GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies

Gender and Captivity

Edited by
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Universität
zu Köln

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 Sarah Youssef, University of Cologne, Germany

1   Confinement occurs in both relatively open and closed spaces, is not limited to the prisoner and does not always occur knowingly. It can occur in a nine to five day and in an abusive relationship; it can occur in the fictional world of an author as much as in reality. The three articles of this issue reflect the complex relation of gendered roles and sexual politics in the context of confinement. And while Val Xaviers statement in Tennessee Williams' *Orpheus Descending* (1957) "[w]e're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own skins, for life" holds true, the characters addressed in our following essays do certainly not submit to their respective restrictions.

2   Although written nearly three hundred years ago, Samuel Richardson's landmark novel, *Clarissa* (1748-49), remains painfully relevant to any contemporary discussion of women's liberation because of its depiction of the ways in which women are both cut off from and pitted against each other. Elizabeth Johnston examines in her essay the novel's venomous female communities and, in particular, its deployment of the trope of female rivalry. According to Johnston, the novel's narrative trajectory depends on Clarissa's exemplary model of virtue as a means by which others are reformed. However, this exemplarity materializes within an enclosed binary that pits the angelic Clarissa against other 'bad' or 'evil' women. In fact, the novel can be read as the evil woman's teleological regress, inversely mirroring Clarissa's progress towards spiritual redemption. As Clarissa becomes more saint-like, the women she encounters become increasingly monstrous. Consequentially, the narrative shifts the blame for Clarissa's kidnapping, rape, and ultimate demise away from her male oppressors and the patriarchal system within which they operate and instead displaces it onto other women.

3   Utilizing a feminist psychoanalytical approach to Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2015), Katie Jones's "Bluebeardean Futures in Alex Garland's *Ex Machina* (2015)" explores contemporary forms of female entrapment – particularly the sexual exploitation of women and the gendered influence of pornography on sexual identities. Jones argues that Garland' s critique of technological patriarchy manifests itself through his reworking of the Bluebeard narrative; however, the film also conforms to typified heteronormative representations of women through its reproduction of familiar cinematic tropes and norms. Moreover, the climactic escape of the central female character combines ambivalence towards technological advancement with dread of female

sexuality in a way that problematises feminist interpretations, despite its emancipatory suggestions. Hence, Jones examines *Ex Machina* as part of a feminist Bluebeard tradition that acts as a critique of current cultural norms that shape and control heteronormative desire, and a male gothic tradition that reflects fears regarding female-ness, abjection and the maternal.

4   Marquis Bey's "Between Blackness and Monstrosity: Gendered Blackness in the Cyborg Comics" gives a racial and gendered analysis of the Cyborg comics, which depict the life of Vic Stone, African American superhero cyborg. The essay's entry into Victor Stone's Black cyborg positionality seeks to do four things: first, articulate, with the help of Richard Iton's notion of the Black fantastic, the unsettling and destabilizing nature of Blackness and cyborg-ness; second, provide a gendered analysis of the Black (male) cyborg that, in part, questions the destabilizing potential of yet another male superhero; third, put Stone's Blackness and cyborg-ness, which he alternatively describes as a transhumanness, in conversation with historical derogations and contemporary reappropriations of the notion of monstrosity; and fourth, highlight the salvific discourse surrounding Stone and speak to the temporal implications of being a Black cyborg.

5   This issue of *gender forum* addresses all aspects of captivity in relation to questions of gender and sexuality. What all three essays clearly show is that confinement is connected to issues of race, politics, economy and personal growth. All characters and concepts discussed underline the prevalent threat of confinement and artistic as well as literary possibilities of addressing the issue.