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Private I, Public Eye: Gender and Exposure

Edited by
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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

1 The boundaries of the private and public self appear to have become less discernible within the last two decades. The expanding and ceaseless dissemination of personal pictures and narratives through different media have led to a vanishing sense of shielded privacy and intimacy. By the same token, the sense of continuously performing *oneself* because of seeing oneself as being seen increasingly shapes our perceptions and expectations of the gendered self. The notion of gender and sexual identity as a continued and staged performance renders the idea of an authentic and natural self ever more questionable. The three articles in this issue address the implications of altered relations of *Private I*, *Public Eye* for the general engagement with gender and sexual “identity” and its consequences for individual agency.

2 In “Cultural Bastards” Ralph Poole tackles questions of cultural and gender diversity played out on Vancouver’s Main Street, the “focal point of [...]multicultural hodgepodge, questioning the valence of spatial belonging” in Shani Mootoo’s short story “Out on Main Street”. The protagonist’s own felt incongruity with common gender and ethnic stereotypes has led to a fear of leaving the flat and being exposed to the public gaze, whereas, at home she can feel at ease with being a “butch”, lesbian, Indo-Caribbean immigrant in Canada. The subversive humour of the narrative, however, foregrounds the derisive aspects of this fear of going/being “out” which is based on a belief in the authenticity of stereotypes.

3 Tobias Schmidt’s exploration of the possibility of humour as a means of challenging stereotypical notions of gender and sexual identities centers on a very different topic. Tracing the stage act of the stand up comedian Eddie Izzard, “Being Cool About It” investigates the ways in which Izzard’s authority on stage promulgates and secures a “queer” stance on gender politics. Far from lamenting the *status quo* in his performances as a transvestite, the paper argues that “[t]here is no anger or bitterness in [Izzard’s] analysis of the society as it is today, but he rather presents a position of sovereignty and a strong belief in the generations to come.” The comedian’s transvestism as an integral part of his life as well as his act thus shows, how a private and public self can merge to challenge the heteronormative symmetry of sex, gender, and sexuality.

4 In contrast to this positive outlook on the subversive potential of public performances, the third contribution to this issue of gender forum draws a rather bleak portrait of contemporary celebrity culture. Dirk Schulz’s article ponders on the media’s regulating dissemination of private and public images of the famous. Drawing on Foucault’s study *Discipline and Punish* he argues that “while pop culture has always contributed to the public

negotiation of norms and values, the current manifestations of judge and jury through different media turn celebrities into detainees and their observation into panoptical affairs.” Thus, whereas the “authenticity” of the displayed performances of gender and sexual identity is increasingly questioned and its manufacturing more tangible, the failure to conform to or rather the failure to present the gender/sexual norm is publicly castigated and disciplined through the monitoring gaze of the media.

5 In addition *gender forum* is very happy to once again provide a platform for fictional writing. England-based author Anne Lauppe-Dunbar shares a chapter of her forthcoming novel called *Dark Mermaids* in which the story behind “the doping scam ‘Theme 14.25’ during the time of former German Democratic Republic [is] told through the voice of a former GDR Olympic swimmer.” Seeing how the drug-induced alteration of both physical appearance and mental experience shapes the protagonist’s sense of self, the narrative provides another interesting perspective on the interplay of the public distribution of gender norms and its effects on the individual.