

Editorial: Playgrounds for Mothers Fathers, States and Ideologies

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The landscape of motherhood has gone through important social and political changes in recent years, due to relevant demographic changes, assisted reproductive technologies, work force migration, economical pressure and also profound impact of feminist thinking and practice.

In the last decades, maternity has continuously reshaped its social design, confronting on one hand with the challenges of emancipation and on the other hand with new capitalist frames of individualism and constrictive needs.

The current issue investigates the politics and intimate fields of motherhood, proposing intersectional perspectives that broaden the understanding of a whole range of representations, searching for new territories of reflection on maternity. The issue covers different aspects regarding maternity, related on economical implication of childcare to ethical dimensions and personal choices, thus covering a diversity of layers of identification.

In her text **Introduction to Kazakhstan's Contemporary Gendered Nationalism: The Case of 2019 Protests of Mnogodetnye Materi**, Aizada Arystanbek explores the conditions of life of *mnogodetnye materi* - mothers of multiple children – and their protests in Kazakhstan in 2019, searching to relate daily life to political and economical issues. 2019 has been a turbulent year for Kazakhstan, from the transition of power belonging to Nursultan Nazarbayev, an authoritarian president who had ruled for nearly 30 years, to Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. This period of transition gave birth to continuous civil protests. One of the well-known group of protestors has been a large and diverse group of *mnogodetnye materi* who has started protesting against the small welfare allowance for families with multiple children (families with four or more children). Aizada Arystanbek applies V. Spike Peterson's theoretical framework of gendered nationalism - **Sexing Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexism** - to argue that both the lenient treatment of *mnogodetnye materi* protests by the government and the backlash it has received could be

explained by analyzing the mothers' roles as biological reproducers and cultural carriers of the nation-state.

The essay **Born in Corruption: Maternity Care after the Change of System in Hungary**, written by Sarolta Kremmer, researches Hungarian maternity care seen from the perspective of an over-medicalised approach to childbirth and also of an informal payment network that makes the level of corruption increase. The author emphasizes that technocratic maternity care and gendered corruption (especially the chosen doctor - model of care) are interconnected and support each other. The approach of the research changes the main field of interest. Instead of looking at data obtained from mothers, in-depth interviews recorded with healthcare professionals were thematically analyzed to identify key problem areas of maternity care and their intersections, thus broadening the understand of the political and social context of childbirth.

In their article **Undoing Motherhood: How IVF Breeds 'New' Mothers**, Xhenis Shehu and Maria Trifon focus on how the in vitro fertilization (IVF) method, as assisted reproductive technology (ART), recombines biological and social identities and defines new ways of understanding maternity. The two authors analyze the reconceptualization of motherhood in the new era of advanced technologies and re-established gendered roles and expectations, exploring different forms of control imposed by society, which most of the times embody patriarchal prescription. Motherhood is defined as a patriarchal institution, initiated as a promising premise for every girl-child, from the first menstrual evidence, culminating to the moment she gets impregnated or decides to have a child. IVF, alongside other ARTs forms have dissolved the fixed boundaries between good and bad motherhood conduct, emphasizing an individualized process of becoming, conditioned merely by a high degree of personal involvement, which can take diverse forms.

The myth of wonder woman: motherhood & entrepreneurship challenges surveys different types of pressure that women feel, having to assume various roles: good mothers, productive employees, housewives. The essay conceived by Adela Alexndru and Rodica-Corina Andrei is centered on interviews with 10 entrepreneurs who are mothers about their relationship with themselves, with their partner, with their child, with the job and with the state. One of the aspects that the author emphasizes is free access to specialized psychology/psychotherapy services, both

during pregnancy and after giving birth and the need to create efficient policies in order to support mother.

In his article **Male gaze in the cinema. How women in general, and mothers in particular, are represented in the movies of the '70s**, Matei Lucaci-Grünberg explores the construction of femininity in the Romanian cinema and the positions of power structured in the way the viewer imposes his authority, creating, most of the times, desired objects of perception. The essay has as a starting point the references evoked by one of the most important cinema critic, Laura Mulvey, who depicted the male gaze from a feminist perspective, identifying ways and means of objectification and subordination of women through artistic creations. This model of analysis is related to the cinema industry in the 70's in Romania, focusing on female directors who gave motherhood an important place in their creations.

Est-ce qu'une femme peut disposer de l'enfant auquel elle donne la vie ? Une approche éthique de la maternité de substitution is a relevant reflection on the controversial issue of surrogacy. The author explores ethical aspects regarding the motherhood of substitution, the surrogate mothers and the way they are perceived. The issues of applied ethics are envisioned by Ana Luana Stoicea-Deram from a feminist perspective at the intersection with technological interventions. The research gathers various aspects of motherhood such as: social practice, economical contract, right of disposing of a child, commercial transaction, genetical relation as well as legal and ethical interpretations.

In the nonthematic section of this issue you will find also three very interesting studies as follows.

The article **Bias and the Politicization of Gender Studies Scholarship** sketches various ways in which opposition to gender studies research has manifested itself in Europe, Brazil or the Russian Federation, confirming stereotypes regarding the *threatening other*. The essay written by Kristína Kállay and Veronika Valkovičová into account multiple strategies of harassing and bullying gender studies scholar, as well as the inferior epistemic status of gender studies in the epistemic cultures of higher education.

The study entitled **Women in the Arab Feminist Discourse: Between the Transnational Feminist Theory and the Islamic Feminist Theory**, written by Ilham Zemouli aims at providing historical as well as theoretical background, analyzing the rise of the Arab feminist discourse in

activism and in scholarship and the Islamic feminist theory in the context of broader intersectional reflections. The article focuses on Arab Muslim women's representation, their distinct resistance to multidimensional oppression, as well as their quest for liberation.

Dunya Suleymanova centers her essay - **Is it possible for an "Islamic Feminism" to exist?** – on significant changes that shaped the politics of gender equality in Muslim countries. Dunya Suleymanova refers to important personalities that reflect on Islamic Feminism, a term that arose in 1990, and its deep connections to religion and tradition. Among them, she mentions Margot Badran, the author of *Feminism in Islam*, Amina Wadud - the world's first woman who delivered a Friday Khutbah - a role traditionally taken by men - in a Cape Town's mosque in 1994, Asra Nomani, a writer-activist who views the practice of men and women praying separately as sexist, Alaa Murabit, an activist who fought for women's rights and needs, founder of "The Voice of Libyan Women", a social networking program for women. In 2012-2013, the volunteers of the program conducted an educational campaign in Libya: they went to homes, schools, universities, mosques and talked to fifty thousand people. Taking into account relevant changes in approaching Islamic Feminism, the author concludes that there are still important and necessary transformations to be expected.

Also the issue includes two book reviews: **Women, Civil Society and Policy Change in the Arab World**, edited by Nasser Yassin and Robert Hoppe and **Shari'ah or the Human History of Divine Will**, by Alina Isac Alak.

The review of the book **Women, Civil Society and Policy Change in the Arab World**, edited by Nasser Yassin and Robert Hoppe, reflects on the Arab Uprisings, with a focus on women and their role in the revolutions that shook up the Middle East in 2011 and subsequent years. The author of the review, Frank Elbers, examines the profound relevance of the implication of women in shaping the revolts against the autocratic regimes of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen and even Bahrain.

Marius Lazăr contextualizes Alina Isac Alak's book, **Shari'ah or the Human History of Divine Will**, as a key research on Islamologic studies. The book proposes a reflection on the status and evolution of the juridical-theological corpus designed by the generic term Shari'ah. The fundamental thesis of the book is that Shari'ah is not a sacred normative corpus, but a historical collection of successive doctrinary developments. The author pays special attention to the status of women in different systems of Islamic jurisprudence.