

Introduction: Early Career Researcher Issue IX

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With this issue, *gender forum* continues its series of Early Career Researcher Issues, which invite scholars in the early stages of their academic careers to publish scholarly articles and reviews that investigate notions of gender and sexuality in (Anglophone) literature and culture. I had the pleasure to act as guest editor for this issue, collaborating initially with my fellow Ph.D. student Alexandra Novacov under the supervision of Judith Rauscher, one of the general editors of *gender forum*, and then, after Alexandra had to withdraw from the project for organizational reasons, with Judith Rauscher. Being able to work with other early career researchers on their papers for a peer-reviewed, open access publication like *gender forum* has offered me the opportunity to gain insights into processes of scholarly publishing that sometimes remain behind closed doors. It has been wonderful to be part of a publication project that commits to facilitating the discursive participation as well as to promoting a higher visibility of the work of early career researchers in the academic community, including researchers from outside Germany.

The ECR Issue we put together with the help of contributors, reviewers, and the team of *gender forum* is characterized by a wide range of topics and approaches; they are however all connected by the aim to approach gender and sexuality from intersectional perspectives. It features four scholarly articles and one scholarly review. In the following, I will briefly introduce each of the publications, emphasizing their different objects of inquiry and approaches to exploring gendered experiences, gender relations, sexual acts, and matters of individual as well as collective identity in different literary and cultural contexts.

In “Menstruating in *Nepantla*: Decolonizing my Autohistoria through Gloria Anzaldúa’s ‘path of conocimiento,’” Andrea Aguilar scrutinizes the notion of menstruation as a gendered phenomenon and bodily experience. Using Gloria Anzaldúa’s performative approach of ‘conocimiento,’ Aguilar offers a critical approach to traditional perceptions of and narratives about menstruation. She considers menstruation as an experience that is both deeply personal and collective. Her unique approach is distinct itself from conventional literary and cultural studies methodologies in the inclusion of autobiographical material, which complements her scholarly discussion of Anzaldúa’s work. Treating menstruation as a crucial bodily experience, though not one that should be viewed as a gendered experience in definitive or exclusionary ways, Aguilar discusses her own, historically and culturally specific perspective on menstruation as well as its affective and transformative potential.

In the second article, entitled “Hegemonic and Non-Hegemonic Masculinities in *Things Fall Apart* and *Pow!*”, Enakshi Samarawickrama compares notions of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinity in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Mo Yan’s *Pow!* (2003). While acknowledging that the two novels differ significantly in terms of the historical and cultural contexts in which they were produced, Samarawickrama explores how the two texts use complex character constellations to negotiate the clash of traditional and non-traditional forms of masculinity in strikingly similar ways. With recourse to Raewyn Connell’s gender order theory and concept of multiple masculinities, Samarawickrama argues that both enactments of toxic hegemonic masculinity and of subordinated masculinity are shown to be harmful in *Things Fall Apart* and *Pow!*.

In his article “The Strategic Eversion of Pornography: Ninja Thyberg’s *Pleasure*”, Daniel Schulz analyzes the filmic and narrative techniques used in Ninja Thyberg’s feature film *Pleasure* (2021). The article interrogates to which degree this movie, which presents a fictionalized look behind the scenes of the American porno industry, manages to subvert the male gaze and tropes of pornographic film-making. Discussing the *Pleasure*’s plot, characters, and aesthetics, Schulz suggests that the film constitutes a nuanced, albeit in some senses limited, reflection on the porn industry, including its capitalistic, sexist, racist, and classist structures.

In “The Negotiations of Masquerade, Sisterhood, and Subversiveness in Elif Shafak’s *Three Daughters of Eve*,” Eva Maria Geicht examines the different versions of Muslim womanhood displayed in Shafak’s novel. Reading *Three Daughters of Eve* as an implicit response to post-9/11 anti-Muslim sentiments, Geicht examines how the main

characters of the text, who all stem from different cultural backgrounds, experience and re-negotiate their respective ethnic, religious, and gendered identities after meeting at Oxford, where they have moved for their studies. Drawing on conceptualizations of performativity and masquerade, the essays argues that it is through a form of (step-) sisterhood, which acknowledges difference as well as sameness, that the three women eventually manage to find ways to resist patriarchal oppression.

Last but not least, in her review of *Sex Work, Health, and Human Rights* (2021), Zoe Moscovici highlights the productive ways in which the essay collection edited by Shira M. Goldberg, Ruth Morgan Thomas, Anna Forbes, and Stefan Baral brings together scholarly and activist pieces that not only discuss, but in many instances also put into practice a community-oriented approach to representations of sex work, in particular where issues of health, safety, and legal policies are concerned.