International Workshop to be held at the Max-Weber-Kolleg (University of Erfurt), 16-17 July 2019, organized by Dr. Giulia Pedrucci and Dr. Dr. Emiliano Urciuoli

Mothering(s) and Religions: Normative Perspectives and Individual Appropriations. A Cross-Cultural and Interdisciplinary Approach from Antiquity to the Present

This workshop is the third in a cycle entitled *Religionification of Motherhood and Mothers' Appropriation of Religion*. The first one, *Breastfeeding(s) and Religions: Normative Prescriptions and Individual Appropriation. A Cross-Cultural and Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Antiquity to the Present*, was held at the Max-Weber-Kolleg (University of Erfurt) on July 11-12, 2018. The second one, *Pregnancies, Childbirths, and Religions: Rituals, Normative Perspectives, and Individual Appropriations. A Cross-Cultural and Interdisciplinary Perspective from Antiquity to the Present* will take place at the Max-Weber-Kolleg (University of Erfurt), January 31- February1, 2019.

In this third and final workshop we will focus particularly on the religious roles of the "mother" in the child's life after the perinatal phase and until adulthood, as well as on the less fortunate cases in which the offspring dies before becoming adult. In this regard, the distinction made by Susan Starr. Sered (1994) between "womAn as symbol" (e.g., images of goddesses and normative stereotypes created by male religious authorities) and "womEn as agents" (real practice, historical mothers), and the distinction made by Adrienne Rich (1976) between "Motherhood as institution" and "Motherhood as experience" (women's experience of and relation to her own reproductive capacities) are particularly relevant here. In fact, evidence suggests a widespread gap between normative representation and actual practice. While the first two workshops dealt with physiological functions that only a woman – mother-to-be or newly mother – can perform, this third workshop stresses that the rearing of a child shifts the focus from biology to society. Therefore, it is necessary to define what "mother" is. In order to do so, we use Sara Ruddick's articulation of the three demands of maternal thinking — preservation, growth, and social acceptance — that are met by the three practices of preservative love, nurturance, and training (Ruddick 1989:17). Preservation has to be understood as the most compelling demand. As Ruddick suggests, "mother" is better understood as a verb (to mother) rather than as a feminine substantive. A "mother" is anyone who engages in maternal practice and makes this a central part of their life. Mother can, thus, be gender-inclusive.

Inspired by Ruddick's words, the epistemological framework and definition of "mother" that we suggest for this workshop reads as follows: any child can have in their life one or more figures who collaborate (simultaneously or not) in pursuing preservation, growth, and social acceptance, but usually every child has in their life a figure – a "mother" – who takes care of them on a daily – or almost daily – base in order to pursue their preservation, growth, and social acceptance. Significant others can help this figure, but she/he performs this task in a preponderant way in comparison with others. This figure is often, but not always and not necessarily, the biological mother. As the title aims to underline, there is a multiplicity of ways to mother, some of which can be shaped and influenced by religion or by other social forces similar to religion. These will form the focus of the workshop. Examples include "spiritual mothering," collective mothering of children by religious institutions, as well as redefinition, negation or negotiation of parenting patterns for instance religious or pseudo-religious inside sects (Mount Athos, Il Forteto…).

We invite papers exploring case studies within the theoretical framework outlined above concerning religious prescriptions for "mothers" and their roles as primary religious inculturators, healers, nurturers, trainers, primary child care providers, active agents in case of lifecycle rituals, as well as in case of the offspring's death and the preservation of its soul and body, and emotional supporters for other mothers in cases of childhood diseases and premature death. We also welcome case studies in which mothers' response to religious norms can be traced back, and those who clarify to which extent mothers feel free to transgress without blaming themselves for not being a "good" mother and obedient member of a specific religious tradition. Moreover, we welcome case studies where the religious usage of space is influenced by the fact that activities are performed specifically by mothers for themselves or for their offspring.

A specific section will be dedicated to the figures we label as "transgressive mothers." We are looking for cases in which "mothers" kill, do not properly feed children, or educate them to self-destructive behaviors on the basis of religious reasons. Examples include Medea, whose actions seems constantly dictated by the Sun God, jihadist "mothers", "mothers" during the Jonestown massacre, "mothers" who refuses life-saving medical treatments for their offspring, including vaccines, etc. We will ask why these mothering figures use religion or spirituality as a way to not conform to the expectations of motherhood, by missing the first, most important demand: preservation/preservative love. For this reason, they act against the definition itself of "mother" and become "transgressive." Quite interestingly, this transgressive behavior based on religious or pseudo-religious beliefs, usually implies a spatial separation from the urban space and its social and emotional pressures and networks (just to make some examples, Medea kills outside the city wall, Jonestown perfectly reproduces a town but in the jungle, Il Forteto is located in the countryside like all the communities at the time of the time). We welcome case studies which deepen our understanding of these socio-cultural dynamics.

The workshop will be held in English. The proposals, which should not exceed 300 words, must be received by December 21, 2018. Please, send them to Dr. Giulia Pedrucci (giulia.pedrucci@gmail.com or giulia.pedrucci@uni-erfurt.de).