The Comfort of Men


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Thesis Abstract

This thesis is a critical history of managerial and professional men in post-Second World War Australia. The attention that I have given managerial and professional men has been determined by my own political desire to problematise the continued accomplishment of hegemony. As subjects, these men and their discursive practices enable scrutiny of the regenerative labour necessary to sustain power and necessary to realise the material results that accrue to those performing such work.

My thesis examines the practices of particular groups of managerial and professional men within four discrete social settings or terrain during the post-war period. I interrogate the operations of managerial and professional men in personnel management (the terrain of work), in market research (the terrain of the market), in parenting and marriage guidance (the terrain of the family) and in the service club Rotary (the terrain of the civic). In each of these terrains I find managerial and professional men framing problems and enacting solutions. A process or intervention that makes natural the connections of interest (of advantage or disadvantage) being constantly recreated; an intervention that expresses a comfort with the mechanics and entailments of hegemony.

To enable my critical history I apply, in each terrain, a framework comprising three core elements. I historicize the accomplishment of hegemony; testing the emergence of government and positive expressions of power during post-war modernisation in the local contexts of managerial and professional men’s interventions. I people hegemony; identifying the practices of managerial and professional men as resources for doing social relations (in particular the relations of gender and class) and crucial to the operation of hegemony. And, thirdly, I demonstrate the interventions of these men to be interested; unravelling the
possessive investments managerial and professional men make through their interventions.

My scrutiny of managerial and profession men and their practices, my choice of terrains in which to study them, my analysis of the process enacted in these terrain and the sources that I have utilised are not intended to assemble a biography of men’s experiences or ideal masculinities. Rather, my thesis provides a biography of interventions in order to disassemble that which appears not to be anything in particular: the ordinary regeneration of hegemony by ordinary men doing ordinary things.
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