

BOOK REVIEW

Review of *Darkness Now Visible: Patriarchy's Resurgence and Feminist Resistance*. By Carol Gilligan and David A. J. Richards. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018. 172p. \$20.59.

Bekeh Utietiang Ukelina

State University of New York, Cortland

A day after the inauguration of Donald Trump as President of the United States in January of 2017, over three million women and men marched across America for the rights of women and other social justice issues. These marches were proactive responses to the kinds of policies that the Trump administration actively supported and advanced. Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again," was a dog whistle for white American men who felt that the presidency of Barack Obama, an African American and a self-identified feminist raised by a single mother, had rendered white masculinity impotent. Trump's message to white American men was clear: he would help them restore the power they lost under Obama and that they would continue to lose if Hilary Clinton was elected President. Many monographs have been produced since the 2016 Presidential election to explain the changing America that led to the election of a man like Donald Trump. Some of these include Arlie Russell Hochschild's *Strangers in their Own Land* and George Packard's *The Unwinding: An Inner History of the New America*. Carol Gilligan and David Richards *Darkness Now Visible: Patriarchy's Resurgence and Feminist Resistance* is a worthy addition to this growing

canon. The authors argue in the book that Trump's election shows the power and presence of patriarchy in American society and how gender can become the optics and hermeneutics of seeing things within a patriarchal framework.

In the first chapter, Gilligan and Richards note that patriarchy has always been a part of human civilization. Nevertheless, the internalization of patriarchal values, which is an outcome of psychological trauma in children is harmful to both women and men as it "deforms human nature." (111). Drawing on Judy Chu's book, *When Boys Became Boys* and Niobe Way's *Deep Secrets*, they note that the process of initiation into patriarchy starts at around age five for boys. Boys are conditioned to think of their masculinity to be in opposition to anything "feminine." The authors give an example of how, in Chu's study, boys formed "The Mean Team" to prove their masculinity because they perceived girls "as being good and nice..." (18). Girls, on the other hand, are pressured into silence, to make invisible their beliefs and to bury their honest voice. This gender binary and hierarchy that patriarchy has constructed, the authors argue, is dangerous most especially when violence becomes a means of "asserting dominance, and thus proving superiority..." (27).

Throughout the campaign, Trump used language that is reflective of "toxic masculinities." He spoke about the size of his penis and described his opponent as weak, and used vulgar language when referring to Hilary Clinton and her female supporters. Reflecting on Trump's actions during the campaign, in the third and fourth chapters, the authors ask two essential questions: why is it that we did not see this resurgence of patriarchy, and why is it happening now? Gilligan and Richards respond that people were continuing to see things through the framework of democracy when the political framework had shifted from democracy to patriarchy. They write, "Gender was no longer one issue among many (race, class, sexuality,

etc.) as it is within a democratic framework where the concern is equal voice or equality. Gender – its binary and hierarchy – had become the lens through which everyone and everything was seen. Democracy with its value of equality is one concern within a patriarchal framework, but the primary concern is manhood.” (34). Under this new patriarchal framework, Trump promised white American men the restoration of power that they had lost and to “undo the shaming of American manhood, by which he meant white American manhood.” (50). Throughout the book, the authors are clear that feminism is not a movement advocating the rights of women at the expense of men. Unfortunately, this is sometimes the narrative, and this happens because many women and men continue to view feminism through patriarchal lenses. Feminism, like democracy, must be freed from this patriarchal framework, and we must shift how we “perceive and speak about reality.” (115).

Darkness Now Visible is a carefully woven and insightful study. The use of stories from popular culture, literature, and personal narratives makes it accessible to a non-academic audience interested in understanding the grip patriarchy holds on our society and the resistance of the feminist movement. Including the narratives of young white male students is an essential strength of the book, as it allows us to see how they think or respond to white patriarchal hegemonies. Engagement with some of the arguments often advanced for the victory of Trump would have helped strengthen the thesis of the book. An example is Hochschild’s argument that there is a big divide between the two Americas: red and blue. Many people in red America felt they played by the rules and still lost because the political class and the elites betrayed them. Americans perceived Hilary Clinton as an insider and Donald Trump as an outsider that would shake things up. The argument that Trump was an outsider is one that needed to be challenged.

Carol Gilligan and David Richards have challenged us to interrogate our patriarchal values and to break the back of patriarchy. Scholars in gender studies and politics would find this book beneficial. The book will also be an excellent addition to reading lists in undergraduate and graduate seminars as it will elicit exciting debates and discussions on patriarchy and feminism.