

Issue 28  
2010

# GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies



## EngAGEing Questions: Gender and Age

Edited by  
Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier

ISSN 1613-1878



## 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

## Editorial Office

Laura-Marie Schnitzler, MA

Sarah Youssef, MA

Christian Zeitz (General Assistant, Reviews)

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

email: 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.

## 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*.

Authors retain copyright of their work and articles are published under a Creative Commons licence.

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

## Detailed Table Of Contents

Editorial	1
<b>Roberta Maierhofer:</b> Generations Connecting: Alzheimer's Disease and Changes of Cultural Values	3
<b>David Vella:</b> The Houellebecq Cure. All Malady Will End in the Neohuman	21
<b>Aagje Swinnen:</b> Never Too Old To Learn or Rebel: Two <i>Old Ladies</i> ( <i>Twee oude vrouwtjes</i> )	30
<b>Anthony Todd (Review):</b> Srole, Carole . <i>Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices</i>	47
<b>Sarah Imhoff (Review):</b> Roden, Frederick (ed.). <i>Jewish/Christian/Queer: Crossroads and Identities. Queer Interventions</i>	50
<b>List of Contributors</b>	53

## Editorial

1 The notion of ageing within western culture is informed by highly ambivalent associations. While on the one hand old age seemingly speaks of a mature and accomplished self awareness, warranting a stabilised identity through the accumulation of experience and memory, age on the other hand is linked to the fears of fading health, the gradual reduction of physical capability and ultimately death. The assumed dwindling of one's "sex appeal" and sexual desire additionally marks this stage of life as a noteworthy perspective, from which to look at prevailing ideas of gender and sexual identity.

2 This issue of gender forum presents three articles which draw on narratives that, in very distinct ways, challenge common assumptions and expectations of the determining significance of age in relation to identity and subjectivity. In "Generations Connecting: Alzheimer's Disease and Changes of Cultural Values" Roberta Maierhofer refers to two narratives, which present mother-daughter-relationships strongly affected by the Alzheimer disease of the mothers. The article demonstrates, how the "loss of memory concerning not only everyday incidents but also one's very relation to others marks a starting point of a new definition of self in relation to others." Thus, instead of seeing identity as a definable and given grounding of the self, the article argues for "an acceptance of identity that is not only in flux, but defines itself in the interaction with others as the self-in-relation."

3 Whereas in Maierhofer's article it is the loss of memory, which poses a serious threat to an established and maintainable identity based on memory and continuation, David Vella's contribution deals with the ultimate threat linked to the ageing process: death. Or rather, "The Houellebecq Cure. All Malady Will End in the Neohuman" delineates our culture's attempts at death defiance as presented in the novels *Atomised* and *The Possibility of an Island* in the shape of the so-called Neohuman. As becomes evident, the attainment of immortality but concurrent bereavement of "the 'irrational' drives of love and carnality" illustrate "the futility of all efforts of subjectivity at mastering an anguish that comes from what is exterior to it; an anguish that, in truth, constitutes it."

4 In the concluding article Aagje Swinnen points up the interrelatedness of identity and narrativity and shows, by which semiological means a subversion of story telling conventions leads to a thorough interrogation of established notions of old age and its relation to gender and sexual identity. "Never Too Old to Learn or Rebel. Two Old Ladies" traces a short story collection written by the Dutch author Toon Tellegen that foregrounds and ridicules the performative reiteration of stereotypes in our culture. Drawing on questions of genre, the

semiologies of the grotesque, Butler's notion of performativity and therewith "uncovering multiple semiotic layers [...] the inherent play with age and gender ideologies becomes ever more apparent."

5 Furthermore EngAGEing Questions features reviews of two recent publications within gender studies, namely Carole Srole's *Transcribing Class and Gender: Masculinity and Femininity in Nineteenth-Century Courts and Offices* as well as *Jewish/Christian/Queer: Crossroads and Identities*, edited by Frederick Roden.