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that appeared in volume 8 of*

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Book review

Making *ein Anschluss* of Sleight of Mouth

L. Michael Hall and Bobby G. Bodenhamer, *Mind-Lines: Lines for Changing Minds – The MAGIC of Conversational Reframing – Neuro-Semantics and the Transformation of Meaning*. Empowerment Technologies, Clifton, CO, 2000. Paperback, 270pp, no price marked.

Reviewed by Eric Robbie

As with a previous review, I had better begin by declaring an interest. I first met Michael Hall in the Master Practitioner track that I taught with Richard Bandler's team in San Diego, in Southern California, in 1989 – a track which, I understand, was his first experience of real NLP. And I have to own up: I first introduced Michael to the phrase 'go meta'. I used it quite a lot during the course. I thought then that the participants would hear, from the way I tonally marked it out, that it was just a jokey, loose, 'this-is-an-inside-joke-for-all-of-us-here-at-camp-NLP' way of talking, and not at all well formed. Michael, on the other hand, was desperately, digitally trying to capture every single word inside his laptop and was perhaps too busy to hear. Or perhaps he took my tonal marking to mean something much more immanent, if not profound.

Then, in the months after that training, Michael – who at that time was some kind of pastor or vicar operating out of Grand Junction, Colorado, in the US mid-West – started to send me pamphlets and tracts that he was self-publishing and using to spread the word.

Now, twelve years later, Michael has applied that same energy and the 'ferocious resolve' he learned at the Trainer Training, which Richard and I taught in San Diego the following year, to producing a whole slew of books – one, it seems, for every major area of NLP. And it's one of the latest of these productions, the *Mind-Lines* book, that I am reviewing here. Chris Hall was originally asked to do it but could not because of her other commitments.

So how did we get here?

This is the third edition of Michael Hall's *Mind-Lines* book. The advance claimed in the first edition on existing Sleight of Mouth was that Hall

had ‘improved on’ the older Sleight of Mouth model by clumping together and grouping the existing twenty patterns commonly in use. Then, following a suggestion from UK-based NLPer Denis Bridoux, Hall ‘improved on’ his new model by adding in six new Mind-Lines to the existing score.

In this third edition, prompted by his US partner, Bobby Bodenhamer, Hall has applied his patent meta-states analysis to the structure of the second edition to produce something which has ‘improved on’ it yet again. In fact Hall and Bodenhamer claim quite simply to have ‘made the model more vigorous, methodical, and streamlined’ (p.59). Hmm.

In practice, what you get is a re-run of the history of the book in the form of three successive prefaces, a foreword by Joseph O’Connor, a sort of ‘overture and beginners’ section – a set of twenty worked examples, which they call ‘Mind Line Teasing’ – and then the book itself.

The main text falls into two parts: part I with four chapters on (1) that old ‘NLP is magic’ thing, again; (2) the arguments, as Hall and Bodenhamer see them, for Sleight of Mouth – or Mind-Lines; (3) the history, ethics, and uses of Sleight of Mouth, now very firmly called Mind-Lines; and (4) the structure of beliefs and frames – again, as Hall and Bodenhamer see them.

Part II has fourteen chapters, the first six of which (i.e. chapters 5 to 10) are the twenty main Sleight of Mouth – sorry, Mind-Line – patterns themselves; the other eight repeat in a slightly different way some of the stuff about ‘the magic of language’, the nature of meaning, a ‘how to do what when’, and how to psych yourself up to create and deliver Sleights of Mouth – sorry, sorry, won’t do it again – Mind-Lines.

The meta-states analysis does not kick in until Chapter 9, while it’s not until the second-to-last of the latter eight (i.e. Chapter 17) that you get, as said above, Hall and Bridoux’s suggestions for six brand new and additional Mind-Line patterns – with intimations of many more.

I might add that part II is quite a big bite to take in at one time; it would have been better to have made the last eight chapters into a separate part III.

Now, the first thing to say by way of review is that this is a self-published book. As such, it suffers from all the faults and failings you might expect. They include a cheap laminated-card cover which soon

curls up like a day-old sandwich; an unimaginative, banal, clip-art cover design; and body-text set throughout in close-spaced, unrelenting, almost unreadable sans serif type. There are also all the self-publisher's faults and failings at the content level, too – in short, it is *badly spelt, badly written, badly organized*, and in many places, *just plain wrong*.

The badly spelt and badly written

Lest you should think that I am biased and making it up, here are just a few examples of the kind of thing I found (highlighted with italics):

Bob . . . thought it was time to *straight out* that model and see if we could find analogical levels that might organize the structure. (p.19)

In doing this, we first became technicians. Only later did we transmute into neuro-linguistic philosophers to the *charin* of our loved ones. (p.24)

'In what order or sequence do *this parts* occur?' (p.51)

Richard was working with a young man . . . who ended up being '*quiet* creative at thwarting every option' (p.57)

Richard with his '*flare* for the outrageous' (p.58)

It's empower to assume total responsibility for the communication process involves the giving and receiving of feedback. (p.219)

There are many more littered throughout this text. And the barriers to good communication and ease of understanding don't stop there. This book is badly written as well. Try these for sighs:

Other mind-lines enable us to align with the person's intentions which then grants them permission to remap. Yet other mind-lines challenge and provoke a person by putting their own logic in their face to see if they can stand it when applied to themselves or applied consequently into the future. (p.65)

and a few pages later:

When a belief becomes that strong, they begin to operate as self-fulfilling prophecies. Then, 'as we believe – so we are,' and so we get. If we believe that people will hurt us, it seems that we suddenly have eyes