

Issue  
2016 **59**

# GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies



## Queer Film and Television

Edited by  
Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier

ISSN 1613-1878

Universität  
zu Köln



## Editor

Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier

University of Cologne  
English Department  
Albertus-Magnus-Platz  
D-50923 Köln/Cologne  
Germany

Tel +49-(0)221-470 2284

Fax +49-(0)221-470 6725

email: [gender-forum@uni-koeln.de](mailto:gender-forum@uni-koeln.de)

## Editorial Office

Laura-Marie von Czarnowsky, MA

Sarah Youssef, MA

Frederic Rukes (General Assistant, Reviews)

Tel.: +49-(0)221-470 3030/3035

email: [gender-forum@uni-koeln.de](mailto:gender-forum@uni-koeln.de)

## Editorial Board

Prof. Dr. Mita Banerjee,

*Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (Germany)*

Prof. Dr. Nilufer E. Bharucha,

*University of Mumbai (India)*

Associate Prof. Dr. Carmen Birkle,

*Philipps-Universität Marburg (Germany)*

Prof. Dr. Ingrid Hotz-Davies,

*Eberhard Karls University Tübingen (Germany)*

Prof. Dr. Ralph Poole,

*University of Salzburg (Austria)*

Prof. Dr. Kathryn Schaffer,

*University of Adelaide (Australia)*

Prof. Dr. Chris Weedon,

*Cardiff University (UK)*

## Editorial Deadlines

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](mailto: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.

## Detailed Table Of Contents

<b>Frederic Rukes:</b> Editorial	1
<b>Maureen E. Ruprecht Fadem:</b> Drawing the Border, Queering the Nation: Nation Trouble in <i>Breakfast on Pluto</i> and <i>The Crying Game</i>	4
<b>Sean Donovan:</b> Becoming Unknown: <i>Hannibal</i> and Queer Epistemology	38
<b>Joshua G. Adair:</b> Loser Lesbians: Failure in <i>Affinity</i> and <i>Fingersmith</i>	63
<b>Amy Tziporah Karp:</b> Jenny Schecter and the Strange Case of the Present Absent Jewish American Woman on the Queer Screen: The Ghostly Failures of Jewish American Assimilation	79
<b>Anja Wieden (Review):</b> <i>Als die Soldaten kamen. Die Vergewaltigung deutscher Frauen am Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs.</i>	106

## Editorial

By Frederic Rukes, University of Cologne, Germany

1 Queer discourse is not limited to dimensions of sexuality and gender. However much these are essential to the lived realities, representations, and perceptions of queer subjects, they usually transcend and are complemented by other areas of identity construction such as race, ethnicity, origin, age, occupation, culture, political attitude, ethics, taste, beliefs, and many more. This fluidity is by definition part of the term *queer* and further represented by the interdisciplinary claim of queer and gender studies, which are inseparably connected to numerous other fields ranging from postcolonial to disability studies. It is thus no surprise that queer film and television continue to explore and extend the boundaries of queer representation and identity formation.

2 Accordingly, this issue of *gender forum*<sup>1</sup> presents articles focussing on films and television series with complex approaches to their diverse representation of queer subjects. These films feature characters that are divided by and often remain ambiguous about their sexuality, gender, nationality, morality, or religion. In respect of this division – as well as in the wake of the increasing mainstreaming of queer film – this collection of essays poses important questions about the intersection between gender and nation trouble, the limits of the liberation of being out of the closet, the notion of queer failure, and the marginalization within minorities.

3 In “Drawing the Border, Queering the Nation: Nation Trouble in *Breakfast on Pluto* and *The Crying Game*”, Maureen E. Ruprecht Fadem analyzes two films by Irish director Neil Jordan about the Troubles. Drawing on theoretical concepts by Butler, Muñoz, Deleuze, and Guattari, the article depicts how, to the protagonists of both films, national borders are just as real as those of gender, making the normative pressure that is

---

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank The Bureau Film Company for granting us permission to use a frame from the film *Weekend* (2011), directed by Andrew Haigh, as cover picture for this issue: <http://www.thebureau.co.uk>

exerted on them twofold. Both *Breakfast on Pluto* and *The Crying Game* engage with different meanings of partition and its implications in terms of content and form. In this process, genderqueer transgressions become prerequisites for the director's deconstruction of nation and nationalism and his revelation of what Fadem terms "nation trouble".

4 Sean Donovan's "Becoming Unknown: *Hannibal* and Queer Epistemology" challenges the assumed liberating effect of the recent inclusion of LGBTQ+ characters in mainstream television shows by opposing them to the horror series *Hannibal*'s seemingly "antique methods of queer coding" (Donovan) that conceal the romance between its two male protagonists. In its mystification of knowledge that refuses to label its leads' sexualities, the show favors expressions of queer anxiety over opening closets. Drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's works, the essay displays how *Hannibal* instead derives its queerness from its form of ambivalent un-knowing, using the glamor and mystery of queer villainy to resist normative incorporation of LGBTQ+ cultures.

5 Joshua Adair scrutinizes queer negativity in the film adaptations of two of Sarah Waters's neo-Victorian novels. In his essay "Loser Lesbians: Failure in *Affinity* and *Fingersmith*", based on J. Jack Halberstam's *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011) Adair reads Waters's novels as narratives of queer failure that offer negative potential for disrupting normativity and disclosing false expectations of queer progress. In applying Halberstam's theory, the article offers a way to embrace Waters's bold and often ugly depictions of lesbians as difficult and potentially violent characters, as an expansion of the representational space of lesbianism beyond the normative pressure of narratives of success.

6 "Jenny Schecter and the Strange Case of the Present Absent Jewish American Woman on the Queer Screen: The Ghostly Failures of Jewish American Assimilation"

by Amy Karp concludes this issue of *gender forum*. The essay deals with portrayals of young queer Jewish American women, with a focus on the character of Jenny Schecter in the series *The L Word*, a series created by Jewish American lesbian producer and writer Ilene Chaiken. In contrast to the notion of perfect Jewish assimilation into 'whiteness' that is evoked by other famous female Jewish television characters, Jenny is relegated to the fragile position of the stranger. In this regard her Jewishness is paradoxically both highly marked and yet highly invisible which is reflected in its lack of acknowledgement by the other characters on the show.

7 All of these articles discuss screen narratives that are concerned with normative pressures on queer subjects ranging from political nationalism, biased notions of sexuality, an obligation to success, or an assimilation to 'whiteness'. These examples prove the potential of queer film and television to trouble established boundaries between nation and gender and to foreground and deconstruct normativities through queer coding, queer negativity, or through a re-evaluation of the past. Thus they are part of the formation of complex queer narratives challenging compulsory normativity in contemporary societies.