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Contact
Dr. Katarzyna Tempczyk
Katarzyna.Tempczyk@degruyter.com

Topical Issue:  
MOTHERHOOD(S) IN RELIGIONS  
THE RELIGIONIFICATION OF MOTHERHOOD & MOTHERS’ APPROPRIATION OF RELIGION  
ed. Giulia Pedrucci
Mothering as women’s lived experience) to outline a patriarchal institution that oppresses women and mothers or as lay followers of the Buddha who end with awakening (nibbāna). I conclude that begins with making a solemn vow (bhûta). The analysis aims to bring forth discussions on the significance of breast milk and the maternal body, and to investigate how milk kinship is framed within the patrilineal system of kinship in Shi’a Islam. The findings discuss rulings on the role of milk-mother and -father in the way kinship takes effect. While patrilineal kinship is often defined based on a paternal ‘milk line’, the study suggests that alternative readings and interpretations of the Quran and hadith are available that centralize the mother and the maternal body.

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Mothers of a Nation: How Motherhood and Religion Intermerge in the Hebrew Bible Claudia D. Bergman

Conception, pregnancy, childbirth, and the rearing of children are truly human experiences. But in religions and in their authoritative texts, these experiences are regularly utilized in metaphorical or symbolic language, or in narratives that tell of the origins of families or even peoples, of the relationship between individuals and groups or the relationship between humanity and the gods. Taking a closer look at the events surrounding childbirth and the time period of breastfeeding, it will be shown how literary texts from the Hebrew Bible go about intermingling motherhood and religion for the purpose of describing the origins of a nation.

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Milk Kinship and the Maternal Body in Shi’a Islam Ladan Rababi

In Islamic law, kinship is defined by consanguineal and affinal relationships. Birth and Islamic marriage are important events that define religious responsibilities of family members towards each other. Some responsibilities are connected to Mahramiyat, a framework of personal relations that regulates marriages and interactions with the opposite sex. Besides consanguineal and affinal bonds, mahramiyat and kinship can also be established through breastfeeding. The relationship formed through breastfeeding is called milk mahramiyat/kinship. It is spoken of in the Quran and hadith and has been extensively discussed in Islamic Fiqh. This study investigates Shi’i guidelines on milk kinship. Its interest is in the exploration of existing gendered rulings on the conditions of milk mahramiyat/kinship in Shi’i jurisprudence. The analysis aims to bring forth discussions on the significance of breast milk and the maternal body, and to investigate how milk kinship is framed within the patrilineal system of kinship in Shi’a Islam. The findings discuss rulings on the role of milk-mother and -father in the way kinship takes effect. While patrilineal kinship is often defined based on a paternal ‘milk line’, the study suggests that alternative readings and interpretations of the Quran and hadith are available that centralize the mother and the maternal body.

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Back Home and Back to Nature? Natural Parenting and Religion in Francophone Contexts Florence Pasche Guignard

New entanglements between parenting (in theory and practice), environmentalism, religion, spirituality, and secularism are at the core of the analysis presented in this article. In francophone contexts, discourses by practitioners, advocates and detractors of natural parenting contribute to associating this specific style of parenting and several of its key practices with religion and spirituality. After documenting and defining natural parenting by listing its characteristic practices and underlining its values as well as its important overlap with attachment parenting, this article examines the historically religious roots of movements linked to several practices still regarded as typical of natural parenting (natural childbirth movements, natural family planning or fertility awareness, and breastfeeding advocacy). Along with feminist and medical strands of criticism, within these secular contexts, the association with religion and spirituality participates in the criticism of this style of parenting which combines the key tenets of attachment parenting with a strong environmentalist agenda implemented for the most part in the domestic sphere and around women’s bodies.

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Natural Parenting and Religion: An Introduction Giulia Pedrucci

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The Entanglement of Mothers and Religions: An Introduction Giulia Pedrucci

Kourotrophia and “Mothering” Figures: Conceiving and Raising an Infant as a Collective Process in the Greek, Etruscan, and Roman Worlds. Some Religious Evidences in Narratives and Art Giulia Pedrucci

The paper deals with significantly different sources and historical periods: the parts dedicated to breastfeeding are based on votive statuettes of adults with infant/s from ancient Latium and Southern Etruria; the ones on pregnancy and childbirth are based on two archeological sources – one from Southern Etruria and one from Imperial Rome – which show the male (divine) appropriation of exclusively female biological functions; The parts on mothering are based on the concept of “mothering figures” (male mothering, animal mothering...) through mythological examples from Greek, Etruscan, and Roman art and narratives. Despite the heterogeneous documentation, we may conclude that the mother was not the only active character in the process of conceiving, giving birth, breastfeeding, and raising an infant in the Greek, Etruscan, and Roman societies. Many other figures close to the mother – male and female - were engaged in obtaining divine protection for her and her child; in helping, supporting, and even substituting her when necessary (and, of course, when possible). The research has been conducted mainly by using the concept of kourotrophia and mothering figures as analytical tools.

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“Like a Mother Her Only Child”: Mothering in the Pâli Canon Pascale F. Engelmaier

This paper examines mothers and mothering in the Pâli canon and commentaries and contends that a mothering path emerges when the deeply patriarchal traditional hierarchy of values is challenged and, following Karen Derris, the unthoughts related to mothers and mothering, which this hierarchy of values generates, are also challenged. The article focuses on three main female characters, Mâyâ, Mahâpâjñâpati, and Visâkhâ, whose paths as mothers or as lay followers of the Buddha who “stand in the position of a mother” constitute a deliberate soteriological path in the Pâli Buddhist texts. It draws on contemporary Buddhist Studies feminist scholarship (in particular, the work of Karen Derris (2014) and Liz Wilson (2013)) as well as motherhood studies (in particular, Sara Ruddick’s (1989) work based on Adrienne Rich’s (1976) foundational distinction between motherhood as a patriarchal institution that oppresses women and mothering as women’s lived experience) to outline how mothering activities in the Pâli canon can be discerned as a soteriological path that follows the same trajectory as the Buddha’s Bodhisatta path that begins with making a solemn vow (paññhāna) and ends with awakening (nibbāna). I conclude that adopting this approach allows us to reenvision age activities and relationships usually understood as “this-worldly” in the canonical and commentarial Pâli texts and in contemporary feminist scholarship, as the embodiment of a soteriology based on interdependence and compassionate care for others.

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Pregnancy, Birthing, Breastfeeding and Mothering: Hindu Perspectives from Scriptures and Practices Sucharita Sarkar

This article looks at the regulations of pregnancy, birthing, breastfeeding in Ayurvedic treatises, and at representations of mothering in Vedic and Puranic texts related to childbirth. Ayurvedic garbha sanskar (educating the mind of the foetus) and at representations of mothering in Vedic and Puranic texts related to childbirth. Ayurvedic garbha sanskar (educating the mind of the foetus) regulates the pregnancy of women to ensure the safe birthing of superior babies. Breastfeeding is both glorified and strictly regulated in Ayurvedic texts. Several Vedic texts describe a range of rituals to benefit a caste Hindu child’s life from before birth to the beginning of manhood. These rituals are formally conducted by the father, whereas the mother’s role is marginalized. Although these texts scrutinize and discipline maternal bodies, yet there are several interstices where female and/or maternal agency can be performed. Ayurvedic obstetric practices often incorporate the indigenous knowledges of midwives (dais). The scripturally-mandated practice of wet-nursing shifts and complicates biological motherhood roles. The domestic tradition of performing vrata to secure the offspring’s longevity allows mothers to have a more central role in childrearing rituals. I will compare the regulatory texts and the potentially resistant practices from a maternal feminist perspective. In an attempt to interrogate the multiple ways in which the Hindu childbearing and childrearing framework is a site of surveillance as well as assertion for mothers.

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Florence Pasche Guignard

New entanglements between parenting (in theory and practice), environmentalism, religion, spirituality, and secularism are at the core of the analysis presented in this article. In francophone contexts, discourses by practitioners, advocates and detractors of natural parenting contribute to associating this specific style of parenting and several of its key practices with religion and spirituality. After documenting and defining natural parenting by listing its characteristic practices and underlining its values as well as its important overlap with attachment parenting, this article examines the historically religious roots of movements linked to several practices still regarded as typical of natural parenting (natural childbirth movements, natural family planning or fertility awareness, and breastfeeding advocacy). Along with feminist and medical strands of criticism, within these secular contexts, the association with religion and spirituality participates in the criticism of this style of parenting which combines the key tenets of attachment parenting with a strong environmentalist agenda implemented for the most part in the domestic sphere and around women’s bodies.

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