

BOOK REVIEWS



Familia în România între social și politic. O incursiune diacronică pluridisciplinară coord. Anca Dohotariu

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Book review by **Roxana-Elisabeta Marinescu**

This collective volume starts from questioning the very definition of the family, an extremely topical theme nowadays in Romania, and goes on to explore the norms, cultural meanings, values and practices of this institution from a diachronic and transdisciplinary perspective. What are the main characteristics of this institution in Romania? Furthermore, to what extent is it relevant for the recent dynamics of the values and practices regarding democratic freedom and gender equality? The authors faced three major challenges and also to answered them in a coherent and unified manner: the diachronic view of the topic and its contextualisation (the Romanian family space was given precedence); the varied perspectives coming from several academic fields: sociology, history, social assistance, politics, medicine, and law; and the focus on gender as a transversal dimension of social life in general and family life in particular.

The analyses included in the book build on already existing research (relying mostly on a French-speaking bibliography, a welcome addition to English and American bibliographies usually consulted in Romania) to create a coherent and unified view of the institution of the family from the 19th century to the present day. Although not an all-encompassing view of all possible configurations of the family, which obviously varied in time and through historic epochs, the volume presents a large variety of issues connected to it. More than a synthesis on the topic, the

book is an invitation to reflect upon it, in order to deconstruct the preconceptions and stereotypes existing in the public discourse on the family in Romania today.

The volume was coordinated by Dr. Anca Dohotariu from the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest, who holds a special interest in transdisciplinary and qualitative analyses of social and family policies, equal opportunities and the sociology of the family, and gender as a political and social construct. She has previously coordinated other research projects on work-life balance within the Romanian Academy, Iași, or „Family Policies and Gender Equality in Eastern and Central Europe. A comparative study Romania-Hungary” (Babeș-Bolyai University). She also wrote a number of academic articles on the issue of the family, among which “The unmarried couple in post-communist Romania: a qualitative sociological approach”, *The History of the Family*, 20(4), 2015 and one monograph *Le couple non marié. Du politique au social dans le postcommunisme roumain* (Iași: Institutul European, 2013). All of the above constitute a guarantee for a serious academic endeavour.

The book chapters include a literature review of the family as a research object (“Familia ca obiect de studiu - de la abordările epistemologice consacrate la lucrările de specialitate din România” by Anca Dohotariu); a study on widowhood of women in the first half of the 19th century in the Romanian provinces (“Asistența socială a femeii văduve în Principatele Române în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea” by Ligia Livadă-Cadeschi); an analysis of the norms and ideologies regarding the family as the support of the nation in Romania in the 19th century (“Familia – „molecula” societății și stâlpul națiunii. O incursiune în universul ideologic și normativ al secolului al XIX-lea românesc” by Ionela Băluță); a view on prostitution and heterosexuality in the period between the two world wars in Romania (“Prostituție feminină și heterosexuality în România interbelică” by Lucian Dărămuș); a review of social and health surveys and their description of the family of women workers in urban Romania in the period between the two world wars (“Emoțiuni mecanice: familia femeii muncitoare din urbanul românesc în anchetele sociale și sanitare interbelice (1924-1939)” by Alexandra Ghiț); a medical view on eating habits and family life in the 20th century Romania (“Politicile caloriei: standard de viață, alimentație și legături de familie în România la jumătatea secolului al XX-lea” by Mara Mărginean); an overview of the medical discourse on abortion in communist Romania (“„Pentru sănătatea femeii!”: elemente ale discursului medical asupra întreruperii de sarcină în România comunistă, 1962-1966 by Corina Doboș); and finally a description of property relations between spouses (“Relațiile

patrimoniale dintre soți în România” by Anca Monica Ardeleanu). All these chapters represent a well-rounded and multiple perspective on the topic.

All in all, *Familia în România între social și politic. O incursiune diacronică pluridisciplinară* is a necessary and relevant book in the present day context in postcommunist Romania and Eastern Europe, where local traditional understandings of the family seem to clash with current more flexible and comprehensive redefinitions and reinterpretations of the concept. Certainly this book brings an important contribution to a better understanding of the Romanian family/ies since the 19th century up to the present, and to the clarification of their role in forming the individual and collective identity of society. It is a useful research tool for a diverse academic public, researchers, students in political science and sociology, as well a good read for the general public interested in the topic of the family from a gender perspective.