

By Jeff Hearn

Men of the World: Genders, Globalizations, Transnational Times

Sage, 2015, 262 pp.

ISBN: 978-1-4462-0718-5

Jeff Hearn is a British sociologist with an impressive record of publications ranging from sociology, organizations and management, social policy, men, gender relations, sexuality, violence, and cultural studies. His latest work, *Men of the World: Genders, Globalizations, Transnational Times* looks at “men in the context of gender relations, intersectionality, spatialization, globalizations, transnationalizations.” (p. 3). The project is ambitious, and Hearn provides a rich theoretical argumentation interspersed with autobiographical vignettes in which he seeks to deconstruct and analyze his own positionality and privilege. Jeff Hearn’s impact on the academic community has not just been theoretical and conceptual, but during his career he has done important work on sexual violence, and he has been active in grassroots campaigns in many countries. His life is characterized by many moves and contacts with different cultures where masculinity and gender are embodied and experienced in different ways.

Men of the World is divided into two parts, *Introducing Men of the World* and *Transpatriarchies in Practice*. In *Introducing Men of the World*, Hearn sketches the theoretical framework of the book, whereas *Transpatriarchies* offers three main ways to look at how men move in the world and exercise their power. The book situates itself in the field of Critical Studies of Men (CSM) and is concerned mainly with three sets of issues: firstly, Hearn sketches “developments in deconstructing the hegemony of men and masculinities”; secondly, he traces the “impact of transnationalizations in changing, critiquing and deconstructing

privileged center including the hegemony of men”, and finally, he looks at the “transnationalizations of knowledge, knowledge production and knowledge communities, including virtual knowledge.” (p. 22). Hearn’s ultimate aim is that of finding a gentle way to “abolish men” through the deconstruction of their dominant positions within the transpatriarchal regimes dominating contemporary gender relations.

Hearn traces the transformations and adaptations of hegemonic masculinities and patriarchies to new socio-political and geographical orders, and analyses, through a Marxist and post-colonial approach, the structural sedimentation of power in its global and transnational articulations. Transpatriarchies, Hearn explains, is a concept used as “a way of talking about patriarchies, intersectionalities and transnationalizations at the same time. I use the concept of transnational patriarchies to speak of the structural tendency and individualized propensity for men’s transnational gender domination.” (p. 19) Especially in the first part of the book, Hearn uses the category of power as one of the crucial dimensions to assess and comprehend transpatriarchies.: throughout his analysis the lack of references to Michel Foucault’s seminal contribution on the articulation of the concept of power weakens Hearn’s argument as it fails to include power’s potentially productive force on society.

Hearn campaigns for the importance of looking at masculinities and “men of the world” in a transnational and trans-intersectional perspective. He argues that the transnational dimension is the only one able to deconstruct successfully the mechanisms of patriarchy and domination upon which men have built their power and through which they exercise subjugation of women. Hearn is very careful in making clear that it is not only “gex” (as he shortens the gender and sex continuum) defining trans-patriarchies but rather, the complex intersection of various axes of privilege, of which gender is only one.

The book is divided in two parts: in the first, Hearn lays out the theoretical framework that provides the scaffolding for the subsequent section where examples of transnational phenomena are carefully

studied: bodies of emotions, structures of organizing, and processes of flow (p. 99). Perhaps, this is the most effective section of the book because it demonstrates clearly how embodied experiences, such as those exemplified by the intensities of violence (bodies and emotion), the organization of transnational patriarchies, empires and corporation (structures of organizing), and the physical movements of people and information (processes of flow), are all imbricated in one another both at the structural and emotional level.

In the chapter on the intensities of emotions and its most ugly effects of violence and violations on other bodies, Hearn defines emotions as “material-discursive processes that contextualize and construct heightened embodied experience” (p. 104), in particular those violently performed in intimacy and those structural to the military institution. The transnational dimension of patriarchal violence is most observable in the collective sexual aggressions and violations perpetrated in war zones and post-conflict situations on women and children by soldiers belonging to international alliances.

When Hearn analyses empires, corporations, and activism as examples of structures of organizing, he begins his discussion with a cogent critique of social sciences’ dismissal of structural analysis, observing that macro-structural and macro-environmental forces unleashing all their power upon “those experiencing structural poverty, forced migration, house repossession, or climate change” and concluding that “to dismiss structures is the privilege of the privileged: the globally bourgeois, placed there by virtue of structure” (p. 122).

The chapter on structures of organizing investigates transnational and transpatriarchial structures such as the European Union and governmental systems guided by international relations where the power of men within politics, economy, the media system and the military produces also behaviors “operating out of control outside the law” (p. 131). One example of this (unlawful) transnational control is the supranational surveillance scandal that hit the United States government at the end of 2013. A second section of the chapter is

dedicated to the financial system and the gender impact on domestic economic life. Hearn concludes his analysis of men's transnational organizing with a call to mobilize and politicize men to advance and broaden a intersectional justice agenda that "involves profeminist, (pro) queer *strategies in obviously gendered policy areas*, such as health and welfare, work, family, sexuality, education, violence" (p. 147, emphasis in the original).

Hearn's study of "processes of flow" is divided in two parts: The first one examines movements of people, such as in migratory fluxes, and environmental flows. Particularly interesting is the section on "Gendering Men Migrants", especially in light of the political and humanitarian crisis that has invested Europe in 2015 as a result of the large flux of refugees coming from war zones. Here, Hearn looks at the consequences that displacement and dislocation have on men and masculinities: "Through these movements there develops the complex formation and transformation of gendered transnational classes and civil society, often peopled and led by men, whether migratory policy controllers or migrants themselves." (p. 168). The second part of the investigation on flows addresses the virtual movements generated by information and communication technologies (ICTs). In particular, Hearn is interested in mapping the construction of the transnational virtual man and how technology impacts sexuality "through the processes of technological control, virtual reproducibility, conditional communality, and unfinished undecidability." (p. 174).

Hearn concludes his book by advocating "a long-term socio-political subversion of the social category of men" (p. 200) which could open the doors to new alliances among feminisms and queer and transgender theory around the notion of *difference*. Ultimately, Hearn campaigns for the abolition of categories altogether in order to "create, produce, improvise, practice, make, a large number of possible gender positions" (p. 201).

Jeff Hearn's *Men of the World* is a thought-provoking and inspiring analysis of the many permutations that transnational

patriarchies have on society. Men are at the center of this analysis and questions of how gender relations are shaped and can change are richly and thoroughly debated. *Men of the World* should find its place in the bookshelves of scholars in gender and sexuality studies as well as grassroots campaigners and activists.

Benedetta Gennaro
Institut für Soziologie
Technische Universität Darmstadt