**Book Review Essay: Men, Masculinity and Paid Work at Home**

*Migration, Masculinities and Reproductive Labour: Men of the Home* by Ester Gallo and Francesca Scrinzi, Palgrave Macmillan.

*Gender, Migration and Domestic Work: Masculinities, Male Labour and Fathering in the UK and USA* by Majella Kilkey, Diane Perrons and Ania Plomien with Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo and Herman Ramirez, Palgrave Macmillan.

In recent years studies of men, masculinities and home have been flourishing. From the work of historians such as John Tosh (2007) and Matt Cook (2014) to that of geographers including Andrew Gorman-Murray (2008), Angela Meah (2017a, 2017b) and Stuart Aitken (2016) amongst many others (see also, for example, chapters in Gorman-Murray and Hopkins 2014). One aspect of men’s home lives that has been increasingly examined within this flourishing has been the work that men do at and on their homes, be that ‘traditionally masculine’ tasks such as Do It Yourself (DIY) (Cox 2016a, 2016b, Gelber 1997) or more traditionally ‘feminine’ tasks (see for example chapters in Szabo and Koch 2017 on men cooking at home). This research complicates understandings of ‘work’ as something that happens outside homes and of masculinities and femininities as made in the public and private spheres respectively. However, while research on women’s work in the home now includes an extremely rich and diverse literature on paid domestic labour, this aspect of men’s relationship to domestic space has, to date, been relatively unexplored (see Näre 2010 and Palenga-Möllenbeck 2016 as important exceptions).

Given this lacuna, the publication of two books which deal with men and paid domestic work is significant. Both these books demonstrate that men and masculinities matter to the growing marketisation of domestic labour. Men are sometimes the workers, but they are also the clients, customers, employers of domestic workers. Too often made invisible by assumptions about women’s role in the home, the books bring men, and their experiences, into focus and through this they reveal the gendered understandings of domestic work and care as well as the importance of domestic labour to masculinities. These books also show the links between paid and unpaid work in the home, between paid employment outside the home and the growth in demand for various forms of domestic work and how these link to sometimes complicated migration patterns.

While Kilkey *et al* are examining the experiences of workers in traditionally masculine roles (gardeners and handymen), Gallo and Scrinzi have delved into the lives of men carrying out domestic and care work (such as care for elderly people) which is feminised, both in terms of the majority labour force and cultural understandings. Both sets of workers are, therefore, negotiating class and racial/ethnic hierarchies in their day to day interactions with employers and others, but gendered expectations play out differently and there are different resources available to them for negotiating those expectations. The books show us the complexity and subtlety of masculinities within paid domestic work.

In *Gender, Migration and Domestic Work*, Majella Kilkey *et al* examine the re-emergence of male household workers, specifically gardeners in the USA and handymen in Britain, to explore the ways in which traditionally masculine tasks are being outsourced to migrant workers. Just as markets for feminized domestic work have expanded with the feminization of paid employment outside the home and the time squeeze that has resulted for many families, so too have markets for masculinized domestic work expanded. The authors argue that this growth reflects the combined effects of an absence of available male labour in the home, long working hours, men’s more active engagement in fathering and a move towards family focused leisure time. Rather than spending weekends doing DIY or gardening men are now more likely to prioritise time with their children. The result is that in the UK, for example, the proportion of households drawing on stereotypically masculinized services is very similar to those buying feminized services and, as with feminized domestic work, it is migrants who supply much of the labour.

In order to explore various different dimensions of the expansion of masculine domestic work, the book brings together two research projects which were executed independently; a study of migrant handymen in Britain which was carried out by Kilkey, Perrons and Plomien, and a study of Mexican immigrants in the USA carried out by Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ramirez. Kilkey *et al*’s study draws on analysis of secondary data and 79 in-depth interviews with householders who buy-in handyman services, migrant handymen, non-migrant handymen and agencies that employ or service handymen. Handyman work is varied and demand is not regular it includes things such as changing taps, fitting lights, putting up shelves, hanging pictures, painting and decorating and small-scale building work. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ramirez’s study, based on 47 in-depth interviews, looks at the experiences of route-owning *jardineros* (gardeners) and their *ayudantes* (assistants) who provide regular maintenance gardening (generally mowing and leaf-blowing) for mostly white, American-born homeowners in suburban Los Angeles. The result of bringing these projects together is impressive, offering both depth of engagement with migrant communities and breadth in terms of migration context, employment relations and types of work involved.

The methods used in both studies are described in detail in the excellent chapter ‘Researching men in the relationship between gender, migration and domestic work’. This provides a nuanced, thoughtful account of the process of research and the difficulties faced by the researchers. Very often the details of actually doing research are glossed over in publications, even those of book length, and methods are reduced to the facts of who, where and how many interviews (or whatever) took place. This chapter resists this trend and gives a sophisticated discussion of how the researcher is present in the process of research and how that process affects research findings. The chapter is not only useful context for reading the following chapters of this book but is also an excellent example of how to write reflexively about qualitative research. I would highly recommend it to any PhD student wrestling with a methods chapter and wondering how to discuss their experiences, positionality and reflections.

The following chapters trace the experiences of handymen in the UK (Chapter 4), of householders hiring handymen (Chapter 5) and of gardeners in the USA (Chapter 6), with Chapter 7 providing a succinct synthesis of the themes that develop throughout the book. One aspect that emerges particularly powerfully in these chapters is the different ideals and experiences of fathering that the three groups of men have. Kilkey *et al* show how new ideals of hands-on fathering underpin demand for handyman labour, which then creates jobs which, due to their flexibility, may prevent handyman fathers spending time with their own children. Middle-class British men find themselves in the ‘father time-bind’. Like that experienced by mothers, fathers face difficulties combining the demands of paid work with spending quality time with their children and performing a particular version of child-centred fathering. One solution is to outsource traditionally masculine domestic tasks to free up fathers’ time. However, this ideal of fatherhood is either not available to nor perhaps embraced by migrant men carrying out that paid work in other people’s homes. We see how *Jardineros* often spend time with their sons by including them in their work as *ayudantes* and training them up to take over gardening routes. Polish handymen in the UK have to be very flexible in their working hours, fitting around their customers schedules and preferences. They can also end up working long hours combining multiple jobs, such as full-time construction work during the day and independent handyman work at evenings and weekends. The result is time away from their children and fatigue, as one interviewee explained (p.116), ‘We are very tired. Sometimes we don’t even have the energy to play with the children.’ Handymen can also be asked to take on tasks, such as chauffeuring children to events, which involve care for their employer’s children. Like, female migrant domestic workers, they may find that they are able to provide a level of attention to employers’ children that they are not able to give to their own.

*Gender, Migration and Domestic Work* makes a significant and much needed contribution to knowledge about the outsourcing of traditionally masculine household work and the lives of the men involved in this growing area of work. This book (and the wider projects it draws on) are foundational for this area of research and required reading for anyone interested in the organisation of home repairs and handyman work and the effects of class and migration on masculinities and fathering.

Like Kilkey *et al*, Ester Gallo and Francesca Scrinzi’s *Migration, Masculinities and Reproductive Labour* brings together findings from a number of research projects, in this case carried out by the authors over a period of 16 years. The book draws on interviews with 250 participants, including both male and female domestic workers, male and female employers of domestic workers, representatives of government, NGOs, Catholic parishes, trade unions and training organisations. This includes 74 male migrant workers, who are the focus of this book and some of whom were interviewed on multiple occasions and at various points during their lives in Italy. This longitudinal engagement has enabled the authors to see how the men’s migration stories developed and the dynamics of their work and home lives. Household-based domestic and care work offers migrant men one of very few opportunities to access legal status in Italy and this area of work also gives undocumented migrants an opportunity to regularise their status and move into other areas of employment. The authors argue that since the late 1990s the number of men involved in domestic work and care work has grown, particularly when all the varied forms of this work are considered, and that this coincides with migrants entering the sector. Migration has come to function as a resource for managing the relationship between households, the labour market and the state.

The book starts with two chapters of literature review and theoretical framing, one on men and masculinities in the International Division of Reproductive Labour (IDRL) and the other on migrant men in Europe and beyond, which gives both historical and contemporary perspectives. As well as framing the arguments made in the later chapters of the book, these chapters stand as a resource to other researchers interested in gendered migration and gender within paid domestic work. They are extremely thorough in their review of existing literature and international in outlook, making them relevant to researchers looking at many different contexts.

These are followed by a chapter that focuses more closely on the specific Italian context, and this is fascinating to readers, like myself, who are not fully aware of the ways in which political and media alliances and the Catholic church have informed public discourse on migration and created the social context for migrants to Italy. Italy has a ‘welfare-mix system’ where the welfare state is partial and family has moral responsibility for providing care. Right-wing political parties strongly influence the media agenda around immigration and representations of migrants and these representations particularly focus on racializing migrant men who are visible in public spaces and portraying them as criminal and hypersexualised. In contrast, paid domestic workers are seen as useful and docile migrants and protected from the attacks on other migrant groups. Even right-wing political parties have supported regularisation policies for this group and in 2009 300,000 migrant domestic workers were able to gain regular status. This conflict between representations of migrant men as bad and migrant domestic workers as good makes the re-masculinisation of paid domestic work a strategic site for the authors to analyse these ambivalent processes of racialisation.

Throughout the book the Catholic church emerges as an important player in the lives of the migrant men in various different ways, mediating access to jobs and training and shaping ‘acceptable’ migrant masculinities. This role is ambivalent, on one side the Church upholds traditional roles for men and women, but on the other it supports migrants and sometimes celebrates Christian migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and Latin America for reinvigorating religiosity within the Italian families they work for. Catholic volunteers use personal networks to match migrants to domestic jobs. These religious actors serve as a guarantee for the moral integrity of domestic workers and confirm their ‘real’ Catholic status in a situation where they face racism on the basis of skin colour and nationality. These guarantees are particularly important for male migrants who face the most negative stereotypes. However, following this assistance there is also an expectation that migrant domestic workers will then become involved in parish activities. Catholic organisations also provide training courses for new migrant workers and these are about producing a particular type of person – that is one committed to family and obedient- rather than just on tasks. The authors argue that the courses are about the domestication of migrant masculinities. Amongst Catholic groups, there is, they argue, a sincere wish to help migrant workers but also paternalism and social control.

Gallo and Scrinzi provide a fascinating picture of the family lives of domestic workers in a situation where women have migrated first and men have first stayed in their home country looking after their own children and then later moved to join their wives and become domestic workers themselves. Migrant men who work in domestic care work are usually joining female family members and are also joining their highly feminized networks, they therefore get slotted into the job market by these networks of women. Pioneer women can become ‘big women’ in their new settings, who then mediate access to jobs for other women and for men. One outcome of this is that the advantages of maleness are contingent. In Southern Europe migrant women have a comparative advantage in terms of gaining employment and legal status but still earn less than men. Men also tend to progress faster into more managerial forms of domestic work, into jobs such as building porter, which provide greater privacy and autonomy, or they move out of domestic work altogether.

The book raises important questions about the production and negotiation of gender in the context of migration. How do migrant men respond to learning domestic tasks and performing them for pay or unpaid for their own families? How do employing men negotiate a version of masculinity that involves filial piety when outsourcing care for their parents? How do migrant women maintain their status and independence through migration and being joined by husbands? It shows how masculinities and femininities are constructed through reciprocal influence within the IDRL. This is relevant not just to the paid domestic workers, but also their employers and wider communities as migrants move through domestic work and into other jobs and participate in political, religious and community organisations. It makes a substantial contribution to our understanding of men’s lives in migration and to the organisation of household and care work.

Both *Migration, Masculinities and Reproductive Labour* and *Gender, Migration and Domestic Work* do an excellent job of keeping *gender* front and central in their analysis. These books are not about men in isolation from women, or about masculinity as a static or pre-existing state. In focusing on men, they also say much about women’s lives and the gendering of migration and home life.

These two books also present an innovative way to publish research by bringing together projects which were carried out independently. The benefits of these collaborations are clear in the scope of the work presented in both books and the depth that they give to the analysis. Such an approach also seems in keeping with feminist efforts to resist the individualizing and competitive nature of so much of academic life, and should be applauded for showing an alternative, collaborative way to work.

Simply by bringing to light the role of men as workers in domestic settings and consumers / employers of domestic and care services, these books open up an important area of research but they also do much more than this. They show how masculinities intersect with social class, ethnicity, nationality and migrant status to produce the experiences and subjectivities of domestic workers and the people who employ them. They also show the dynamic nature of masculinities; how masculine identities vary over life course and migration trajectory, in different jobs and in relation to marriage and fatherhood. This is clearly a rich area for future research for which these books provide firm foundations.

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