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GENDER FORUM

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Transgender and the Media

Edited by
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Spring Issue:

abstracts (October 1),

completed papers (January 1)

Summer Issue:

abstracts (January 1),

completed papers (April 1)

Fall Issue:

abstracts (April 1),

completed papers (July 1)

Early Career Researchers Special Issue:

abstracts (May 1),

completed papers (August 1)

Winter Issue:

abstracts (July 1),

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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There are no submission or page charges, and no colour charges.

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Editorial

by Johanna Schorn, independent scholar

1 The December issue of *Gender Forum* is dedicated to the topic of Transgender Studies. Transgender Studies is a field of academic inquiry that is interrelated with Gender Studies, Feminist Studies and Queer Theory. In her introduction to the first anthology in the field, Susan Stryker defined it as “concerned with anything that disrupts, denaturalizes, rearticulates, and makes visible the normative linkages we generally assume to exist between the biological specificity of the sexually differentiated human body, the social roles and statuses that particular form of body is expected to occupy, the subjectively experienced relationship between a gendered sense of self and social expectations of gender-role performance, and the cultural mechanisms that work to sustain or thwart specific configurations of gendered personhood” (3).

2 In the roughly two decades that Transgender Studies has been formally recognized, the usage and popularity of the term “transgender” has proliferated and, most importantly, has entered the vocabulary of mainstream media. However despite these developments, transgender individuals remain the target of discrimination and violence and are often silenced. This may even include media that is purportedly inclusive of them, but which fails to give transgender people the opportunity to influence their own representation (e.g. the recent film *The Danish Girl*, based on the biography of the painter Lily Elbe, was criticized for casting male cisgender¹ actor Eddie Redmayne for the leading role).

3 For this issue of *Gender Forum*, scholars were invited to submit articles which explore the recent changes in media representation of transgender people, fictional as well as non-fictional, and to critically engage with questions of sexuality and gender. In the first paper, “Mundane Transphobia in Celebrity Big Brother UK”, Damien W. Riggs, Chloe Colton, Clemence Due and Clare Bartholomaeus discuss the representation of a transgender contestant on the 2013 season of Celebrity Big Brother UK. To this end, they analyze a selection of conversations between the transgender contestant Lauren Harries and other contestants, as well as conversations other contestants had amongst each other. Riggs et al found multiple instances of what they called “mundane homophobia” – a tension between proclamations of liberal inclusivity on the one hand discrimination in the form of mockery and a focus on anatomy on the other hand.

4 A similar theme of ambivalence continues into the following submission by Rhianna

¹ Cisgender describes a person who identifies with their assigned biological sex.

Humphries with the title, “I think journalists sometimes forget that we’re just people’: Analysing the Effects of UK Trans Media Representation on Trans Audiences”. Humphries, too, argues that greater inclusivity of transgender individuals does not necessarily translate to a respectful treatment. In this article, she presents her findings from extensive interviews with trans people to examine the ways in which they see their lives affected by trans media representations. Interviews and focus groups were conducted online with self-defining trans people as experts on the ways newspaper reporting affects their lives. The findings that emerged from interviews revealed newspapers repeatedly influenced daily lives especially in relation to transphobia, misgendering and misrepresentation, which were highlighted frequently.

5 The final paper presents a more hopeful note, focusing on representation of trans and non-normative gender roles in a children’s cartoon series. In “*Steven Universe* and the Queer Cartoon Carnavalesque”, Eli Dunn argues that some cartoon series are beginning to express queer alternatives to cisgender and heteronormative heroes within the realms of magic and fantasy. The medium of the cartoon gives *Steven Universe* the opportunity to represent trans and non-normative characters within the confines of a children’s cartoon, but it also displays gender fluidity and exploration more generally as a positive site of free play and learning. This representation, Dunn concludes, not only has obvious positive effects for queer children, it also brings to the fore questions of how we as adults view trans embodiment, fantasy, and queer desire.

6 The issue concludes with a book review by Andrea Anderson of bell hooks’ *Writing Beyond Race: Living Theory and Practice*, published in 2013 by Routledge. In this book, hooks is writing at the intersection of class, race, gender, sexuality and religion and suggests new avenues for thinking and addressing race and racism. She proposes using the term ‘white supremacy’ as a more useful tool for discussing racism in the US, as it keeps in the forefront an awareness of the interlocking systems of oppression that are at work in our culture. The book goes on to feature a collection of essays by hooks, in which she analyses the ways in which race and its representation have been impacted by contemporary cultural texts.

7 We hope that this diverse collection of contributions enliven and enrich the field, and wish to thank the contributors for their work.

Works Cited

Stryker, Susan. "(De)Subjugated Knowledges. An Introduction to Transgender Studies." *The Transgender Reader*. Ed. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle. New York: Routledge, 2006.