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Early Career Researchers Special Issue:

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Winter Issue:

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completed papers (October 1)

About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

Opinions expressed in articles published in *gender forum* are those of individual authors and not necessarily endorsed by the editors of *gender forum*.

Submissions

Target articles should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition) and should be between 5,000 and 8,000 words in length. Please make sure to number your paragraphs and include a bio-blurb and an abstract of roughly 300 words. Files should be sent as email attachments in Word format. Please send your manuscripts to gender-forum@uni-koeln.de.

We always welcome reviews on recent releases in Gender Studies! Submitted reviews should conform to current MLA Style (8th edition), have numbered paragraphs, and should be between 750 and 1,000 words in length. Please note that the reviewed releases ought to be no older than 24 months. In most cases, we are able to secure a review copy for contributors.

Article Publishing

The journal aims to provide rapid publication of research through a continuous publication model. All submissions are subject to peer review. Articles should not be under review by any other journal when submitted to *Gender forum*.

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Editorial

By Laura-Marie Schnitzler, University of Cologne

1 Heading into its fifth year, *gender forum*'s Early Career Researchers issue has now become an established place for insightful new research. This year's issue presents the format's trademark broad range of interest, showcasing new research that deals with material as diverse as song lyrics, stage plays, performance art, biography, and finally, online forums.

2 In "The Disruption of Normativity: Queer Desire and Negativity in Morrissey and The Smiths", Frederic Rukes analyses the negotiation of ambiguous and ambivalent depictions of gender in the lyrics of singer-songwriter Morrissey. While Morrissey refuses to classify himself in any predefined categories of gender and sexuality, his own and his band's musical canon is rife with narratives of queer desire and instances of sexual intimacy, which often allow for both a gay and a straight viewpoint. It is precisely this ambiguity that offers the possibility of an interpretation offside a compulsory heterosexuality and –normativity, therefore opening it to a queer audience. It is furthermore among the reasons why lyrics by Morrissey and The Smiths qualify as queer texts. In order to establish and defend such a view, Rukes draws on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's approach of a queer reading and her work on homosocial desire in literature, Harold Beaver's examination of homosexual signs, and Teresa de Lauretis definition of queer texts. Deriving from Jack Halberstam's concept of the queer art of failure, Lee Edelman's critique of reproductive futurism, Judith Butler's reflections on the term *queer*, and José Esteban Muñoz's conceptualisation of a queer utopia, Rukes shows how Morrissey uses different formulas of negativity and longing to generate power from, thus transforming them into critique of regimes of the normal.

3 James D Wardwood's article on "The Razor Edge of Accommodation: Violent Perception and the Nonbinary Body in *Gender Failure*" too engages with issues of stigmatisation and discrimination in the context of nonbinary identities. Positing the question what it means to be "retired from gender", and what role such an identity plays in daily life, Wardwood engages with the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Judith Butler to elucidate the experience of nonbinary – that is, external to the male/female gender binary – gendered individuals, and the ultimate unintelligibility of that experience. Although an arbitrary system, the gender binary serves as a mechanism of so-called social truth: because the nonbinary reality rejects this truth, the nonbinary gender performance not only appears unintelligible to the binary other, but also represents a threat to social stability. Wardwood uses the memoirs in *Gender Failure* – written by two self-identified nonbinary individuals – to consider how

social norms inform binary perception and how that perception constitutes the nonbinary self. Perceived from within the binary matrix, the nonbinary self appears unintelligible: as a result, the validity of their gendered reality is threatened. Conscious of the conceptual gap between nonbinary and binary individuals, this project explores gender as the subject of the perceptive act and not only outlines the delegitimization of the nonbinary reality but also suggests opportunities to make space for non-normative gendered experiences.

4 Continuing this issue's concern with non-normative gender experiences, Molly Marotta analyses the artistic and personal biography of 18th century actress Charlotte Clarke. In "Instrument and Screen of All Your Villainies:" Charlotte Charke, *Deviant Bodies*, and Disguise in George Lillo's *The London Merchant*, Marotta's analysis of *The London Merchant* (1731) as a required moralising viewing for young apprentices contrasts the play's seemingly simple moral (men and women should do as their positions, masters, law, and God require; transgressions are not to be tolerated) with the subtextual meaning generated by Charke's acting. While scholars have respectively discussed Charke's life and autobiography and *The London Merchant*'s morality, the intersection of this actor's personal history and her performance in this play has not been analyzed for its intrinsic properties. Charke's life experiences, celebrity, and presence on stage point to the fact that the consumption and destruction of transgressive female or feminized bodies sustain the prevailing systems of morality of the play. Looking at the eighteenth-century drama and Charke's role in it through Christine Cloud's work on cross-dressed writing, Marvin Carlson's work on the haunted stage, and Felicity Nussbaum's work on celebrity culture, this play illustrates the ways in which performance serves to utterly disrupt the meaning of a play as cultural icon and broken hegemonic symbol.

5 In "Feminist Interventions and Intercultural Mobilities in Satoshi Miyagi's '*Othello* in *Noh* Style'", Roweena Yip too offers a reading of gender on the stage and examines the ways in which moving the excluded female body onto the *Noh* stage. *Noh* is a classical Japanese performance form from the 14th century that only allowed male actors. Casting actresses in contemporary productions such as Satoshi Miyagi's '*Othello* intervenes in the performance history of *Noh* – particularly because the visual presentation of the actress's distinctly feminine features foregrounds the materiality of the female body on the *Noh* stage. This production therefore constitutes a materialist feminist intervention both into the *form* of historically all-male *Noh* performance, and into the *focalisation* of Shakespeare's narrative. It thus provides a specifically female articulation of the memory and experience of trauma. Desdemona's memory of the past becomes the dramatic plot of *Othello* re-constructed, to

enact a new subject position: Desdemona's ghost. This material intervention facilitates temporal and spatial mobilities unique to intercultural performance, opening possibilities for theorising at the intersection of interculturalism and gender. By fracturing the temporality of Shakespeare's *Othello* narrative, this intercultural *Noh* performance mobilises and re-constructs the working-through of traumatised female subjectivity as taking place in the present, shifting narrative authority to Desdemona's ghost.

6 The final article of this year's Early Career Researchers issue has been contributed by Megan Lieff, who engages with the "Effects of Usenet on Discussions of Sexual Assault in the BDSM Community in the 1990s". Finding that although informed consent between adults is a mainstay of BDSM—bondage/discipline, dominance/submission and sadomasochism—its practitioners have had to fight accusations to the contrary. Though BDSM practices are generally consensual, assault undoubtedly occurs within the BDSM community. This paper focuses on how the idea of assault has been handled by BDSM community members; how survivors and perpetrators have been treated, how assault and consent have been defined, and how communities have approached preventing future assaults. In order to explore these issues, this paper historicizes the issue of rape in the BDSM community by examining academic and activist writing from BDSM focused community organizations and online forums throughout the 1990s. Lieff's analysis documents the evolution of these conversations from the advent of BDSM specific newsgroups on Usenet through the late 1990s. In the 1990s, for BDSM practitioners who were able to access the Internet, forums such as Usenet provided a new opportunity for anonymous and safer spaces in which to process and discuss assault within the community. Specifically, the alt.sex.bondage newsgroup was home to some of the first documented conversations about trigger warnings, BDSM specific anti-domestic violence resources, and community wide conversations about the existence of rape and abuse in BDSM.

7 In keeping with this issue's interest in engendered stages, the issue closes with Ali Alsmadi's review of *Beyond Spain's Borders: Women Players in Early Modern National Theater* and Kirsten Stoddarts review of Hulu's *The Handmaid's Tale*.