

Editorial

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As the new general co-editor of *gender forum*, it is my greatest pleasure to be writing the editorial for the second special issue on “Gender, Violence, and the State in Contemporary Speculative Fiction,” guest-edited by Judith Rauscher and Marta Usiekniewicz. It is truly an honor to be stepping and growing into the shoes of one of *gender forum*’s general editors, and I am looking forward to continuing the legacy of founding editor Beate Neumeier, whose visionary work created Germany’s first English-language open-access journal for gender studies with a particular focus on literary and cultural studies. Resounding Judith Rauscher’s words from her editorial for issue 80 (2021), I want to express my awe and gratitude for the relentless commitment that Beate Neumeier and her team have poured into *gender forum*, which has grown into a living archive of feminist scholarship and research in gender studies and queer studies.

I could not have wished for a more wonderful co-editor than Judith Rauscher for this joint endeavor of making gender and queer studies freely available. Not only do we share our scholarly commitment to gender and queer studies, we also consider it our responsibility to support early career researchers in their first publishing processes and to provide a platform for scholars working from the margin in what remains a highly traditional and hierarchical university system, in which the ways of how to do things are not always readily available to everyone. My previous editorial work has prepared me well for these endeavors, but while technical expertise and experience with the editorial processes are certainly important to keep a journal running, it is the collective energy that an editorial team develops that makes the heart of a journal beat. I

want to take this opportunity to thank Judith Rauscher and our student assistants—Izel Ercanoglu, Tensae Desta, Julia Hahn-Klose, Maheen Muzaffar, and Leontien Potthoff—for their warm welcome, their thorough editorial work, their creative ideas, and their scholarly and political commitment to intersectional gender and queer studies.

Gender and queer studies have not only been shaking to the core the compulsory heteronormative assumptions of identity and desire, they continuously, creatively, and poetically re-calibrate what it means, entails, and implies to think, feel, identify, and love otherwise. For many, doing this work is not merely an academic exercise but a deeply personal and political lived reality, which informs theory and critique and which comes with a variety of vulnerabilities and risks. Queer literature and other forms of queer cultural production have been lifelines in hostile environments, just as projects of “cruising utopia,” as José Esteban Muñoz entitled his 2009-monograph, have been pointing to the necessity of imagining queer political futures. Whether utopian, dystopian, or both, in penning speculative fiction, and “in all the brouhaha clanging about these unreal worlds,” as Samuel R. Delaney has underlined in “About 5,750 Words,” “chords are sounded in total sympathy with the real”—a real that, despite all the socio-cultural and political changes of the past forty years, is still structured along the lines of violently heteronormative configurations of gendered identity and desire. It is thus not surprising that this second issue on “Gender, Violence, and the State in Contemporary Speculative Fiction” in *gender forum* highlights the ways in which literary imagining reflects on and critiques the structures through which ideological state apparatuses yield power and exercise violence over non-conforming gendered bodies, identities, and practices. Writing about and publishing special issues on questions of gender and queerness in speculative fiction always offers opportunities of further pushing, widening, re-constructing, changing, oscillating, unthinking, and rethinking the structures that have been established around processes of subjectivation, desire, and potentialities of resistance. I invite all readers to critically enjoy this issue (and to read it along “Gender, Violence, and the State in Contemporary Speculative Fiction” I in issue 80 [2021]) . . . and if it sparks your own scholarly imagination to guest-edit a special issue of *gender form*, we welcome inquiries via gender-forum@uni-koeln.de.

Johanna Pitetti-Heil
General Co-Editor