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Absolute Erotic

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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

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Editorial

1 In the cultural imagination, expressions of the erotic – sex, desire, relationships – are intrinsically linked to gender. Female gender stereotypes are often based on ideas about sexual behaviour, from the lustful Jezebel who preys on innocent men to the sexually passive ‘angel in the house’ who endures sexuality for the sake of procreation. Similarly, behaviour during sexual encounters is often strictly scripted based on gender, with an alleged set of rules of conduct, including sexual positions and questions of dominance. Representations of the erotic are also plagued by double standards: not only are women encouraged to be sexually available only to be disparaged for being ‘too’ available, but which behaviours are culturally acceptable also differs widely between the genders. This issue of *gender forum* presents works that critically engage with representations of the erotic, both on the page and on the screen.

2 In “Private Selves and Public Conflicts: Mastery and Gender Identity in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*”, Laura Linker examines in how far Gaskell's novel from 1855 advances a radical social-moral agenda as it examines Victorian anxieties about public expressions of power and gender identity. The novel presents several competing articulations of the pragmatic industrialist, the intellectual gentleman, and the working class man. The “true man” (164) in Industrial England, a term Gaskell employs to describe the factory owner, Thornton, comes under particular scrutiny, as does the now famous Victorian feminine ideal of the ‘angel in the house’. The pragmatic industrialist identity is challenged by Margaret Hale, the novel's heroine. Margaret appropriates a stereotypically masculine role to advocate for a better life for the factory men working for Thornton, who also serves as her love interest in the novel. At odds with the strong industrialist man “made of iron” (213) represented by Thornton is the ‘man of letters’ represented by the heroine's father, Mr. Hale, whose values and forms of work are regarded as weak, effeminate, and outdated by Thornton. While these gendered divisions of work existed before the mid nineteenth century, they came under pressure during the Industrial Revolution, as working-class men were increasingly ready to go on strike for better conditions and pay. This paper considers these gendered identities and competing forms of work and particularly examines Margaret's inner conflict, for she desires both to improve the condition of the factory workers in Milton-Northern and protect Mr. Thornton from mob violence and financial ruin.

3 Natalie Perfetti-Oates’s article “Chick Flicks and the Straight Female Gaze: Sexual Objectification and Sex Negativity in *New Moon*, *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, *Magic Mike*, and *Fool’s Gold*” uses Laura Mulvey’s seminal work “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”

as a starting point. Perfetti-Oates outlines how it reveals the existence and impact of the (heterosexual) male gaze in classic Hollywood cinema. Despite the prevalence of this gaze today, the binary Mulvey posits—man as subject/woman as object—is dated as it fails to account for the emerging presence of the heterosexual female gaze in contemporary Hollywood cinema. Indeed, the practice of male sexual objectification is trending and little research has been done concerning the erotic spectacle of the male body on screen. Her essay examines this trend in chick flicks, which more than any other film genre are created for a heterosexual female audience. As Marcia Pally's "Object of the Game" points out, such spectacle is not necessarily negative; however, an analysis of the genre reveals that sexual objectification is often linked with sex negativity. Chick flicks like *Magic Mike* (2012), *New Moon* (2009), *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* (2008), and *Fool's Gold* (2008) demonstrate that the sexual objectification of the male body actually weakens the desirability of his character. In *New Moon* and *Forgetting Sarah Marshall*, it is the nice guy who 'gets the girl' and the sex object who does not. In *Magic Mike* and *Fool's Gold*, the sex object does win over the woman in the end, yet the films designate the sexuality of these characters as a flaw they must overcome to achieve this aim. Case studies of these movies thus show that chick flicks increasingly indulge in male spectacle, yet condemn the practice of sexual objectification via sex negativity.

4 Cameron E. Williams focuses on correlating representations of "Sex, Violence, and the Southern Man in Lee Daniels' *The Paperboy*". Though the film has been derided by critics as smut hardly worth watching, this article argues that *The Paperboy* fits squarely into a tradition of Southern fiction in which sex and violence are not only strangely and problematically tangled up, but are furthermore inextricably linked to representations of gender and race. By contextualizing the South's historical preoccupation with associating sex and violence, this essay places *The Paperboy* within this narrative tradition to ultimately illuminate the ways in which the film directly confronts paradigms of Southern masculinity that are deeply entrenched in the region's cultural and racial mythologies.