Editor's Introduction

When Peter Hallama approached the *Aspasia* editorial board about publishing the proceedings of a conference he was organizing on Socialist Masculinities, we jumped at the opportunity. It seemed that *Aspasia*, as a journal of women's and gender history, would be the perfect venue to showcase the innovative and important historical scholarship being conducted on masculinities in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe. Although the COVID-19 pandemic delayed his plans and necessitated holding a virtual conference, the results that make up the contents of this volume do not disappoint. As Hallama mentions in his Introduction to the Special Forum articles, and as Marko Dumančić highlights in his concluding Comments, the works included here reflect a deep engagement with the lived experiences of men, assessed through memoirs, diaries, photographs, newspapers, and internal party documents. These articles explore some of the many and shifting masculinities constructed throughout the region during the socialist period, showing that individuals and the state constantly engaged in their negotiation and renegotiation.

The six articles are presented in rough chronological and thematic order, but the connections and synergies among them transcend temporal and geographical categorizations. Hallama's Introduction sets out the state of the field of socialist masculinity studies, placing the articles in this Special Forum within a renewed interest in social and cultural history, as the authors investigate the meanings of everyday lived experiences and the performative aspects of masculinity under socialism. Several of the articles situate their topics within the emerging field of the history of emotions to assess constructions of masculinity within personal relationships and in relation to the socialist state. To begin, Brendan McElmeel examines debates over the evolving meaning of love and marriage among the readership of the Soviet Communist Party press in the Urals region of Sverdlovsk during the Thaw. Similarly, Cristina Diac reveals the internal party mechanisms established to deal with transgressions of intimate behavioral norms among communist functionaries in postwar Romania. Erica Fraser and Kateryna Tonkykh continue by employing the notion of rumor to reassess cosmonaut handler N. P. Kamanin's diaries, emphasizing the importance placed on the private lives and personal behavior of public figures, and arguing that private constructions of masculinity, such as in the diary, served a public purpose. These articles reveal the deep concern that communist parties displayed regarding the personal lives of their cadres and the ways they sought to construct and encourage proper expressions of what the state considered to be socialist masculinity, particularly in intimate relationships.

For many of the contributors to this Special Forum, ego-documents, such as memoirs, diaries, journals, and photographs, also reveal the contested nature of socialist masculinities. Natalia Jarska and Wojciech Śmieja both use the published results of popular memoir contests to depict very different versions of masculinity in state-socialist Poland. Jarska focuses on men's persistent resistance to female wage labor, finding that while among the older generation women's work undermined men's sense of family authority and identity, the younger generation generally accepted women working, for a variety of reasons. Śmieja, in contrast, focuses on those disabled during World War II as they negotiated Poland's peacetime politics. For these veterans, the notion that military experience guaranteed their success in postwar socialist society clashed against both the popular stigmatization of disabled bodies and the struggle to live up to the state's ideological prerogatives. Magali Delaloye also draws on the concept of military masculinity in her examination of the narratives and images constructed by Soviet doctors during the Afghan War, arguing that doctors' representations reaffirmed traditional conceptions of Soviet masculinity and refuted the late-Soviet discourse of a "masculinity in crisis." Finally, Dumančić's comments draw together the themes explored in the Special Forum, highlighting the performative nature of masculinities across all contexts and their unique manifestations according to particular conditions.

The Source included in this issue also contributes to the Special Forum on Socialist Masculinities. Amy Randall's translation of the pamphlet *For the Father of a Newborn* and her contextualization of this source reveal the ways postwar Soviet medical authorities sought to redefine the meaning of masculinity in support of pronatalism. In this context, being a man meant being a supportive and helpful spouse by taking over domestic chores during and after pregnancy, helping with the children, and intervening when necessary to seek medical assistance. Randall argues that Soviet medicine sought to mobilize men to engage more in the domestic sphere, but that this did not necessarily help women or increase gender equality in Soviet society; rather, through its efforts to promote more healthy births, the state used men as surrogates to extend greater surveillance and control over women. Nevertheless, the state faced an uphill battle to convince men to embrace this particular vision of masculinity. In sum, the contributions to this Special Forum make significant headway in establishing new avenues for research into the everyday lived experiences of men and reflect the innovative use of sources and methodologies that highlight the contested, negotiated, and constructed nature of socialist masculinities.

As always, this issue of *Aspasia* includes a diverse collection of book reviews that showcase the wide range of scholarship on women's and gender studies, published in many different languages, in our region and beyond. We are grateful to our contributors for their willingness to take on the important task of producing the book reviews, and for our book review editor, Krassimira Daskalova, who works tirelessly to ensure we bring the breadth and depth of current scholarship to *Aspasia* readers. One of the book reviews in this issue evaluates a recent work published in honor of Hana Havelková. Havelková, a renowned sociologist, a leading voice of Czech feminist thought, and a founder of gender studies in the Czech Republic, passed away soon after the publication of the book. We are deeply saddened by this loss to our field

and include a tribute to her life and work at the end of this issue, prepared by two of her colleagues and friends. As I close these introductory remarks, I want to take a moment to thank all of the *Aspasia* authors and editors who continued their work on this volume through the pandemic. As we have seen and experienced, the pandemic has affected the world and our region unevenly, disproportionately impacting women, people of color, and areas with fewer resources. Our contributors—authors and editors—represent a truly international cooperative of scholars from both East and West. As with our socialist men, each navigated their unique circumstances to ensure the continuation of our collective endeavor. Thank you for your sustained and devoted support of *Aspasia*. Be safe and healthy.

Sharon A Kowalsky
Senior Editor, *Aspasia*
aspasia.editor@gmail.com