

*Worker-Mothers on the Margins of Europe: Gender and Migration between Moldova and Istanbul.* By Leyla J. Keough. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016. 239 pp. Acknowledgements. Bibliography. Figures. Index. Maps. Paper cover: Paper.

*Olena Fedyuk, University of Strathclyde*

Set up against the dynamic backdrop of feminization of global migratory flows, Leyla J. Keough's book *Worker-Mothers on the Margins of Europe* unravels complex gendered moral economies that guide migratory practices and choices of female domestic workers from Gagauz Yeri (Moldova) to Istanbul. The author traces the emerging market for domestic work in Istanbul and fast-paced neoliberal transformations in post-socialist Moldova that accompany this migratory trail. While drawing a larger picture of the transformations from socialism to a private-sector economy, Keough zooms into how these changes alter the ideals about working women and motherhood in the context of transnational migration.

Although Keough's goals are ambitious, she is skillful in connecting multiple stories in a single ethnography guided by her qualitative multi-sited research conducted in early 2000s. The true strength of the book lies in a careful application of conceptual framework of gendered moral economies and practical operationalizing of the concept of transnational social fields. The former allows the author to explore the working of gender not only as "the products of national ideologies" (14) but as discursive, embodied and practical daily choices of migrant women, their families and their employers. Transnational social fields—a concept which at times suffers from a vague application in migration studies—thus become concrete sites where gendered moralities become tangible through individual actions and structural opportunities or limitations. This concept allows the author to explore the effects of moral gendered economies in a variety of overlapping sites and in relation to a variety of actors. The author puts together a fascinating puzzle; what drives Turkish households to hire Moldovan Gagauz women, what makes Gagauz women seek employment abroad in Istanbul's affluent homes, and what is the meaning of the socialist past and entrepreneurial aspirations of the present in both locations? In doing so, Keough tells a local story that is relevant to the global context: "What these women's stories offer us is an understanding not only of how women are experiencing neoliberal shifts in the global economy but also how deeply embedded beliefs about gender, agency, and labour drive this economy" (36).

Chapters 1 and 2 are set in Gagauz Yeri, Moldova, and focus on social meaning of different types of work, including jobs that people take pride in and those that are seen as a moral transgressions. She then explains how these ideologies translate into performing domestic work in Istanbul. Unlike men, female migrants "spend a great deal of time and energy strategically positioning themselves within these representations of women" (7). Thus they exert much of their energy in justifying their choices of going or staying, the types the work they perform, the length of their stay and the way they spend their hard-earned money. Keough observes that, like many other migrating women around the globe, Gagauz women turn to the trope of the sacrificing mother

to justify their decisions, and, like in many similar contexts, this trope often obscures “the variety of capitalist exploitations migrant women face as global workers” (70).

Chapters 3 and 4 take the reader to Istanbul, where Keough explores the demand for new forms of domestic labour among Turkish upper-middle class, secular and urbanized elites. Hiring Gagauz women, argues Keough, is not simply about the cheap labour at home, but “a modern civilization choice, a morality” (132) that modernizes Turkish households. Gagauz women’s whiteness, Europeaness, secularity, education, and work ethic position them as a highly desired work-force. At the same time, they are also seen as “desperate, oversexed and ambitious” (100), and therefore a potential threat to the Turkish wives. These chapters explore such power struggles through examination of the ways in which migrant women and their employers think of good work and working relationships. The author proceeds to discuss relationships between Gagauz women and Turkish men, skillfully deconstructing the dichotomy of sex-worker vs. domestic worker by turning to the concept of “sexscapes” (170), where providing sex and affection as a part of work or personal relationships is contextualized in power relations of uncertain economic situations. This concept allows her to draw a complex picture of sexual, romantic and intimate encounters between migrant women and local men with various motivations, degrees of exploitation and rewards on both sides.

In the final ethnographic chapter (Chapter 5), Keough discusses counter-trafficking campaigns in Moldova, focusing specifically on class conflict that drives moral justifications behind these campaigns. The migration scenario that sits most comfortably with Moldovan state ideology is that of a female victim falling prey to foreign male interest. When confronted with success stories of Gagauz and other Moldovan women migrating as domestics, the staff of IOM (International Organization for Migration) Moldova revealed their discomfort with such stories, indicating that female migration is ultimately seen as an inherently “immoral decision” (193). Educated urban Moldovans that inhabit places like IOM Moldova see rural women’s desire for worldliness, consumerism and status as disruptive to their families, communities, and classed social order as a whole.

One of the weaknesses of the book is Keough’s analysis of the relationship between Turkish and Gagauz women. Keough emphasizes the perspective of migrant women, who often portray Turkish women as spoiled, lazy, unable to control their households and children to the degree that even Turkish men suffer from it (e.g. Chapter 4). Here the author seems to stop short of applying her critical analysis to this striking lack of gender solidarity. While she investigates racist and sexist attitudes of the Turkish women, she does not explore this in Moldovan migrant women. In my view, these narratives could be read as another form of class- and race-based moral superiority discourses practiced by Gagauz women who might feel cheated out of their entitlement as white, secular, and European women reduced by their economic disparities to the position of servants in less white, less European households. Just as Moldovan women are held responsible for the possible deterioration of their households in Moldova (64), they similarly hold Turkish

women responsible for the disorder of the Turkish households with Turkish men being mere victims of the lack of womanly virtues of their wives.

Keough inserts her case well into the literature on global feminized migratory flows and in local Turkish literature. However, she lacks references to the rich literature on similar migrations from the former Soviet and socialist states to other countries, particularly to Italy and Greece. Similarly, it is unfortunate that, while published in 2016, the book has no references to the removal of visa requirements to the EU for Moldovan citizens, which was enacted in April 2014. This event must have removed some of the most troublesome restrictions on the mobility, employability and power relations for the women described in the book.

Keough's book is a fascinating analysis of the workings of class, race and modernity as ideals of neoliberal economy acted out through gender. As such, it is a must-read for all students of post-socialist studies and scholars of migration. It is also a gripping read for anyone interested in a good ethnography of the global "neoliberalizing social field of transnational labour" (22).