

In summary, the book contains a rich and diverse range of perspectives on masculinities in the developing world, but it misses out on the opportunity of presenting the material in a way that might fundamentally challenge the direction of existing approaches to development discourse and practice.

***A Man's World: Changing Men's Practices in a Globalized World***

**Bob Pease and Keith Pringle, editors, London: Zed Books, 2001, pb, 272 pp., ISBN 1 85649 912**

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Like the men's movement to which it is generally antagonistic, the profeminist study of masculinities is largely an affair restricted to the advanced English-speaking countries. *A Man's World* is an admirable attempt to extend such study to the global scale, crossing a number of cultures and national contexts. Concentrating on the commonality and diversity of men's practices within and between nation-states, the volume includes contributions from the USA, the UK, Australia, Ireland, Sweden, Finland, Brazil, Nicaragua, Hong Kong, India, and South Africa. As the majority of authors work in social work or social policy, there is an emphasis on how neoliberal globalisation has eroded welfare state mechanisms for the development and advancement of programs aimed at reducing men's violence, improving men's health, and supporting men in their role as fathers. But the volume also explores international initiatives in antisexist education and lobbying such as the White Ribbon Campaign against men's violence, which began in Canada in 1991 and has now spread to over a dozen countries. Moreover, the book seeks to intervene in the profuse literature on globalisation, inquiring to what extent the current transnationalisation of men's practices means an approach to masculinities based on international comparisons must be replaced (or supplemented) with an approach that emphasises the complex interplay of global/local perspectives.

In this task, the editors (and many of the authors) refer to a 1998 article by Bob Connell, which argues that, due to the role of globalisation in the construction of gendered power relations, the life-history and ethnographic methods that have been central to work on masculinities must give way to team-based projects focused on large-scale institutions, markets, and mass communications. While recognising that recent globalising processes differ from earlier transnational phenomena, the general drift of the volume is toward an approach that seeks to relocate the nation-state (and national social policy) within the complex dynamic of globalisation. In other words, the authors are reluctant to back away from an internationally comparative perspective for an approach that would emphasise globalising processes before and above the role of the nation-state. And, to this extent, the vision of transnationalism presented by *A Man's World* remains fundamentally bound to the nation-state and implicitly critical of postnational approaches to globalisation such as those of Appadurai or Hardt and Negri.

It is a commonplace that the current study of masculinities arose from radical feminist calls for men to participate in struggles against sexism. And, indeed, the editors of *A Man's World* find precedents for their project in feminist studies of women's transnational situation. But in what way is the relation between the postnational approach to globalisation and an internationally comparative perspective gendered? A central chapter by Michael S. Kimmel, the editor of the book series to which *A Man's World* belongs, explores how a dominant global hegemonic version of masculinity (cosmopolitan, liberal in consumption and sexuality, but conservative in opposition to political controls on the economy) increasingly provides a norm against which local, regional, and national masculinities play themselves out. Indeed, in studying the reassertion of masculinity among right-wing militia in the US, Kimmel shows how such a hegemonic cosmopolitan masculinity is feminised by extreme nationalist organisations. Similarly, in a chapter about unlearning *machismo* in Nicaragua, Patrick Welsh shows how recent initiatives aim to counter masculine supremacist attitudes that became

entrenched in left nationalist groups during the period of revolutionary struggle. While it would be wrong to associate the international comparativism of the book's contributors (all of whom hold personal commitments to fighting sexism) with the reactive masculinity of these nationalist movements, it is appropriate to ask what particular model of gender relations informs their investigations of globalisation and masculinities.

*A Man's World* surveys gender relations in a wide variety of international contexts, but its arguments, as Kimmel notes, are generally shaped by the need 'to engage men as women's allies in their struggle for equality.' To this extent, the feminism from which the project departs might be identified more with rights-based Anglo-American feminism rather than with European feminisms that emphasise difference above equality and emancipation. In the feminism associated with Italian thinkers such as Luisa Muraro and Adriana Cavarero, for instance, women's freedom is rooted not in identification or equality with men but in female difference. And this means that rather than trusting in the state, in law and in rights, feminist practice aims to mobilise alternative forms of subjectivity and question the basic relations of the social contract. Moreover, in recent writings, this approach to gender dovetails with an understanding of globalisation that stresses differences, contamination, and the blurring of boundaries.

The point is not to discount the considerable achievement of *A Man's World* and the many practical interventions in patriarchal gender regimes that its contributors describe. Rather, it is to suggest that one's understanding of gender will be inextricably connected to one's understanding of globalisation. A rich debate in this area serves to strengthen our knowledge not only of gender relations and transnational processes but also of the relations between the two. *A Man's World* is a pioneering study in this regard, crossing the study of masculinities and the study of globalisation in original and important ways. For this reason, the book should enjoy the full attention of thinkers who work in either

gender or globalisation studies as well as those who work at the intersection of these fields.

***Compelling Engagements: Feminism, Rape Law and Romance Fiction***

**by Wendy Larcombe, The Federation Press, 2005, Sydney, pp. 170, pb., ISBN 1 86287 525 1**

**Reviewed by Samantha Hardy**

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At first glance, the victim in rape law and the heroine in romance fiction appear worlds apart, but Wendy Larcombe's book demonstrates the startling similarities in their representation as feminine subjects. The book's central aim is to explain how the fictioning of femininity is able to be deployed so punishingly against women in the applications of rape law, and yet function as the basis of a fantasy of female success and self-realisation in women's romance (p 4). Although fiction has the potential to challenge dominant gender-based power relationships, and modern romance fiction may superficially appear to do so, Larcombe argues that genuine transformation is impossible while certain constructions of feminine subjectivity work symbiotically to legitimate, maintain and extend the authority of the institutions reproducing them (p 9).

For the past few decades feminists have challenged the conventionally gendered subjectivities in both rape law and romance fiction and although both the law and romance novels have changed in recent years, the gendered subjects remain remarkably untransformed. Larcombe acknowledges that both rape law and romance fiction have also consistently produced divisions, disagreements and reservations amongst feminist critics (p 4) and explores where and why feminist critiques of rape law and romance fiction have stalled or been frustrated (p 5). She does so by a textual analysis of rape statutes, judgments, excerpts from trial transcripts, cross-examination, and judges' comments to juries. She also analyses romances from two Harlequin Mills and Boon series, as