

## Editorial

by Dr. Laura-Marie Schnitzler

1 This year marks the sixth Early Career Researchers issue of *gender forum*. As in previous years, 2018 has seen a huge demand for this platform for up- and coming researchers and led to the submission of many high quality articles on a remarkable variety of issues. The few articles selected for this issue focus on notions of masculinity and femininity, the queer in-between spaces, and the potential of shaping non-normative identities against the strain of a normative society.

2 In “Making Sense of the “Monsters Next Door”: General Strain and the Rampage Violence Narrative“, Patrick Osborne discusses the impact of the 1999 Columbine massacre on the literary imagination. Tracing the way the shooters Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold have since been used as stereotypes of the violent narcissistic psychopath and the depressed pariah respectively, Osborne undertakes a reading of Lionel Schiver’s *We Need to Talk About Kevin* (2003) and Jodi Picoult’s *Nineteen Minutes* (2007). Both this reading and the media narratives following the massacre itself focus on the shooters’ internalization of the pressure of hegemonic masculinity, and Osborne expertly traces how they lead to the condemnation of the narcissistic psychopath figure while offering a tentative note of compassion towards the ostracised and depressed pariah.

3 Likewise engaging with the notion of outsiders is Henriette-Juliane Seeliger’s article ““Raging Bull:’ Contesting Masculinity in Joyce Carol Oates’ *A Book of American Martyrs* (2017)”. Seeliger’s insightful analysis focuses on the novel’s protagonist, Dawn Dunphy, who has grown up with a negative conceptualisation of female sexuality and whose rape at the hands of a gang of schoolboys left her reeling. Yet, Seeliger proposes that Dawn is more than the victim status easily associated with her traumatic background and instead reads her overture into women’s boxing as a way to re-claim her agency and assert both her self-governed and constructed femininity *and* her agency despite the sport’s male gaze. Seeliger ultimately proposes that Dawn, who re-christens herself D.D., assumes a powerful form of female masculinity that not so much stands in contrast with notions of femininity, but offers a queer addition thereto.

4 Alex Philp’s article is a contribution to an often underrepresented issue in literary analysis, namely the notion of biological sisterhood. In “Looking in the Mirror: Biological Sisterhood, Doubleness, and the Body in Krissy Kneen’s *Steeplechase*”, Philp applies the notion of the double to sisters and offers a critical reading of how they are both automatically

self and other to one another. Philp's analysis does so in an attempt to do away with stereotypical representations of the sister as either a rival or an unattainable ideal. Undertaking a convincing close reading of Kneen's novel, Philp's article analyses the relationship between estranged sisters Bec and Emily and focuses on the negotiation of the boundaries of the female body in literary fiction.

5 The fourth and final article, "The Power and Subjection of Liminality and Borderlands of Non-Binary Folx" by Nyk Robertson, ambitiously conjoins Victor Turner's concept of the liminal and Gloria Anzaldúa's idea of borderlands to critically discuss the way these spaces offer possibilities for the realisation and lived experience of what Robertson calls multiple subjectivities. Robertson draws on the umbrella term non-binary folx to refer to people outside the normative gender dichotomy and sees the borderlands both as a space of possibility, while at the same time addressing the marginalising difficulties non-binary folx are confronted with when using (or withdrawing) to these spaces.

6 The annual Early Career Researchers' issue of *gender forum* concludes with reviews by Kelly Morgan and Morgan Oddie. Morgan offers an evaluation of Lori Merish's 2017 book *Archives of Labor: Working-Class Women and Literary Culture in the Antebellum United States*, and Oddie contributes a critical review of female-directed horror film anthology *XX* (2017). We thank the contributors for their insightful articles and reviews and are looking forward to the exciting new and interdisciplinary take on gender next year's crop of early career researchers will undoubtedly have in store for us.

