-21). Do you think there is something about that period in a young man's life in our day that plays a part in what you experienced?

Particularly of young men, the culture requires certain things that lead to experiences like mine. Mostly, we feel like we have to add up. We have to be manly enough; our girlfriend has to be pretty enough; we have to make enough money; and the recognition or respect we receive has to surpass that received by our peers. The problem is that masculinity, girlfriends, money, and status, though good things in themselves, make terrible gods. And when the culture pressures us to be good enough in all these ways, that is exactly what we make them.

When this happens, our satisfaction is dependent on these things, since we seek joy in what we worship. As long as I am cooler and stronger than my friends, everything is okay. If my girlfriend is better looking than your girlfriend, I can sleep at night. Unfortunately, there is always someone better. One of your friends will always have a better girlfriend or job or body fat percentage or haircut. Moreover, even when you are on top, these things will never be truly satisfying. They will never be enough. So when we put these gods on the throne, we feel empty and unsatisfied. And when we feel empty and unsatisfied, we panic. And when we panic, we self-medicate, often in destructive ways.

For this reason, our self-responsible but culturally-encouraged attempts to rule our own universe and build our own kingdoms will always fail. Abandoning these principles, I think, is one of the crucial steps for men going through situations similar to mine several years ago.

What would you say to guys reading this who have thought of “offing themselves” or are doing themselves harm, one way or another physically?

One of the hidden blessings of suffering is the resultant ability to comfort others who go through similar afflictions. I have met many young men struggling with self-injury and suicidal ideation. Typically, they say similar things to what I said in those types of conversations several years ago, and the advice I give is not all that different from what some people told me while I was struggling. One thing is certain: patting them on the back and telling them everything will be okay is not enough. Pretending that their suffering is not real or that the problems leading to their suffering do not need actual solutions does nothing for them.

When I was cutting, I knew there were deeper issues causing my pain, but I just wanted a quick fix to make it through day. So, I would get high and hurt myself. But then the next day, I just needed another temporary solution. I never got anywhere. My counselors and friends told me I needed to make lifestyle and mindset changes. All I did was mask the pain. I needed surgery not a Band-Aid.

To those, then, who are struggling with self-injury, this is what I would say: Cutting is not helping you. Suicide will not save you. They are self-medications that extend false promises of hope. Cutting holds you over only until you have to cut again. Sometimes, my roommates add water to the hand soap when it is almost gone to get it to last longer. Eventually, it is not even doing anything to keep our hands clean; we just need new soap! You need to get to the root of your problems. You do not need an escape from the symptoms but a cure for the cause. My greatest problem, and I am convinced that I am not alone in this, was sin. For this problem, there is a great solution, an unsurpassed hope. Killing yourself will not solve this problem. A Savior who already died in your place, however, will. I will talk more about that in the following answer.

Why are young men facing spiritual crises in our time, perhaps more than before? What is it about being male and young in American society that might be producing the kind of situation you experienced?

Many young men have spoken to me about their similar, and often more severe, spiritual crises. A pattern continues to surface in these conversations. Similar to my experience several years ago, they feel lost with no sure footings. Though willing to acknowledge this, however, they fail to acknowledge the cause: the adoption of a restriction-free worldview removes every possible boundary by which they can orient themselves. Being male and young, for the first time life forces them to blaze trails and make decisions for themselves, and the vastness of the options can initiate a dangerous cycle into deeper and deeper levels of obscurity.

Cafeteria spirituality and worldview sound appetizing, accepting, and progressive. You can pick whatever you want. No one can tell you what to choose, and likewise, you have no business in anything more forceful than a gentle recommendation. Since all the components are put together at your beckoning, the finished product will suit you perfectly. This, then, should be the means to ultimate fulfillment, since all of your needs and desires will be met. Further, no one can judge you, and so you are absolutely free to be yourself.

This flexibility, however, is not freedom but slavery. It is similar to parenting with no rules and no discipline. Children might have quite a bit of fun for a few days, but eventually it is destructive. Those in the cafeteria have no solid ground on which to stand, but swim in a sea of confusion with no boundaries that disorients and overwhelms. Remember the note I wrote that night? Thorough relativism creates a cyclical spiral into more and more obscurity.

Transitioning from rational to irrational, epistemologically, the process is rather silly. First, confident of our cognitive abilities and potential, we think ultimate truth is within our grasp, to be attained by us through our own efforts. We are the authority. Then, once we realize how completely the ultimate evades our grasp, the transition occurs. It is outside our reach, we say. Surely none can attain it. This absolute truth, though, that none can attain sure knowledge of the ultimate, we ourselves attained by our own striving and superior understanding. Here, our assertion disallows its own proclamation. If all truths are relative, then even the truth that all things are relative is relative, and you cannot tell anyone to adopt that truth. To say the only thing that is black and white is that all things are grey would pass as legitimate in no other fields of study but modern philosophy and spirituality. Though free from constraints, those traversing this grey world have no handles to grab, no footing of which to lay hold.

Absolutes are absolutely necessary. Relativism is only relatively helpful. Without a sure footing, unstable young men fall into an overwhelming panic. This is why so many young men enter crises like mine. Personally, the absolute I found is Jesus. This Jesus claims himself to be not just a helpful solution to our spiritual crises, but *the only* solution. Not just for young males, but for all. He is transcendent and outside our reach; but he chose to reveal himself in time and space. He is accessible, but on his own terms, that is, by revelation. If he is just a good teacher, a sage of the ages, then he may be more helpful to some and less so to others. He will find a place on some of our trays in the cafeteria, but not all, and that is okay. Jesus, however, forbids this suggestion. He claims to be the only Truth and the only Life. If he is wrong, then this claim is not only arrogant but also harmful. If he is correct, then come find Truth and Life and freedom from relativizing cafeteria spirituality.

NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE.
THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).



A Memoir: Movement, Breakdown and the Body

DUNCAN ALLDRIDGE



Duncan Alldridge is working to serve men exploring their masculine energy and 'maleness' while providing a platform for a creative inquiry into the male path. The work uses movement practice and contact to manifest film and live performance and is evolving from his roots in theatre and sport, as well as his experience through depressive breakdown and ongoing spiritual path. The memoir snapshots his own experience and is a reflection on personal transformation.

Keywords: male, manhood, male studies, rites of passage, embodiment, movement practice, depression, katabasis, father, nervous breakdown.

Where Did It Begin?

I'm uncertain when the pain first started, the distressing nag of anxiety in my gut that signalled a dissatisfaction with my place in the world, but it was sometime after the age of 35. I'd worked flat-out as a drama teacher, all hours, and developed a system of overriding myself that served my largely institutionalised life. I kept going, coping under considerable pressure as most teachers will, and rode a wave of material achievement and external validation I'd been taught was necessary to prove myself a man in the world. The work was creative, often spontaneous and offered huge emotional highs and lows. As I sat watching, and letting go of, the wealth of creative work I'd guided every year, I'd harness my tears, never allowing myself to be with the moments of beauty we'd created together. That wasn't what a man did. Cry. Even a passionate, talented and crazy drama teacher.

My place in the work become edgier as the chasm of dissatisfaction grew. I became less while the students became more. I disassociated with the gnawing anxiety, projecting it onto my environment, my work and relationships. I sought causes external to myself. I yearned for external validation. A huge output of creative work was never honoured or witnessed outside an educational frame. I think I began to disappear. At times it felt like one enormous undiscovered secret: my false self was a man who walked on water just to get by.

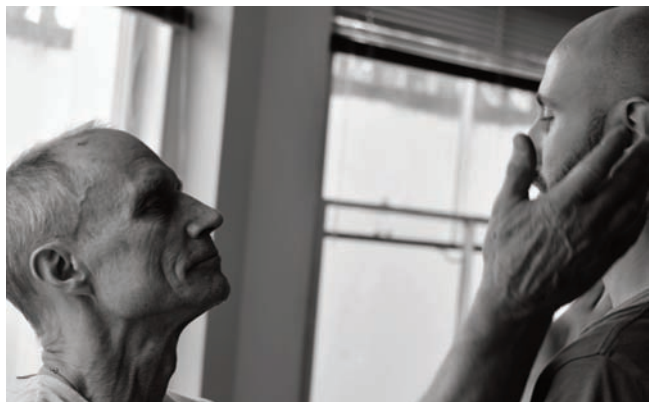
I longed to fall into vulnerability and be seen underneath it all. The 'creative' in me offset my professional output with even more movement: music albums, collaborations, theatre-companies and performances of my own. There was no space to stop, no time to listen.

But where did it begin?

My Father

My relationship with the most important man in my life, my father, was healthy and positive. A PE teacher and keen sportsman, I experienced a balanced physical intimacy with him. I knew his male friends similarly, largely present and physical, playing, wrestling and 'doing'. Although this was a solid grounding in maleness - testing physical strength, creating self-discipline and an awareness of boundaries - I never witnessed any emotional vulnerability in any of them. Similarly, I had no experience of my father vulnerable or struggling, but learned that to be a man meant accepting responsibility, getting on with things, being purposeful at work and being a positive force in the world.

He was kind and physically strong, and I learned that good men are gentle, caring and self-disciplined; he unconsciously introduced the male Lover¹ archetype to me, introducing me to poetry, different styles of music, reli-



gions, politics and an awareness of a 'bigger picture' outside mine. I experienced a sensitised, poetic world through him.

Yet like many boys, I learnt that to survive I needed to shroud my feelings. Over emotive-men depicted a negative image of masculinity for me, one of softness, freely running emotions and conversation, qualities I traditionally associated with being female. To compete within the male jungle, would these feminine qualities then serve me in a career and 'getting on' in life? There were other reasons why I disguised myself, but I learned from my father that women had permission to appear 'emotional', and men, largely, did not.

Deeper Questions

It was 2007. I was 42 and longing for a sustained relationship with a woman. When a relationship broke up I experienced deep physical pain. I was confused about what this was and why this had happened. Why was I frightened of being vulnerable? Where did my longing come from? What journey did I actually long to undertake? Was it a spiritual question? What bearing did the complex psychological outcome of parenting and the relationship and problematic early bonding I'd had with my Mother have? What were the important questions to ask?

I wanted to keep control and I wanted a handle on my story. What right had I to this? Somehow I was still the centre of my Universe. Life, as I saw it then, was about *my* story. I had a rough idea of a personal God, but had never taken any time to seek out the many questions that lay unasked, so therefore, unanswered. Being a man was about being secure in what *I* knew, my *own* truth and experience. It wasn't about following anybody else's and it certainly didn't involve anything about surrendering control. Faith wasn't a mystery back then, it was a weakness.

I'd been waiting for *her*, Bly's 'Woman with the Golden Hair'². A whole spiritual tapestry began to open for me, more choices, and a whole bundle of seemingly secular confusion.

What was true?

Looking back, many things came together simultaneously. A storm was brewing, a deep destructive storm of despair. I was arriving at the end of the line of my first half of life 'career' yet still looking for a place to call my own, somewhere I 'belonged' in the world. I'd been swimming in a tiny dark pond for years. What might happen if I ever had the courage to let go?

So when I arrived in Greece the following year I was standing on the edge. I'd often cried myself to sleep that year. Despairingly alone. There was a growing desperation. I still needed to hold up the world. What a responsibility! Hospitalisations, enquiries into my professional practice, collapses and an acknowledgement



of a relationship with this unholy and altogether unhelpful term 'depression' were all lining up waiting to be counted.

I was unprepared for real manhood. I was unprepared for suffering. Life was difficult.

Embodiment

I've thought it strange, but how could a physical theatre practitioner become so detached from the feeling centre in his body? I'd heard it said many times that men think with their head and their penis, yet we remain detached from the rest of our bodies, and for me it was largely true. I'd had a physical upbringing, education and work-life: gymnastics, rugby, football, sports, performing - yet I began to be conscious that even though I possessed a wide variety of skill-sets, I still lived largely 'in my head'. Yes, I was an expressive teacher, performer and artist and I'd developed a wide theatre-making repertoire, yet I remained 'unbalanced' in myself.

It is more than merely a physical question. And it had happened over a number of years. It was a gradual de-sensitisation to living fully.

Many men learn to do this. It's a social DNA we unconsciously adopt that helps us to achieve at work, do the physical grind, fight wars, sacrifice for family and defend territory. All the emotional journeys that I made professionally and artistically were never processed by my body, they stayed upstairs. In 2008-9, when I began movement practice in the 5Rhythms, and alongside the spiritual enquiry I was bound on, I began to excavate the places, the cells, that still held these old patterns. After 3-4 years of extensive practice, into and through experiences that, without a qualified voice of psychoanalysis, I might call 'nervous breakdowns', I began to experience firework-displays of feelings that had lain unexpressed. While deepening this practice, I found myself offering men a physical intimacy that had remained uncharted territory for me. Years of facilitating theatre practice with students had given me opportunity to model this, I'd been a guide and example to many young men, yet I'd been demonstrating an essence that I hadn't fully experienced myself.

And so my body became broken, dismembered. Organs malfunctioned. The usual lights got turned off. There is no sleep. The body, a once strong container, becomes a disorientated, whimpering mess of anxiety lurching from extreme fear to extreme fear. My reptilian brain³, the survival gene, fought to hold on, to move, to go to work, to anywhere away from the endless, ruminating spirals of catastrophic thinking.

When we are underground, we cannot breathe. Movement begins with the first new breath.

As things very gradually began to settle, these extreme experiences became the platform upon which my identity was re-drawn into a purposeful and more holistic cycle of being. I was not who I thought I was. I wasn't the real me. I'd been taken on deep dives into *liminal space*⁴. What kind of man would come up from these ashes?

It was September 2008 that I began two practices that underpin a grounding aesthetic of what I am

offering now: Yoga and 5Rhythms movement. These personal practices ground the Deep Diving Men enquiry and one of the questions asked in the opening Lab-theatre, “*How do I learn to live in a man’s body?*”

Being in the body is vital. Many men are out of touch with the incredible potential for living that our bodies are designed for. It’s been deprogrammed over generations, perhaps since we left and fell out of relationship with the land. The dehumanisation of the masculine soul; sitting in front of computers, Facebook, working committees; stifled in suits and trousers among all the trappings of a



voyeuristic, heady, pampering media market designed to lure in the Esquire-style young working male, is deeply toxic. Men need to feel the earth beneath their feet again. If we listen deeply, I suggest we long to be back together in our bodies, remembering our ancestry and lost rites of passage, repairing the wounds, and getting in touch again with a basic need to fully feel our experience of safely being boys and men together.

Gathering Men

In 2008 I had an important experience with another man. It’s important for me to mark largely what had happened prior to this, in that this was a first step in intimacy for me: I began to make myself vulnerable. We were on a ‘self-development’ holiday camp in Greece and were invited to undertake a co-listening exercise with each other each day. I’d met Rashi on the boat. We’d had a drink in the bar and had spent some time alone together. There was a gentle intuition in his manner and it intrigued me that he was training to be a psychotherapist, something I knew nothing about. He also reflected back to me qualities of the ‘mask of masculinity’ that I wore. I’d spent a lot of time with men, often one to one, drinking alcohol and playing sport, but had never really shared much of my internal world with any of them. So to sit down and talk about myself, the unmasked man? It was a shocking delight. How did I *do* that? The structure offered allowed each of us to be heard without judgement, and he would paraphrase back to me what he had heard me say. Above anything else, it was learning to deeply listen to another.

Over those fourteen days I discovered, not unsurprisingly now I look back, that my fears in allowing myself to be vulnerable were reflected in his. As our friendship grew and level of trust deepened, I began to hear more of my own voice when he spoke. I began to deeply *trust* him. This was a relationship where the conditions for trust were created by allowing myself to open and become vulnerable. It was a strange relief to begin to hear my true voice. I was learning to speak about my feelings and connect with them in my body. I was beginning to speak from my heart.

During the following year he and I met regularly with two other men we’d met on the trip. I felt safe within the similar cultural demographic we offered each other and we became more comfortable. These talks weren’t really intense though the ease we felt allowed laughter and a general dropping

down. I was beginning to experience that other men were similar to me. I'd recognised this previously, but culture, sport, alcohol and historical patterns had limited the boundaries of the relationships I was able to initiate. I began to acknowledge this as a central part of my life, the experience of another man's interior world.

It seemed many men longed to feel the unboundaried playground of being together again as boys, and that there was a deeper, more fruitful, less guarded way of relating and being with each other than the affirmation-seeking neediness, yet seemingly confident exteriors we wore to survive, and that we were conventionally modelled and taught. We wanted each other's love. A seed had been planted.

How is it to learn to love another male? Surely every man needs this to feel this feeling, that all men long to earn the unconditional love of the father⁵.

Observing the Radar

So what was so liberating about being in the company of men only? What is so revealing to us about the absence of women and why is this important?

I thought myself heterosexual, yet the word came sharply into focus when I began to experience movement practice as a dance of different energies. Back then, I was a man at the back of the yoga class for two reasons, firstly I didn't want to be shown up not making the mark, to be not good enough, to look unimpressive in front of women, so it made sense not to be in focus, and secondly, as the class was full of women, I got a better view from the back! Similarly, when on the floor of a dance practice, the same radar starts to operate. If you put males in a hall with a lot of females, a dance of procreation will inevitably come into play: a search for the most fertile hips to bare his child, alongside the strongest, safest provider for her children. The males will compete. This must play out. Alongside this dynamic are the energies of different bodies, and the uniqueness of each regardless of gender. When I first went to an all male dance, as part of my research and practice, I was sweetly challenged. Would it be a gay dance? Did that matter?

What would happen between men in the space in the absence of woman?

It is a unique experience, to be a pack of men in movement together, without female energy. The experience of encountering another man, without that 'radar' switching on, was a liberation for me. Being given permission to dance the hip-grinding staccato of my raw masculinity with other men, as well as my circling, more intuitively flowing feminine, opened new doors. What was I discovering during these practices? One thing was my *father* energy. Gabrielle Roth: 'Father is the masculine consciousness of your body and soul, the active, practical, protective part; the part of you that sets goals, plans for the future, pays bills... .. the world of beginnings and endings, lines and boundaries, answers and authority.'

I saw this energy in the male and female teachers who led the movement classes, and in the different authority figures I'd met in my life. It was an energy I knew I already had, but in the dance it was

finding a new path, flowing a different stream. I was beginning to embody a new authority, one which did firmly ground me in my body, one which gradually reconfigured the physical theatre soul in me. Embodied movement. I felt it in my heart and in my breath.

I was realising an important gift within me. How could I offer a physical, bounded space where we are free to get physical with each other, re-test our strength and ego-boundaries, relax with each other's bodies, trust, gently fight, challenge and play. The opportunity to offer the physical conditions for a healthy masculinity, those that my father gently rooted in me, was this gift. It was this energy, though it took some more time to percolate in me, that I took into offering an opening workshop with men, which then flowed into the first steps of the Lab-theatre process in 2014.



Working Through Depressive Breakdown

Around April 2012 I became aware that this prolonged period of internal crisis in my life was a body of research. What kind of man was I? Was I living the kind of life I had hoped for? Was I any closer to unlocking the meaning of being alive? A year previously I'd fallen from my first half of life career path, and the nervous breakdown plunged me onto a path of descent I'd never imagined.

Prosaic summary won't do justice to that experience of suffering. Of being alone with it. The confusion, the chaos, the slow realisation in the rare moments of sanity that something cataclysmic is going on over which I have no control. It's a whole book, it's a sacred personal text, a bible. But it was a revolution, an overthrowing of power, a titanic struggle with fear, and my mind, body and ultimately spirit, were the battleground. When I first read Bly's *Iron John*, perhaps a year later, it became clearer that a mythical and psychological battle had, and was still, taking place, and that the courage to descend, to fall and to let go and to go down, was my part. David's biblical journey in the deserts of Judah⁶ highlighted this. Aloneness. Learning to be a man for me (and in that I mean learning what it means to be fully human, as I am male not female) was concerned with a prolonged experience of, and encounter with, suffering, and thus a gradual re-mapping of my place in the cosmos. I wasn't creating this, it was being created for me. I began for the first time to acknowledge a personal, loving God.

The acute anxiety of mental breakdown left me in a broken body, a body that needed to relearn how to gradually put one foot in front of the other again. My encounters with men, the sex who understood the hard-wired male in me, became important in that they signposted a gradual return to strength, yet with an awareness that the old paradigms of competition and mistrust were dead, and that an altogether different playing field was possible.

So my research began to be both conscious inquiry; the reading, the body practices, the therapy and

gradual processing; and experiential, in that my mind fell apart and a terrifying shadow called fear stepped out up from the darkness. I'd fallen, I was struggling to let go and take the journey to finally land at the bottom. Katabasis. Bly calls this the 'mark of descent' or 'lowliness'. He suggests this is more acute in men who are 'high, lucky and elevated.'

In May 2012 I started to make small steps and started to write a blog.

My Life is not About Me

From the age of around 22 I was of the mindset that other men didn't have much to teach me. I'd learnt what I needed to learn; I was particularly inspired by and drawn to my education tutor on my post graduate course, and as a young teacher I was now in a position of social responsibility myself. It was rare to encounter men in positions of authority whom I looked up to. Most men are not modelling from their hearts. Are we simply 'living lives of quiet desperation' from the neck upwards? We are the most comfortable within our peer-groups, yet they have virtually nothing to teach us. We yearn for connections with a man's internal landscape. We fail to see ourselves reflected and therefore miss our own suffering⁶.

In Autumn 2008 I took a flight and a risk, to Switzerland, and visited a new male friend. This man had affected me. He was a revered yoga practitioner, older than me by 10-15 years, and in the midst of my seeking and ongoing crisis I sensed I had something to learn from him. On reflection, I think I was drawn because he was prepared to unmask and share with me his inner life. I saw his pain, his humour, his longing. He inspired in me a quest for adventure on my own path; he invited me to reach out for knowledge beyond my own. I saw he was on a journey and was practising his passion; a spiritual man living in his head, heart *and* body. Despite all the distractions women had offered me, here was an authentic man, struggling with his genuine offering to the world. An elder.

Deida's *The Way of the Superior Man* was one of the gifts he offered. It opened an exciting door to further research, and I returned from the trip with it. I became more aware that I was researching, and was living research for, *something*. Earlier that year I'd sought out a therapist, then another, both, by my own choice, women. (It wasn't until 2011, after my first breakdown, that I took steps to ensure I was working with a man) On reflection, they saw a man so locked up in his own pain and unaware that it was actually himself he needed to see clearly; so at the time the sessions felt fruitless. I felt a disturbing reality underlying these encounters: that there was a long way to go. At the time I wanted out, I felt I'd been through enough pain; I really didn't want 'in'. I didn't want to go 'down'⁷.

On reflection, perhaps I didn't trust them.

What does a woman know of a man's pain? Could she have any empathetic connection to how I was feeling? When I terminated the second relationship receiving the gentle parting challenge of "Who is Duncan?" and my scrawled reference to Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled* in my notebook, I was troubled.

By the time I got to Greece and my lover there compassionately pointed out to me 'You're not the

finished article', I actually heard her. I was putting pieces together; suffering is an opportunity, and I was journeying through it. I read the *Power of Now*. I learnt to 'own' my experience, and use what felt terribly vulnerable at the time, the 'I' to express myself. My research ultimately led me, a couple of years later, to Richard Rohr and then the famous first line of Scott Peck's sat significantly anew. 'Life is difficult'.

Spiritual Lessons: Driving My Car

A thing about being human is recognising and being in relationship with our own suffering. Is a man's suffering any different to a woman's? I became more aware of being inside the body of a male. This body had been created, and evolved to be set up in a certain way. It is very different to the female body physically and chemically. To use Bly's metaphor, if my body is a car, I need to learn how to drive it from someone who knows how to drive their own. Biddulph also, 'With no deep training in masculinity, boy's bodies still turn into men's bodies, but they are not given the software, the inner knowledge and skills, to live in a male body with its unique hormonal and neurological traits.'

Looking around me at the world through my keyhole of privilege and social advantage and seeing the impact of an imbalance of power in which men have held the keys for thousands of years, and then more closely at my own choices and actions in my relationships with women, it seems that men crash the car, and I was regularly crashing mine. Even with my eyes fixed on what I thought might be a road, I was still driving into the hedge.

I began then, to be more attentive to books written by men about men; the people who had learnt to drive a body like mine. I felt my journey become more focussed around men and the body as a way into my heart and expansion of spirit.

Male Leadership

I had been a role model for boys during 20 years teaching drama and theatre practice. The tiny windows of one-to-one that emerged with them I knew (as a result of my own desire for positive modelling when I was young) were moments of gold, but in the wind of the institutionalised pressure cookers of creative outpouring, they were fleetingly few. I could only model who I was. In my more intimate moments with my older classes, classes who'd made profound and intimate journeys together, and there were many, I might share something of my personal life. Yet to the young men I was modelling a man who had yet to come to terms with acknowledging his own neediness. Slowly, I began to see the need for a wider picture and to take responsibility for myself. For those boys I'd been more important than a teacher, director, magician - I'd been a man.

Will he notice me? I'd felt a deep masculine longing for affirmation from those elders around me when younger: PE teachers, drama lecturers, sports leaders - it was the men in the positions of responsibility I wanted this from, those that seemed in 'purpose', that offered a positive energy about living and modelled a comfort in their own bodies. I was fortunate to have time with older men, PE teachers and Drama specialists, yet I longed to know more about them. I enjoyed the rare moments

when I saw flashes of the real man beneath the role. On reflection, I wanted to see surrender, a struggle at the bottom of things, *katabasis* in action. I'd seen plenty of the suffering of women, but the



suffering of men? It remained shrouded, hidden from me. Despite their positive, individual male influences, perhaps these men merely modelled a continuation of the shoulder of patriarchal responsibility; in that men had taken responsibility ancestrally; so now we are prepared to sacrifice our freedom too easily in the face of conflict, yet keep running at all costs to support our families, and simply run out of gas; we flounder in the absence of a spiritual rite of passage that teaches us of pain; we are not of the mind-set that it's acceptable to know anything of our inner lives. Biddulph again, 'Most men don't have a life, what they have is an act'.

There's a male leader at my church who models inspired and purposeful leadership within a frame of authentic struggle and suffering. A powerful intellect and with a compassionate heart, he's a gifted orator. His strength in authority is that he is not afraid to show absolute vulnerability as part of who he is. He stands embodied in his own voice. It's very powerful for me to see a man stand in his authentic self, emotionally present to the moment, and to witness his pain. To see this in the action of leadership is inspiring. Once, in talking of his Christian faith, my father quietly said "It's very difficult for a man to completely surrender". It is something of this spirit and strength in surrender, something that my father tried to show me, that I find compelling in the heart of another man.

Spiritual Lessons: Adam's Return

I knew that the path to faith (which is such a key pivotal word in all this) lay buried for me for many years. The longing we all feel for the other is about our journey of faith. Beneath everything that was going on on the surface in my forties, I was 'lost' because I still wanted answers, control, and for things to come to me on my terms. Unconsciously though, I was somehow longing to surrender to the mystery of things, yet was waiting for this opportunity to land on my doorstep. Ultimately my opportunity to engage with mystery came through painful and rehabilitating experience of mental breakdown and, eventually, a willingness to experience and surrender to the deep pain of what living had been like. A dive down into not knowing. The ashes. A whimpering child. 'A bundle of nerves' doesn't even scratch the surface. My 'ashes' experiences were as wormholes from a lived solar system into a terrifying chaos.

The letting go of all I understood and was helped me to ask deeper questions, questions perhaps that become harder to face as we get older, because if we are privileged we must give up such a lot. This prising open of a closed heart, if you like, was a cataclysmic wrestle with shadows. How could I have been so 'blind' for so long? Why couldn't I see myself clearly? So I fought to hold on, and that fruitless state gave the oppor-



tunity for two further prolonged experiences of mental breakdown.

It's a frightening and gradual discovery, realising it was my false self that had been the voice of wisdom 'driving my car' for so long. In the film *Birdman* I see this clearly. Keaton, as Riggan Thomson, plunges to and fro, from creative triumph to abyss, through no end of internal chaos, while constantly buying into a script that he has to 'to keep everything going'. The ultimate realisation and confrontation with his egoic false self brings him crashing down, with tragically hilarious consequences, after years of buying into an illusory narrative about himself as a miracle-maker. I see my old self clearly in him. To an extent, I had become a dangerous man, weaving my path of creative chaos, unable to see a bigger picture than my own blindly self-destructive purposes, and trapped within a story that unfolded forever towards an inevitable spiritual desert.

So this book, when I landed with it and the key signposts Rohr teaches, not only underpins a springboard for my new journey in Christian faith (I understand them also as cornerstones of all mature religious experience) but provide a framework for learning invaluable lessons about being human, and more specifically for me, about being a man, simply as that is my sex. The five spiritual lessons became footprints for me before the first breath of this new work, and firmly root the spiritual corridor of where I am coming from in my offering and creative enquiry with men.

In Service to Others

When I was younger I often dreamed two things, that I was immortal and would live for ever, and that I could fly. These are the dreams of a Peter Pan, of someone who is not coming down and perhaps these early dreams became imprints or beliefs for me.

Yet the firm yet gentle physical relationship I had with my father did create some foundations for a bridge from boyhood to manhood, a bridge that can only be guided by a man. I also received some mentoring in the spiritual disciplines that I believe are the foundations of being a male today. These disciplines provide the foundations for spiritual sustenance equipping a boy for living in the world. Rohr describes them 1) *Life is hard* 2) *I am not important* 3) *My life is not about me* 4) *I am not in control* 5) *I am going to die*.

Relationship with suffering has forced my hand. I was led into a series of mini-deaths; interweaving strands of experience had come together to create conditions for transformation. *Adam's Return* was a game-changing encounter. It clarified an newly emerging ball-park, and laid a new gauntlet down. Experience in my body now became points within a new compass. Not just a map alongside others, but a new landscape for living. Richard Rohr, 'Authentic God experience always "burns" you, yet does not destroy you.'

Ancient rites of passage would teach a young man how service to his tribe was important. It would be modelled by his elders and he would learn that to work for a greater good, other than himself, would be a step closer to manhood. Thus he would learn about ego boundaries, and that living on the planet would not be all about him. Rohr again, 'The privileges of manhood are given only to those who have paid some dues to the common good, and therefore can be trusted not to abuse the common good. Otherwise we merely empower selfishness.' In the mentoring of a young tribesman

this would be something the older men would pass down. Our culture of the individual teaches us that it is all about *me*. Is there any active modelling of unconditional service to others in the male elders among us? This question was one on which I wanted to travel. It would be about loving another man.

A Men's Group

In the summers of 2009 and 2010 I met two other significant men on my journey, both on 5Rhythms community camps. Experiences together as men, and with women, provided the ground to begin a group together which began in Autumn 2010.

I shared personal and profound experience in the group. It became an exciting, radical education. While an enquiry into being men together and falling deeper into experiencing each other, it's also been an observation and study in how men think and behave. I spent six months managing and leading the group forward to a place where we now facilitate ourselves. Among many things, the group reveals to me the cultural challenges men face concerning leadership, status, accountability and communication.

Importantly it also shows me that men need each other's love. We need to learn how to feel it and create conditions where it can take place. As Rohr points out, it does not seem to work for men if this is given away too easily, but grounds best when it is earned. Men have learned to love me slowly, and I them. I am now close friends with men that previously I would have actively chosen not to spend time with. 'The male need for the male is in men's hardwiring, and most do not understand its depth or meaning, especially since it has taken so many unhealthy forms.'

The group has been ever-present in my life since. As I was diving deeper into more intimate contact and movement practice with men, it was a foundation for me to be still. It became the roots and a bedrock for where I can now evidence a body of research, and signposted a new, emerging purpose. Poignantly, my first half of life came crashing down, and so the group was a place I held on, a worm-hole the other side of mental illness, and the men in it became lifelines in a strange kind of way.

By summer 2013 I felt well enough to step gently forward. I began to 'operate' again. I began to feel flow. Everything moves. God loved me, and wants to be in personal relationship with me, however messy I am, and the cycles of birth, death and renewal call forward our humanity in their omniscience. Suffering is necessary. The sun will rise.

Perhaps it had been seven years. This deep dive.

Deep Diving Men

I might define: men who are on a journey to find out who they are, and what they can offer, as males. I would also suggest that the growing community exists to support men getting together creatively and freely in different ways, and that this work aims to serve men and boys in taking themselves into relationships with each other, with woman and in the world. There are different aspects of the work emerging constantly. For me there is a specific artistic energy to the Deep Diving Men flow, and so an emphasis in the work is to use mediums of creative expression, rooted in the body and voice, to create form within which the male voice can be witnessed. This brings the work into a public, socio-political frame.



It was in my mind to stimulate the possibility of an artistic collective of men. It was, initially, less clear why. A performer, teacher and theatre director in my first half of life, what grew in me over a period of time was the idea to try and hold and develop spaces where a company or collective of men could evolve. It became slowly clear, that in its flow, where this stream was headed in terms of its form, yet it did not need a fixed destination. The *intention* to create the flow was the vision, not to *control* the flow.

It's important that the enquiry continues to be moving and co-creating with what it meets energetically and have it's own journey: it is a dive down and will encounter what it encounters. In this way it will have a life-death-rebirth cycle as is reflected in the journeys we all might make.

In 2012 I took on a job to direct a large youth theatre production of Shakespeare's *Tempest*. It was a triumphant return to work after the breakdown the previous year. 'Triumphant' was of course the key word. Nearing end of the rehearsal process, and as we began to move into the theatre, I began to feel the irrepressible storm clouds of depressive breakdown slowly form and, piece by piece, unravel me again. But I was guiding the ship into the harbour. That's what I'd always done, it was what I'd been designed for. Wasn't it? To provide, take responsibility, weather the storm, lead from the front, gather the young. That's what my father did. That's what I saw some *good* men doing.

An ex-student of mine and friend, a talented and capable young man, was working with me. I'd asked him to. Somehow, I was already prepared. It was, in this microcosm of theatre production, as if a metaphor for all my professional life was here to be reckoned, one final time. Having led the whole exciting and exhausting process for eight weeks, and led a close-knit younger staff mentorship team for the young people, around me as support, I was ready. When deep in the desert, in a moment of lucidity and courage I called him. "Here. It's yours. I want you to take it and take care of it. I have to

let go.”

Man to man. Across the generations. Across all the survival masks of my former self. Guide the ship into the harbour.

I'll never forget the joy and the relief of secretly attending the first night, being smuggled backstage and sitting to watch what I'd started, happen. It had been *difficult*, I was not in *control*, it was not about *me*, I wasn't important and I was going to die.



So, two years later, I invited men to join together in a short series of explorative workshops. Here I shared a vision for the Labtheatre work. I knew I wanted the process to create its own flow and to plant seeds inviting an ongoing collaborative vision. It was unfortunate I'd used well-worn emotional muscles too soon after the initial breakdown, but it came with many blessings.

So we began a dive: into a physical language, into allowing each other to be the men we were, into vulnerability and intimacy. After eight weeks work together, and having researched various texts concerning the male path, we had the seeds of an ensemble. Physical theatre was the medium. We began to explore what it was to be a male and as men together explored questions arising for us as a group. I found the men open to receive research of mine that I offered. So the words of Bly, Rohr and Biddulph became the performance text. While this created an intense yet unfocussed tapestry, we offered an authentic energy, physicality and vulnerability that impacted the audiences. We shared the work in small theatre-spaces. This is from one of the female observers.

One of the things that pulled me into the longer performances I've seen was the opening. Silence. Movement. Authentic and yet non-confrontational eye contact. There was something special in this opening. Something scared that resonated through the entire piece. Hypnotic, lyrical. It was an invitation with clear boundaries and a taste of the intensity, and creative vulnerability to come. The gaze from the men performing felt pure, intimate, and safe. A kind of deepening. A kind of homecoming through the courage to meet another, through the courage to meet a man.



The film Where Are We Going? evidences slices of the process.

Since 2012 I'd been blogging, gently navigating the energy of this new purpose. As I recovered slowly that year, I gained confidence that there was a new offering being created for me as a result of these dives. I made a website and began, at the beginning, to slowly post my story. It felt a very vulnerable invitation into pieces of my world.

As a result of connections that were being made, I ran a series of workshops for young men at a summer camp in August 2014. International Men's Day in November then presented an opportunity to

move the work forward again. I gathered a generationally diverse group of men, a film crew, wrote some text, gathered everyone together for just one rehearsal and then guided a group of men through a street theatre pop-up 'event' on London's SouthBank. You can read [their reflections on the day](#) and also see the docu-film of the event.

Running

Running away, running towards, running fast, slow, for and against. Running to win, to keep up, running to fit in - running because they are, just running along. Running to move, to get away, to escape,



to be still. Running with and without you, running somewhere, anywhere, running with the men, running my mask; running questions and answers, towards my father, my brother, my son - running as sacrifice, running a hero, running for life, death, freedom, security, love - running for my family, my community - so I'm running my edge, my gift, running the race - I'm running to come home. (Deep Diving Men)

The physical image is a gauntlet thrown down. Where are we going? The question invites different suppositions. One focus is physical endurance. Running reminds men of our DNA, of 200,000 years evolving as hunter-gatherer, of the need to be grounded in the body and of the sense of undertaking a purposeful community sustaining activity together. Running reminds us that our bodies, physical strength and testosterone were fundamentally essential to the sustenance of the tribe. We ran to survive; reacting quickly, avoiding danger, killing animal and protecting family. A few years of liberal thinking and gender debate doesn't alter this blueprint. In speaking of how father-love, unlike the love of the mother, is conditional, Groth suggests, 'Perhaps all active initiation of affection for others by a male is modelled on his way of loving his father. None of this, I maintain, has changed in an era of fractured families, the promotion of single-parent "families," the promotion of same-sex "parents." These social changes have highlighted deep-lying prototypes of experience that are still very much in play in our bodies and psyches. We cannot controvert thousands of years of collective, embodied experience with a few decades of socio-political innovation.'

When I drop into a purposeful 'staccato' in a 5Rhythms movement session - straight lines, forward movement, a disciplined, focused energy - it comes from the roots of my body and grounds a maleness for me when I feel it. Gabrielle Roth teaches me this movement is also a wild *masculine* offering. It's a 'wild son'⁸: it can be angry, it can be unpredictable. This embodied feeling can't be discussed, or organised in my head, but only expressed in my body. 'To be truly wild and free you have to follow

your heart, not your head.' My staccato movement actions things, speaks my truth, fights for freedom, steps forward into vulnerability.

Deep Diving Men is about taking action. It's about having the courage to be seen untamed, raw and unbridled. It's an expression of freedom.

Running is an active image. It's going somewhere. A group of men, unknown to each other, stepping forward to publicly show themselves is a very masculine act. It's edgy, slightly dangerous and invites unpredictability; it puts men together outside existing comfort zones in a way they would not usually find themselves. It fuels our sense of humour, a laughter of the heart. It's standing up shoulder to shoulder. It's forward motion into the world. It's provocative debate. It's embodying questions about who men are today.

Notes

¹ *Moore and Gillette, 'King Warrior Magician Lover'*. 'The Lover archetype is primary to the psyche also because it is the energy of sensitivity to the outer environment. It expresses what Jungians call "sensation function," the function of the psyche that is trained in on all the details of sensory experience, the function that notices colors and forms, sounds, tactile sensations, and smells. The Lover also monitors the changing textures of the inner psychological world as it responds to incoming sensory impressions.'

² *Robert Bly, 'Iron John'*. 'We are looking at the source of a lot of desperation in certain men here, and a lot of suffering in certain woman. A man may repeat the courting and disappointment over and over. One man about thirty-five told me that confusion about the layers had ruined his life. His life had gone like this: he sees a woman across the room, knows immediately that it is "She." He drops the relationship he has, pursues her, feels wild excitement, passion, beating heart, obsession. After a few months everything collapses; she becomes an ordinary woman. He is confused and puzzled. Then he sees once more a radiant face across the room, and the old certainty comes again. Her face seems to give out a whisper: "All those who love the Woman with Golden Hair come to me." She doesn't seem to realise she is sending out that whisper. Of course the whisper gives her great power because men offer to rearrange their lives for her. But it isn't real power, and when men leave her she feels insignificant and small, abandoned, powerless. A generation ago millions of Western men gave their longing for the Golden-haired Woman to Marilyn Monroe. She offered to take it and she died from it.'

³ *Karen Armstrong, 'Fields of Blood'*. 'Each of us has three brains which coexist uneasily. In the deepest recess of our grey matter we have an 'old brain' that we inherited from the reptiles that struggled out of the potential slime 500 million years ago. Intent on their own survival with absolutely no altruistic impulses, these creatures were solely motivated by mechanisms urging them to feed, fight, flee (where necessary) and reproduce. Those best equipped to compete mercilessly for food, ward off any threat, dominate territory and seek safety naturally passed along their genes passed along their genes, so these self-centred impulses could only intensify.'

⁴ Richard Rohr, *Adam's Return*. 'Liminal space is a concept refined by Victor Turner in his classic study on initiation and ritual. The Latin word *limen* means "threshold." Liminality is an inner state and sometimes an outer situation where people can begin to think and act in genuinely new ways. It is when we are betwixt and between, have left one room but not yet entered the next room, any hiatus between stages of life, stages of faith, jobs, loves, or relationships. It is that graced time when we are not certain or in control, when something genuinely new can happen. We are empty, receptive, an erased tablet waiting for new words. Nothing fresh or creative will normally happen when we are inside our self-constructed comfort zones, only more of the same. Nothing original emerges from business as usual. It seems we need some anti-structure to give direction, depth, and purpose to our regular structure. Otherwise structure, which is needed in the first half of life, tends to become a prison as we grow older.

⁵ Miles Groth, *We Men Must Love Our Boys*. 'It is important to add at this point my observation that it is in his relationship with his father that a boy's outlook on and way of loving others is established. Let me explain briefly. A male infant learns from his mother that he is lovable. It is thought that male (or female) infants return mother-love with love, when what they express, in fact, is gratitude—not love. On the other hand, a boy first learns how to *initiate* love with someone in his relationship with his father. He also now learns what it means to be loved *in return*, of requited love in this relationship. He is now loved, not unconditionally, as was the case with his mother, but conditionally—conditional on his act of loving in a relationship in which he has first initiated the love. His first opportunity to do this occurs in boyhood and for the purposes of identifying with the father, the person he wants to be like. Much depends on whether he has been made into a son and much that follows depends on this. Freud—who had a very troubled relationship with own father—left this out of his theory. He could see only the rivalry that occurs between father and son.

Without hesitation and without thinking about it, a father will love his son in return— unless the situation is chaotic and he is not there emotionally, or he has gone away. The father's response is critical. If he does not love his son in return, the boy's bridge from boyhood to manhood cannot be built. Since for a boy, his father is the model of all men, his attitude toward other men will depend on what his father does in this situation. I would add here my belief that a man's feelings of love for a woman are modelled on this way of relating. Perhaps all active initiation of affection for others by a male is modelled on his way of loving his father. None of this, I maintain, has changed in an era of fractured families, the promotion of single-parent "families," the promotion of same-sex "parents." These social changes have highlighted deep-lying prototypes of experience that are still very much in play in our bodies and psyches. We cannot controvert thousands of years of collective, embodied experience with a few decades of socio-political innovation.'

⁶ Bible: *Psalms 63:1-4*. My soul thirsts for you; My flesh longs for You/ In a dry and thirsty land where there is no water/ So I have looked for You in the sanctuary/ To see Your Power and Your glory/ Because Your loving kindness is better than life/ My lips shall praise You/ Thus I will bless you while I live/ I will lift up my hands in Your name.

⁷ Bly triggers this thought for me, that as a result of feminism and negative images of male authority, men had been squeezed into the inability to create a voice for themselves. Patriarchy negates the

need for a male voice, they say. So while 19th Century men were unaware of the suffering of women, yet became aware, men have only recently become aware of the great suffering caused to ourselves. It isn't a suffering inflicted by power imbalance, but one of grief and a generational father-wound.

⁸ Robert Bly, 'Iron John'. 'One has the sense that some power in the psyche arranges a severe katabasis if the man does not know enough to go down on his own. Depression is a small katabasis, and something other than us arranges it. Depression usually surprises us by its arrival and its departure. In depression, we refuse to go down, and so a hand comes up and pulls him down. In grief we choose to go down.'

⁹ Gabrielle Roth describes a 'wild son' archetype in the staccato rhythm. 'Look for the part of you that wants to shake things up, the part of you that takes risks and makes changes. Look for the wild child everyone told to sit down and shut up; the part of you that cannot be hemmed in, that knows lies are dangerous, nice is death, and pretending is just bad acting.

It saddens me to see so many people running from this part of themselves. I understand the threat—it's dangerous territory for anyone who has an investment in a specific self-image, like being the polite one, the do-gooder, the old fart, or even the rebel. Why protect a self-image that limits and even harms you? Go for the anger and find out what it has to teach you.'

References

Armstrong, Karen. (2014) *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*. London: The Bodley Head.

Biddulph, Steve. (2008) *Raising Boys*. London: Harper Thornsons.

Biddulph, Steve. (2004) *Manhood*. London: Vermilion.

Bly, Robert. (1990) *Iron John*. London: Random House.

Clements, Nick. (2013) *The Alpha Wolf: A Tale About the Modern Male*. Winchester UK: Roundfire

Dieda, David. (2004) *The Way of the Superior Man: A Spiritual Guide to Mastering the Challenges of Women, Work and Sexual Desire*. Canada: Sounds True.

Glouberman, D. (2003) *The Joy of Burnout: How the End of the World can be a New Beginning*. Makawao: Inner Ocean.

Leader, Darian. (2008) *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and Depression*. London: Penguin.

Moore R & Gillett D. (1990) *King Warrior Magician Lover: Rediscovering the Archetypes of the Mature Masculine*. New York: HarperCollins.

Peck, Scott M. (1978) *The Road Less Travelled*. London: Arrow.

Rice-Oxley, Mark. (2012) *Underneath the Lemon Tree: A Memoir of Depression and Recovery*. London: Little, Brown.

Rohr, Richard. (2004) *Adam's Return: The Five Promises of Male Initiation*. New York: Crossroad.

Rohr, Richard. (2005) *From Wild Man to Wise Man: Reflections on Male Spirituality*. Cincinnati: St Anthony Messenger.

Rohr, Richard. (2011) *Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.

Roth, Gabrielle. (1997) *Sweat Your Prayers: Movement as a Spiritual Practice*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.



Duncan is working collaboratively on creative projects with both men and women and is passionate about the potential of gathering men together. A theatre practitioner, performer and experienced teacher, Duncan recently founded Deep Diving Men, a evolving community platform in service to exploring the male journey, and is using theatre and film as mediums to document the evolving process. Duncan mentors younger artists, is Creative Consultant at TheSpaceUK and has worked extensively as a Drama teacher in schools and colleges.

NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).

Book Reviews



Neil Lyndon, *Sexual Impolitics*, Amazon, 2014.

Neil Lyndon's *Sexual Impolitics*, should be on the reading list of every course on gender—that is, on both women and men. The author is a journalist, not an academic. His book is more accessible than many treatises to anyone who can read and think. At any rate, it is both entertaining and blunt. It is free of both dense theorizing, moreover, and political correctness. It is a *cri de coeur*, a passionate and energetic response to the destructive sexual polarization of our time and therefore an appropriate topic for analysis by those who claim to care about sexual or any other form of justice.

Whether this book actually will appear on academic reading lists is another matter. Lyndon tells readers how his adversaries either attacked his writings or ignored them and how he eventually lost his job for persevering in his attempt to explore the anomalies and contradictions in some feminist literature. He writes, in short, of being silenced (which is something that many feminists consider a problem unique to women). As a male academic who writes about misandry, I know that many of my colleagues—both female and male—will either ignore my books and those of my co-author or prevent them from being published in the first place. Silencing dissenters is not only less messy but also more effective, after all, than attacking them. Our adversaries will do so no matter how thoroughly documented our research and no matter how formal or neutral our style, simply

because we do not support the current orthodoxy—by which I mean ideas that are supposedly immune to criticism. They will allow no one to challenge any feminist theory except from the perspective of its effect on women or sexual minorities (or, in some cases, on other minorities as well). This is not an argument for abandoning scholarship, however, in favor of journalism. It is an argument for listening just as carefully and compassionately, or at least as prudently, to men as to women.

To the extent that I find anything lacking in this book, it would be a discussion of war as the primary paradigm of masculine identity in Western societies since the late eighteenth century. More specifically, I refer to the advent of “universal” (male) military conscription in Revolutionary France. For the first time, a government linked citizenship with military service. Women did not have to become soldiers, so they did not become full citizens. Because all men did have to become soldiers, at least in theory, this became the fate that all men shared and that all men had to prepare for in one way or another. It was, lamentably, the source of their collective identity as men. Like the sexual revolution, this military revolution was both profound and unprecedented. Earlier regimes sometimes forced ordinary men into service (leaving enough men to produce food for the state and without weapons to threaten the state), but they saw no need to justify this form of oppression with any philosophy about a social contract. Rulers had power, and everyone expected them to use it for good or ill (although their ability to enforce measures of this kind was somewhat limited before the rise of modern bureaucracies). But it would be foolish to expect Lyndon or any other author to cover every topic.

Lyndon’s greatest insight is that the current state of affairs is not the result of some titanic and historic conspiracy of men against women. Women have indeed faced marginalization in the public realm until very recently, he says, but not because men have hated women and therefore subjugated them. The characteristic functions of women both historically and cross-culturally are due instead, he says, to the obvious fact that only women could gestate and lactate. To survive, therefore every society had to ensure that women could give birth to and care for infants. And this led, at least in our society, to what women now (but did not always) see as confined lives. That changed, radically, with the very recent advent of reliable contraception and legalized abortion. Suddenly, after countless millennia, women were free to reject or put off motherhood. And this meant that they were also free, for the first time in history, to leave the private realm and enter the public one. At first, both sexes enjoyed their new freedom from ancient restrictions. It was not always easy to break away from deeply engrained notions of family life, let alone propriety, but profound social and other cultural changes came nonetheless and with remarkable speed. Far from facing implacable hatred from young men, young women found support from them. After all, young men wanted the responsibilities and burdens of manhood (those of their fathers and earlier male ancestors) no more than young women wanted the responsibilities and burdens of womanhood (those of their mothers and earlier female ancestors). As hippies, for instance, both young men and young women celebrated the new order.

And yet, it all went wrong. The hippies were naïve. After approximately one decade, women were beginning to feel ambivalent about their own freedoms, let alone those of men. Some women found that change was coming too quickly; they wanted their careers but also children and listened with increasing anxiety to the ticking of their “biological clocks.” Other women found that change was not coming quickly enough; they blamed men for not being sensitive enough to their needs either in the workplace or the home. Nonetheless, no social revolution in history had ever moved so

quickly. Almost overnight, in historical terms, governments (relying on the votes of both women and men) rewrote laws and institutions revised policies with women in mind.

This brings me to a mystery that neither Lyndon nor I can explain fully: the emergence of ideologically oriented feminism, with its ultimate focus on the conspiracy theory of history (also known as the origin of patriarchy) and the resulting implacable hostility toward men. Unlike egalitarian feminists, ideological feminists rejected reform and embraced revolution. And to do that they needed an enemy class. Lyndon points out the parallels between their rhetoric and those of Marxist rhetoric. The new “bourgeoisie” were men, the new “proletarians” women. I agree, but I think that ideological feminists tapped an additional source, albeit unwittingly. I refer to the nationalism or even racism that Romanticism had fostered. The notion of class warfare was not very different from that of race warfare (although, in theory if not always in practice, members of one class could defect to the other). And sexual warfare is very close to racial warfare, because both sex and race are biological categories with innate characteristics. In any case, neither idea was new in the nineteenth century; both emerged from long histories in the West (and not only in the West) of dualism: “us” versus “them.” Lyndon is correct in noting the obvious fact that ideological feminists have openly promoted contempt for men as an enemy class. As he puts it, many women believe that all men are Idi Amin. (Here in Montreal, many believed, and said, that all men are Marc Lépine, the mass murderer who shot fourteen women before shooting himself in 1989). Lyndon adds that some feminist books or essays would be indistinguishable from Nazi ones by replacing the word “Jews” with “men.” And even women who rejected that approach in theory often trivialized, ignored or even condoned it in practice, nonetheless, as a way of “pushing the envelope” for women.

In effect, writes Lyndon, feminism has become a “secular faith.” And I agree. My own research in the field of religious studies has focused on that very phenomenon: political ideologies that come to function very much (though not quite completely) as religions do. They provide adherents with meaning, purpose, moral principles, myths, rituals, symbols, pilgrimage sites, special days, special writings, communities and, most important of all, collective identity. But I will return to that.

Much of Lyndon’s book is about the results of this mentality. It was in this context, for instance, that countless jurisdictions rewrote their legal codes. Doing so made it easier for women to divorce their husbands and take full custody of the children, for unmarried women to sue their partners for alimony, for women to sue men for creating or ignoring workplace environments that women might find offensive, for courts to make allegations of rape easier for women to “prove,” for police officers to arrest men—not women—after allegations of domestic violence without requiring any proof and so on.

It was in this context, too, that companies and universities rewrote their policies on contact between the sexes. Codes of sexual etiquette on campus, for instance, now require one partner (usually the man) to gain an explicit and even enthusiastic “yes” not only to sexual overtures but to every step along the way to intercourse. Those who fail to provide a “preponderance” of evidence to defend themselves soon end up behind closed doors with access to neither lawyers nor their accusers. Students now have a right to sue their professors (usually men) for stating facts that make them feel “uncomfortable” in class. And then, there is affirmative action to hire more women than would otherwise be likely (even though, with so many more male students than female students dropping out

of school, that premise will soon be very hard to sustain).

And it was in this context that academics reversed their stance on the study of sexual difference. For a brief period, they had opposed any research that might reveal sexual differences. They had assumed that any differences would favor men, not women. Within two decades they began to *emphasize* any research that might reveal sexual differences. They assumed now that any differences would favor women, of course, not men. At the same time, universities set up departments of women's studies, which promoted the works of both egalitarian and ideological feminists. (Later on, these became departments of "gender studies," even though the focus remained exclusively on promoting the interests of women and sometimes sexual minorities.)

At the moment, how many researchers or politicians worry about the fact that so many more men than women are killing themselves or dropping out of either school (to become an economic underclass) or society (a criminal underclass)? For that matter, how many worry about the fact that men in our time do not even live as long as women? How many tax dollars go to pay for research on that?

Now, all of these punitive measures and double standards make sense only on the assumption that men deserve collective punishment and that women deserve collective revenge. If it were true that men embody collective guilt for crimes against women in the past, apparently, then maybe they should expect collective suffering in the present (even if only to "level the playing field" for women). Men are the means to an end, in other words, not ends in themselves. This mentality is definitely not what egalitarian feminists have ever had in mind. Nor does it produce the kind of world that most women have ever wanted for their own sons.

Questions remain. How did we get here? More specifically, why did many women embrace, or at least condone, theories that rely on the explicit or implicit demonization of men? And why have feminists only recently begun to acknowledge this as a feminist problem? I think that the early man-haters obviously had, or believed that they had, something to gain by heaping ridicule, contempt and malice on men. Some of them must have believed that they had nothing much to lose by separating themselves from men or even separating all women from men. Lyndon argues, however, that sexually liberated women suddenly experienced a great horror. They were suddenly terrified of male sexuality, in other words, and therefore associated it with implacable evil. They might well have experienced a great horror, but I suggest that they were terrified mainly of their own newly revealed sexuality and projected that onto men. In any case, most women do not want to sever themselves completely from men. So, why do they condone the ranting of those who do? One obvious answer would be that they do so in the interest of political expediency: closing ranks against anyone who challenges a feminist claim no matter how grotesque that claim might be. And what about male feminists? Why do they use ideological versions of feminism to attack other men? They consider themselves honorary women, I suggest, and therefore believe that they are exempt, as repentant sinners, from the charges. They buy self-respect (and presumably respect from women) at the cost of separating themselves from other men.

But I think that one thing is clear. Feminists did not invent radical dualism, which has long been a characteristic feature of some theological ideologies, fundamentalist ones in our time, and

has therefore become a characteristic feature of all secular religions—that is, of all political ideologies on both the left and the right. The appeal of religion in an increasingly secular age, its secular equivalents, is hard to ignore. No matter how loathsome and dangerous these religions or secular religions are for outsiders, they clearly serve a need for insiders that modernity per se does not serve. We ignore history, including our own history, especially since the 1930s, at our own peril.

Paul Nathanson

NEW MALE STUDIES: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL (NMS) IS AN OPEN ACCESS ONLINE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL FOR RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION OF ISSUES FACING BOYS AND MEN WORLDWIDE. THIS JOURNAL USES OPEN JOURNAL SYSTEMS 2.3.4.0, WHICH IS OPEN SOURCE JOURNAL MANAGEMENT AND PUBLISHING SOFTWARE DEVELOPED, SUPPORTED, AND FREELY DISTRIBUTED BY THE PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE PROJECT UNDER THE GNU GENERAL PUBLIC LICENSE.

THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DOWNLOADED FROM [HTTP://NEWMALESTUDIES.COM](http://newmalestudies.com).