

Introduction

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After another turbulent year, we are happy to be able to present to you our Lova Journal at the start of the new year and to look back upon our work and activities in 2023. This 44th edition of the *Lova Journal of Feminist Anthropology and Gender Studies* gathers essays and articles that are situated within the current global political changes that are impacting gender rights.

The social and political environment in which anthropologists operate is always changing, and so have the processes and methodologies of anthropological research and fieldwork seen transformations in recent years. Particularly during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, scholars have been forced to seek alternative ways of doing research while simultaneously finding other modes and media of representing the knowledge they produced. Digital ethnography, multimodal methods and auto-ethnography have taken flight in the last few years. One of such works is featured here, as Carla Besora Barti offers an ethnographic analysis through drawings of “unruly” intimate practices of women above the age of 50 in Belgium. Her graphic notes, one of which is on the cover of this journal, offer an abstract, yet affective impression of her experiences during a tantric workshop in Belgium, and she reflects upon drawing as medium and as sensuous practice. The materiality of ink, paper, and pen requires a corporeal engagement, and the images produced may evoke movement, rhythm, direction, or stillness. For research in such intimate settings, drawing can offer a more lively and dynamic mode of ethnographic note-taking, not bound by the limitations of figurative representation in academic writing. Yet, drawings, like writing and text, “speak,” Barti argues,

and the way in which they are “read” depends upon the interpretation of the audience. The next contribution adopts a historical analysis of the complex relations between gender and nationhood, in particular its portrayal in popular culture in Turkey. Janset Nil Genç goes back 100 years in time as she critically analyses a magazine produced in the early Turkish Republic, in 1923-1924. Her essay explores the use of homosocial ridicule in *Bin Bir Buse*, an erotic magazine that humorously addressed sexuality, including cheating, masculinity and female sexuality. Genç argues that the magazine’s humour, centred on ridiculing women, fostered a homosocial bond between the male author and his audience, intertwining desire and mockery in the depiction of free sexual relations. Moreover, the magazine reveals contradictions in how the Turkish woman is imagined in this newly founded nation and thereby provides a useful source for examining, or “unmasking” the disparities between official discourses and ideology. The findings both reflect and challenge current developments in Turkish society, as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s Turkey is markedly different from that what Mustafa Kemal Atatürk envisioned 100 years ago as founding father of the state. Where Atatürk promoted a vision of Turkey as looking towards the future, Erdoğan favours narratives that anchor contemporary Turkey in its Ottoman past and legacy. After his re-election in May 2023, Erdogan promised, during the celebration of the centenary of the republic of Turkey, that this new century will “bring the country above the level of contemporary civilisations” (Bourcier 2023). Similar to Gubán and Kranner’s writings later in this journal, Genç’s essay reveals gendered processes of nation-building and identity formation, processes that unfortunately do not only progress towards emancipation and liberation, but which increasingly deteriorate in today’s political climate.

Another example of gendered processes of nation-building is presented in Mária Gubán’s essay on the Hungarian far-right movement HVIM. Gubán explores how HVIM employs the symbol of the Virgin Mary to define traditional roles for female followers. This essentialising icon of womanly purity has become increasingly prominent within

Hungary's political frame, which gradually restricts the rights of the LGBTQIA+, particularly after the 2021 law against the "promotion of homosexuality" to under-age citizens, and its recent application to bookshops that forced librarians to impede access to "sensitive" books (Bienvenu 2023). Gubán demonstrates how young women willingly adopt these roles for a sense of belonging and purpose, navigating their womanhood through heterosexual monogamy, motherhood and nationalism, while rejecting feminism and reproductive rights.

The impact of right-wing politics on women's reproductive rights and mothering also comes to the fore in Catalina Kranner's article. In her article, Kranner explores the intersection of reproductive technologies, surrogacy, and biotechnology in Argentina from a Latin American feminist perspective. She critically examines how these practices impact women's reproductive work, shaping individual, family, and collective identities within the context of global inequalities and socio-cultural changes. Not long after submitting the article to our journal, Argentina elected the right-wing, libertarian politician Javier Milei to be its next president. This new political era might include significant setbacks to human rights, as Milei has announced not only the closure of the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity, but also to possibly repeal the right to terminate a pregnancy until fourteen weeks. Hence, Kranner's article underlines the significance of anthropological criticism in understanding and interpreting such dynamics in cross-border reproduction, and their lasting effects on gender relations in the global South.

Moving to South Asia, Priyanka Hutschenreiter explores Bangladeshi identity formation in the plural. Hutschenreiter's research in Dhaka, Bangladesh explores relationships between Muslim identities, religiosity, secularity, space and feeling. They adopt a queer-feminist postsecular approach to explore the intricacies of identity formations of both religious and secular Bangladeshi. Through an exploration of the intimate relationships that upper middle-class Muslims establish within and across religious and secular contexts, Hutschenreiter

argues that the religious and the secular cannot be understood separately in this context, despite popular and academic tendencies to do so. Challenging the (Western) idea that religious piety is antithetical to agency, Hutschenreiter offers a nuanced perspective on agentic identity formations in contemporary Bangladesh.

Adopting a more theoretical approach, Éva Rozália Hölzle and Magdalena Suerbaum's article reconsiders one of anthropology's foundational concepts of kinship. The authors use ethnographic vignettes to advocate for a nuanced exploration of the mutual constitution of kinship and generations. By including intergenerational relationships into the study of kinship formations, they show the transformative impact of such dynamics on normative orders and relationships. Hölzle and Suerbaum analyse two case studies: the mothering practices of Syrian migrant women in Berlin, and a young woman who becomes the head of her village in a borderland town in Bangladesh. Drawing on gender studies, the authors propose the concept of "kinship generations" as a way to challenge romanticised family perspectives, question hetero-normative structures, and expose societal inequalities, asserting its relevance for understanding gender dynamics influenced by kinning processes and broader societal structures.

And finally, Inga Haaland and Karama Ogillo's paper explores the negotiation of gendered appearances and representation among transgender women and men who have sex with men in Tanzania. Through ethnographic insights gathered during a ten month fieldwork period in and around an HIV prevention clinic, the study delves into the intersection of gender discourses, sexuality, and public health within the context of a PrEP programme in Tanzania. Similar to the Hungarian context that Gubán described, Tanzanian politics and public institutions strictly guard heteronormativity when it comes to gender expressions. In their article, Haaland and Ogillo focus particularly on the transformative gender experiences of Ibada, one of the participants in their study. By balancing his personal needs and desires

with societal expectations, which are reinforced in public health clinics, Ibada reflects on the adjustments of his gender expressions over time. This article reminds us how individuals engage, resist, demonstrate agency and courage, and devise creative ways to express their gender identities in negotiation with political discourses that attempt to erase the existence of the LGBTQIA+ community.

The agency to creatively and defiantly resist political conservatism is much needed in a world in which half of its total population (about 4.1 billion people) will be called to vote in 2024 for presidential, legislative, and local elections in more than fifty countries (Jégo 2023). These include eight of the ten most populated countries in the world, among which are Brazil, Mexico, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, the U.S and Russia (ibid.). If the results of some of these elections can be predicted in advance, other election outcomes are still uncertain, and they might comfort nationalist tendencies or bring about more drastic political changes. Such circumstances demand critical reflection and continued academic engagement. The authors in this issue of Lova Journal provide such a perspective.

Sometimes, however, situations are so acute and severe that we cannot sit and write, or not yet. We had received an article about an Israeli anti-Zionist activist against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. A fascinating and engaging article about the possibilities and limits of an individual's acts against the Israeli state from within that same state. We were very much looking forward to publishing the article. By the time we were exchanging about the necessary adjustments, 7 October had passed, and we learned that the author had traveled to their family in Israel. Needless to say, other things than the editing of an article received priority. We hope that this year brings the changes necessary for more justice and freedom in Palestine and beyond.

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