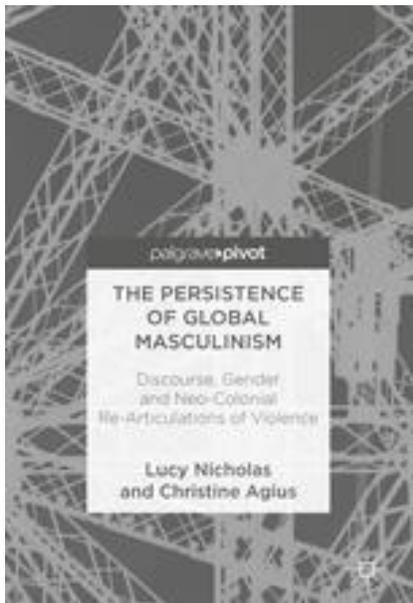


BOOK REVIEW



The Persistence of Global Masculinism:
 Discourse, Gender and Neo-Colonial Re-
 Articulations of Violence
 Lucy Nicholas and Christine Agius.

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Book review by Denijal Jević

The contemporary rise of antifeminist and anti-PC movements through a masculinist backlash has been accompanied by diverse reinvigorations of conservatism. The transition from the post-Cold War era to a current age of man-dominated global politics is rendering increasingly palpable the manifestations of masculinist understandings and practices of security and violence, in which patriarchal and misogynistic beliefs occur in diversified instances and constitute ideologies and movements that necessitate a dependence on uncritical internalizations of gendered hierarchies and binaries.

In the interdisciplinary monograph *The Persistence of Global Masculinism: Discourse, Gender and Neo-Colonial Re-Articulations of Violence*, Lucy Nicholas and Christina Agius explore, through detailed literature review, theoretical approaches, and case studies, the concept of masculinism as a tool of critique and gendered analysis. Defining masculinism as a “dominant ethos and mode of relationality enacted and normalised by men and women across a variety of spaces and contexts” (143) and “masked by an ostensible neutrality and universality,” (15) the authors present a lucid elaboration on how masculinity becomes standardized beyond the liberal analysis of power and gender. The monograph is organized into six chapters that elaborate on the

omnipresent (re)masculinizing of the public sphere, which appears overtly and covertly in public discourse, online spaces, politics, and technology.

Despite an increasing recognition of gender equality through practices of gender mainstreaming, repercussions against feminism continue. In fact, traditional gender relations have remained constant and masculinity was never under attack. In the introduction, the authors identify as contemporary problems the increase of illiberal policies under the Trump administration and in several European countries, a common rejection of feminism as extreme and anti-men, the wrong equation of feminism with human rights, women's complicity in movements like neo-conservatism and the alt-right that support the oppression of women, as well as the categorization of feminism as being an individual choice.

The authors apply the critique of masculinism as both a focus and a method, "an underlying *ethos* or totalising worldview that implicitly universalises and privileges the qualities of masculinity, and in doing so subordinates and 'others' alternative ways of understanding, knowing and being." (5) Exploring current backlashes against feminism in both the Global North and South, the second chapter discusses how men's rights activism enforces masculinist perspectives. Surveying the current loose transnational alliance between social and political movements that focus on men's and fathers' rights, the authors scrutinize anti-women politics in the public sphere and in online spaces which frequently overlap with opposition to multiculturalism and leftist progressivism. The authors analyze aggrieved entitlement as gendered in a masculine gender and perpetuated primarily by whites across genders, outlining how this entitlement combined with the aspiration to reenact an era in which white men held absolute domination constitutes white and male supremacy. The discussion delineates the contemporary continuation of the acceptance of traditional gendered domination and the simultaneous formation of new dynamics of gendered concepts of domination in less visible forms.

Sexual violence against women is still oftentimes individualized and/or explained through male nature. Such tendencies, however, as the authors point out in the third chapter, tend to obscure the cultural components and thus may prevent structural analysis. As concrete examples, the study cites instances in which the police and media have apologized gender-based violence when they focused on the female victim's behavior. Popular discourses around gender-based violence in India reveal how anti-women violence tends to be discussed as being part of non-Western cultures only.

Besides the danger of viewing sexual violence as limited to certain cultures only, the authors' nuanced analysis also formulates the common fallacy of reducing the extent of sexual violence only to the sexual component and obscure the structural violence. Case studies include analyses of, among other movements, Femen, which adopted a neocolonial, Western liberal feminism that perpetuated gendered hegemonic ideals and a cisgender, white, Western standard and reinforced white savior dynamics. Taking into consideration the movement's construction of a binary between the idea of a misogynist Islam and an Orientalist feminism, the authors speak of an arrogant absolutism of Western liberal feminism that, in perpetuating gendered hegemonic ideals, subjects other women, such as sex workers and religious women, and claims agency over them.

Similarly, discourses on humanitarian intervention have focused on Muslim women and projected a protectionism that subordinates non-Western and non-white women as an inferior other who necessitates protection. How humanitarian intervention is gendered is dealt with in depth in the fourth chapter. Showing how concepts of peacekeeping have been constructed through forms of hegemonic masculinity, the authors show how Western military interventions gained significant liberal feminist support. Under the guise of peacekeeping, Western imperial policies have followed Orientalist tropes about the need to liberate subjugated non-Western women from gender apartheid and barbaric rule. However, as the authors show with the example of Afghanistan, Western intervention resulted in a confirmation of injustice and inequality continuously experienced by women in Afghanistan.

Describing a post-9/11 "masculinist revival," the study scrutinizes the gendered concepts of preserving and reinstating order in the international system, analyzing the discrepancy between Western exclusiveness and emotionally reasoned military intervention. Referring to Trump's authorization of a missile strike on Syria in 2017, the authors recall how Trump's decision was broadly as a form of saving the suffering Syrian, i.e. the distant other. While Trump's approval rates increased significantly, the United States simultaneously denied to offer refugee to those who were affected. The masculinist character of current understandings of security and violence is also evident in drone warfare, whose gendered character is tackled in chapter five. Seen as a means of securing state sovereignty, which in itself is a product of masculinism, drones represent a neo-liberal weapon embedded in masculinism, while, justified as legal and ethical, the absence of drones is oftentimes constructed as harmful in political discourse. Elaborating on how drone

warfare produces, racializes, and genders bodies through a (neo-)colonial gaze in order to destroy them, the authors argue that the sovereignty of targeted states is de-masculinized and feminized, with killing and warfare being rationalized through a perpetuation of masculinism.

Lastly, the book emphasizes the necessity to explore alternatives to masculinism that go beyond binaries and perpetuations of structural domination and violence and challenge the male privilege. Reiterating that a language of equality and protection is continuously used to secure a maintenance of male hierarchies, this well-structured book offers a comprehensive survey of the current state of research. Lucidly written, it summarizes and engages with other theorists' work and draws crucial connections between various approaches that help transmit a rich understanding of what masculinism constitutes. This endeavor is supported by case studies and strengthened by a wealth of contemporary examples. While the book engages in depth with crucial phenomena, it can still serve as a valuable introduction to the topic. The plentitude of references and citations provides a solid background that makes the work a significant contribution for gender research accessible to readers across other academic fields.