

Sexual Impolitics: Heresies on Sex, Gender and Feminism. By Neil Lyndon. Kindle: 239 pages. www.amazon.com. \$4.43. Review by J. Steven Svoboda.

British journalist Neil Lyndon has published a book that for the first time reprints the “original, uncensored, unexpurgated text” of his classic 1992 book *No More Sex War: The Failures of Feminism*. While directed to the UK, the great majority of his analysis and conclusions is also applicable to the US, in some cases with some minor adjustments. The litany of injustices relating to *No More Sex War* with which the author opens his book may make it hard for some readers to sympathize with him or like him.

This would be a shame because the book is as refreshing and illuminating to read now as it no doubt was more than two full decades ago when it first appeared in its unfortunately modified form.

Lyndon is a more trenchant observer of the gender wars than virtually all other authors to address the overall “battle of the sexes” in broad strokes; so far as this reviewer can recall, the authors’ only possible competitors in this regard are Warren Farrell and Tim Goldich. Lyndon shows that many years on from when the National Organization for Women first got started, we now are frankly confronting an ideological battle for supremacy between feminism and common sense.

The author comes across as simultaneously reasonable and radical, justifying his description of feminism as a “reactionary” force through which “we have all, women and men, been harmed in our personal lives and in our political potentialities...” by quoting chapter and verse of its effects on males and indeed, on all of us.

Lyndon has a great feel for the ease with which, using one hand, we condemn “men” while simultaneously, with the other hand, taking back our claims for supposed exceptions such as our spouses, good friends, fathers and sons. By the beginning of the 1990’s, the author writes, “Men as a generalised whole (not your husband nor hers, *bien entendu*) had become useless and the unspeakable evil, the object of a light smirk of dismissal and the irredeemably condemned for whom, as I am about to show, no imprecations, no damnings, no luridness of language was excessive.”

The author takes Rosalind Miles to task for demonstrably false claims she made that men’s most common doctor’s visits relate to impotency and that physical violence is a uniquely male phenomenon and accordingly “it is to masculinity itself that we must look for the answer to its origins and for any hope of its remedy.” Why, Lyndon queries, “do feminists of all persuasions and shades of opinion want to insist that men share universal characteristics of behaviour and habits of thought? Why are they so unwilling to acknowledge similarities between men and women and differences between men?”

Lyndon eloquently, passionately contests the common claim of a uniquely female way of working, suggesting instead how remarkably unchanged professions have

been by women's entrance into them *en masse* over the past few decades. Perhaps even more to the point, men's suggested sense of entitlement or comfort in the workplace is nothing more than a myth. "Anybody who assumes that men discover and enjoy in institutions a comprehensive sense of belonging which women lack has not been listening to men or must willfully be ignoring realities for the sake of a fictitious account."

The author makes a very passionate and generally persuasive argument that the single most important event in women's "emergence into public and commercial life on equal terms with men" was the appearance of the pill and of available, legal abortion. He also points out that feminists largely ignore the critical roles played by these developments. Lyndon also provocatively shows that several government-brokered and important gains by women in the UK in the sixties—doubled university enrollment, greatly expanded access to legal abortion, and divorce reform—occurred without significant opposition and did not result from feminist campaigning.

Only a few nits can be picked with this superlative, even exciting, book. Periodic lapses into obscenity do not strength his case. The repeated misspellings of Naomi Wolf's and Ashley Montagu's names do not inspire confidence. I also think Lyndon concedes far too much when he writes, "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." Finally, the book's structure is a bit unfortunate, with several essays from subsequent years simply reprinted following—and duplicating some of the material from--*No More Sex War*. It should however also be said that these essays contain many penetrating insights and much original thinking bringing together ideas from a wide range of disciplines.

On the other hand, this is perhaps the best book regarding gender that manages to contextualize pertinent issues within the larger society and within broader concerns not directly related to sex. So it is that Lyndon interestingly posits that the critical factor is not sex but class. "The evident and incontestable truth... is that very great numbers of women in the West have taken pleasure in commercial competition, in acquisition and in domination... They have flung themselves into those roles and styles with abandon and gratification." The diminution in recent years of—in Germaine Greer's words--"social provision for the very young, the very old, the imbecile and the outsider" proves that "it is simply pea-brained cant to say that, if women were running the world, a better and more humane set of priorities would be established and care would be sympathetically provided for all who need it. As far as the administration of the social welfare institutions is concerned, women already have a very big hand in running the world."

Lyndon also writes trenchantly and with robust common sense in debunking claims that almost half of women have been raped and showing how flirtation and wooing naturally introduce unclear situations not susceptible to post hoc political analysis. In short, "The storm of hysteria which envelops the subject [of rape] may well be taken as an indication of the falsehood with which it has been willfully endued by the sisterhood. They cannot permit a calm discussion of the evidence because the evidence is so plainly contrary to their declared analysis and aims." Lyndon takes some risks when he goes on to discuss in some detail just how rarely rape in fact occurs, as this clearly flies in the face of feminist mythology, yet as usual his analysis is refreshingly down to earth. The author then goes on to provide an analysis of domestic violence that complements his discussion of rape, concluding that "the issue of domestic violence has been comprehensively blown-up for polemical purposes." Lyndon crowns his achievement by pointedly comparing what may be fairly called our overreaction to the relatively modest numbers of women and children forced to seek refuge from domestic violence with our almost complete lack of concern with the vastly greater numbers of homeless men. "I count this extraordinary discrepancy in sympathy and ineptitude in political practice among the cardinal failures of feminism and of the style of politics feminism has promoted."

The author evidences an admirable breadth of vision and a truly moving compassion for all of humanity. A hearty round of applause for this unique and highly meritorious masterwork. Don't miss it, especially given a tiny price that suggests that it may be the greatest value in the history of men's rights literature!