

# GENDER FORUM

An Internet Journal for Gender Studies



## Threads of Eternity? Gender and Marriage

Edited by  
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## **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.

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.

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## List of Contributors

**Patrick Osborne** is a PhD candidate in post-1900 American literature and cultural studies at Florida State University. He received his B.A. in English from the University of Georgia and earned his M.A. at Georgia State University. Much of his recent scholarship examines representations of deviant behavior in contemporary literature and popular culture. His articles, "Evaluating the Presence of Social Strain in Rockstar Games' *Grand Theft Auto IV*" and "Finding *Glee* in a High School Hell: Social Bonding as Salvation for the Adolescent Pariah," appear in *Studies in Popular Culture*. His work can also be found in *Popular Culture Review* and *Literature and Belief*.

**Dr. Nicole Richter** is Associate Professor, and Program Coordinator, at the Tom Hanks Center for Motion Pictures at Wright State University. Her research focuses on sexuality and gender in popular culture. She has been published in the *Journal of Bisexuality*, *Short Film Studies*, *Feminism at the Movies*, and *Queer Love in Film and Television*. She is the founder of the KinoFemme and KinoQueer filmmaking collectives and serves on the editorial board for *Short Film Studies*. She has a forthcoming introduction to film textbook to be published in 2017.

**Dr. David M. Jones** is a Professor of English and Honors Education at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire. In 17 years of service at UWEC, he has served campus leadership roles in the Honors Program, the Liberal Studies Program, and in English, where he currently directs the Master of Arts in English program. His courses examine African American literature and culture, popular music, and interdisciplinary studies. His publications include an essay collection titled *Coming Out to the Mainstream: New Queer Cinema in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, and a recently published essay, "Revoking the Privilege of Forgetting: White Supremacy Interrogated in *12 Years a Slave*" in a collection, *Movies in the Age of Obama*. He is currently completing articles on the history of Black Feminism in the U.S. and on shifts in attitudes towards the family as marriage laws have been redefined.

**Kimberly Miller** is a third year Gender Studies PhD Student, and Cultural Studies minor at Indiana University-Bloomington.

## Editorial

1 Is marriage a cruel institution that preserves religiously saturated nuclear family structures, normalizes heterosexual citizenship, and conceptualizes all those who reject its universalizing *good life* claims as “‘affect-alien’” (Ahmed 30)? Is it an out-dated concept of the past, since more and more young people all over the world voice their unwillingness to ever enter nuptial bonds? Yet, how to tackle the multi-faceted debates over queer-inclusive marriage, taking place in liberal and queer liberal, queer radical and openly homophobic conservative circles? Or controversies over marriageable age and the racialized Othering of migrant and refugee communities? Surely, there are no easy or *universal truth* answers to the above, intentionally provocative, intrinsically polarizing and always deeply ideological questions. After all, questions of marriage in its gendered, cultural and socio-political implications call for nuanced and contextualized theory formation, for caution not to fall into the trap of simplified oppositions, discriminatory heterocentric or Eurocentric ethical violence or the displacement of differentiated desiring subjects.

2 The articles assembled in this issue deal with the multiplicities of contemporary marriage formations. They shed light on their gendered manifestations in neoliberal consumer societies, but also engage modes of thinking intimate relationships outside the normativizing powers of institutional marriage and marriage outside the juridico-political, paradoxically secular-minded yet WASP-centric bio-power of the (U.S.) nation-state.

3 In “‘I’m the *Bitch* that Makes You a Man’: Conditional Love as Female Vengeance in Gillian Flynn’s *Gone Girl*”, Patrick Osborne reads Flynn’s novel as a satirical response to violence against women perpetuated by patriarchal simulations in the media. The novel provides an outlet for female violence and frames revenge as a response to a consumer culture that impedes female happiness through the construction of emphasized femininity, inequality in marriage, and ‘raunch culture’. Amy Dunne, the protagonist, breaks under the pressure generated by hyperrealities and narcissistic desires of America’s consumer culture that suffocate the traditional bonds of marriage. Thus, deviance is a reaction to a patriarchal social structure that reinforces gendered illusions of self-actualization and allows male entitlement to remain unchallenged.

4 Nicole Richter’s article “Affirming Plural Marriage: *Sister Wives* with Benefits” examines the ways in which TLC’s controversial reality show *Sister Wives* radically challenges traditional conceptions of marriage-as-monogamy and agency in polygamous marriages. *Sister Wives* documents the daily life of the Browns, a fundamentalist Mormon

polygamist family. Richter argues that the series is as interested in the relationships between the wives as it is the relationship between husband and wife in a polygamist family. Richter's paper will chart the interpersonal communication and emotional development between the four wives on the show. By analyzing the rhetorical claims made by each wife, each woman's personal experience of her family and lifestyle will be related to theoretical perspectives on piety and postsecular agency. Even as there are immediate problems that present themselves when analyzing the show from a feminist perspective the show does reveal benefits to this arrangement that are not available in the 'traditional' family unit.

5 In "'A Little Bit Married' while Black: A Personal and Political Meditation on Marriage, Single Adulthood and Relationship Literacy", David M. Jones cautions that, amid debates about the meanings of marriage, the social fact that the United States remains a nation where nearly half of the adult population is divorced, widowed, or never married should not be overlooked. With 1.2 million divorces occurring annually, relationships are in flux in numerous households at any time. As the U.S. enters an uncertain and contentious era of legal marriage equality, only about 56% of US adults over 18 are married, compared to 72% in 1960. Using personal reflection on thirty years of living as a single Black male, Jones calls attention to several core concepts for contemporary relationship literacy. He asserts a need for advocacy, caring connections, and relationship education to widen public acceptance of gender, sexual, and family, re-education measures regarding the state of relationships and a re-dedication to standing on the side of love in *all its varieties*.

6 The issue closes with Kimberly Miller's review of L.H. Stallings' 2015 study *Funk the Erotic: Transaesthetics and Black Sexual Cultures*, published by University of Illinois Press.

### **Works Cited**

Ahmed, Sara. "Happy Objects." *The Affect Theory Reader*, edited by Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, Duke UP, 2010, pp. 29-51.