

Abstracts

Marie-Luise Angerer, *Between ecstasy and melancholy: the body in the newer feminist discussion*

In the last few years the *body* has become a conspicuous venue. The concept and the materiality of the body, its doubleness, technologies, and performances have forfeited their putative *familiarity* and *naturalness* in the characteristics of different deconstruction processes. The body, gender identity, and (sexual) difference – these have been basic categories from the beginning of the feminist movement, and right now, in the last few years, it is these categories, which have gathered more and more criticism. These criticisms show how these applications are used to define essentially understood entities. This means with the help of these notions an apparently fixed basis will be sought to be created which should guarantee stability. Particularly these groups, women of color, gays, and lesbians, through their coming out have exposed the „Feminist Project's“ own imperialistic air. This means that many of these „other“ women no longer feel addressed in the notion of „women“. This was just the beginning of an ever wider call for „locatedness“. Within the different feminist body discussions – where the names of Donna Haraway, Susan Bordo, Liz Grosz, Elspeth Probyn, or Judith Butler have become very important – a few new notions have emerged: the *situated knowledge* and the *learned imagination*. With the help of both the body and gender identity can be understood as *material-semiotic nodes* in their shifting historical, geographical, and political contexts. It is the space where the power of fantasy, desire, and identification unfolds.

Sabine Fuchs, *Woman is weak by nature ...? Swimming as part of the female culture of exercising during the 19th century*

A specific female athletics did develop in the late 18th and early 19th century. Commonly accepted and little discussed physical exercises were – under the influence of the bureaucracy – replaced by such physical exercises which were deemed to help women to fulfill the public demand of the birth of more healthy children. The discussions on swimings were not – like the discussions on school athletics – influenced by this dichotomization of gender roles. On the other hand there were little opportunities for women to learn swimming. The military founded swimming schools between 1810 and 1830 to which women had no access. The first swimming school for women within the Habsburg monarchy was founded in Vienna in 1831 and others followed in due course. There existed a strict segregation of sexes; the structure of the buildings had to hinder men to watch the women in the swimming school. Therefore this sport got quick acceptance by women of all social strata. Swimming matches for women were instituted during the 1880s. First only women were admitted as spectators, only later both women and men. By 1912 women's swimming was admitted as an Olympic event and had developed as a network. It also continued to exist as a leisure and health activity. Women however could not reach a say in the international organizations of this sport; a deficit of power concerning their own physical exercises continued to exist.

Daniela Hammer-Tugendhat, *Body image – image of nature? On the construction of gender difference in the art of the nude in early modern times*

This article is an attempt to show that the representation of the naked body is not a reflection of nature, but rather a construct designed to suggest „naturalness“, and especially to produce the illusion of a „natural“ gender difference. Thus the nude is essential for the construction of gender difference in Renaissance art. A comparison

of Michelangelo's *David* and Giorgione's *Venus* – two paradigmatic works of Renaissance art – illustrates that nakedness is perceived at entirely different levels depending on whether the naked body is male or female. Moreover, Renaissance develops a structure fundamental to the evolution of the nude: The representation of the naked body whenever it is supposed to signal eroticism and sexuality is reduced to the female body. The absence of the male within an erotic context goes so far as to deny him in representations of the coitus where only the female body is in the picture, while the male is hidden in metamorphosis: In the representation of *Danae*, for example, the male is transformed into golden rain or pure light. Man can image himself as the spiritual principle even in the sexual act and project sexuality on women. The reason for this development is to be found in the bourgeois concept of the autonomous, rational subject. Clothes and other attributes are no longer suited to characterize the personality as was the case in the middle ages with its estates. The presumed gender difference has to be inscribed in the human bodies themselves to be perceived as „natural“.

Barbara Hey, The development of the concept of gender in the connection with the poststructural thinking

This article tries to explore what the integration of poststructural elements of theory could attribute to the attempt to develop „gender“ as an analytical category. Furthermore it traces the difficulties regarding the conception of this term arising in connection with the criticism of modern „Episteme“. The first and second parts of the article explore the genesis of the term „gender“ and trace its weaknesses as well as those questions, which in its traditional version the term is not able to deal with. In the foreground of discussion are critical objections: The term „gender“ perpetuates – without being questioned – a binarily constructed frame of reference (nature/culture respectively nature/history) and takes over the establishment of self-containment of gender identity from a liberal-functional paradigm, which results from patriarchal science. Furthermore the following points are discussed: the relation between „gender“ and power, the limitation of „gender“ to special topics often closely connected with reproduction, the question of splitting off the bodily disposition through „gender“. The third and fourth parts depict the attempt of the Northamerican historian Joan W. Scott to work out in detail the concept of „gender“ along the theses outlined above.

Karl Kaser, The virago in the patriarchal societies of the Balkans and the myth of matriarchy

This article deals with the phenomenon of the „virago“ on the Balkans, especially in Albania. This phenomenon – a young woman swears eternal virginity and takes up the social role of a man – is neither ethnically nor confessionally limited to a special group. The last „viragos“ were observed in the generation born in the first decades of the 20th century, especially in the northern parts of Albania. The phenomenon was embodied in the Slavic and Albanian common law and unique in Europe. A woman could take up the role of a man when brother or father were exposed to blood feud, when no male existed to settle a case of blood feud or to support parents in old age. The adoption of the role of a man was accepted socially and accompanied by rituals. Ethnological research of the postwar period has explained the phenomenon of the „virago“ partly with the continuation of patriarchal, partly with the continuation of matriarchal structures. It could be explained by its function, which was to remove faults in the very special form of Balcanese patriarchy, which was characterised by a strong patrilinearity (patrivirilocality, bride-wealth, patrilineage, worship of ancestors).

Annette Kliewer, Virgin mothers. Imagines of female sexuality in fin de siècle literature – Adele Gerhard's Pilgerfahrt („The Pilgrimage“), 1902

Several female authors of the fin de siècle bourgeois women's movement such as Ilse Frapan, Gabriele Reuter, Helene Böhlau, Lou Andreas-Salomé aim to discover a new, explicitly „female“ sexuality. They object to the experiences of violence in the male world and to the disillusioning personal experiences women should stop to concentrate their feelings and sexual energies on men and focus them instead on their own children. New creative energies would be developed by this shift. These women were opposed to their male writer colleagues and prides themselves in their unique experiences of pregnancy, birth and childcaring. These feminist women claimed that these experiences could not be properly described by their male colleagues and claimed an advantage

offer them by possessing „maternal creativity“. The problems of this concept of „autonomous motherhood“ which dispenses with any male support can be studied at the example of Adele Gerhard's novel „The Pilgrimage“ (1902). Although this new concept of sexuality represents a revolt against the standards of male dominated sexuality, it follows nevertheless the very ancient ascetic ideal of the „chaste“ woman. Positive alternatives as for instance an equal sexual partnership between women – apart from the hierarchical symbiosis of mother and child are not considered. This represents a problem in current discussion too. All women should orient themselves on *one pattern* of sexuality which is not that much free from patriarchal elements as it is frequently supposed to be. There exist similar problems in present day feminist discourse too, particularly with regard to criticism from outside. Critics often emphasize the habit of feminists to represent themselves as victims of male violence and their proneness to coalitions with puritan conservatives concerning these issues.

Richard Wall, Some inequalities in the health and nutrition of boys and girls in 19th- and 20th-century England and Wales

This article uses the records of the medical inspections of English and Welsh schoolchildren to investigate the differences in the nutritional and health status of girls and boys attending state elementary schools during the first of the 20th century. The low earnings of the working class population ensured that a large portion of their resources had to be devoted to expenditure on food and with the earnings of male at least four times those of females, there was a strong economic incentive for families to feed their daughters less well than their sons. The school medical officers reported, however, that the nutritional status of boys was often poorer than that of girls, although there were some exceptions, and notable in the east coast port of Hull. Nor is there any evidence in the data on weight and height for the poorer nutritional status of girls, since the average weights and heights of females in early adulthood in a range of 19th century populations were closer to present day weight and height standards than were the averages for males. Parents were also concerned to ensure that their daughters were presentable for public occasions, such as school, and the all important visit of the school doctor. Girls' clothing was more likely to be deemed satisfactory in these inspections than that of boys, girls were generally cleaner, and their teeth were in a better condition. Parents were also more likely to be present for the medical examinations of their daughters, and may even have been more aware or more willing to acknowledge their illnesses. This would appear to be the most convincing explanation for the high reported incidence amongst girls of the major diseases of childhood such as measles, whooping cough, chickenpox and scarlet fever. The expectation was that boys and girls would behave differently. There were therefore treated differently, not only by their parents but also by medical officers, nurses and teachers.