

Chantelle Gray van Heerden

University of South Africa
 evheercg@unisa.ac.za

We are pleased to present the fourth volume of *Gender Questions* and to announce that our journal has officially been granted accreditation, effective from the beginning of 2017. We would like, therefore, to invite all scholars and activists working on gender and gender-related research to consider us for future publication.

Our first contribution in this volume is an interview with Professor Desiree Lewis from the Department of Women's and Gender Studies and the University of the Western Cape. Interviewed by Deirdre Byrne, one of our editorial board members, who is also the head of the Institute of Gender Studies at the University of South Africa, Lewis generously shares her own academic journey, as well as her thoughtful insights on gender studies in South Africa.

The articles that follow address a range of specific gender-related issues, but with an overarching theme addressing the production of subjectivities. Specifically, these articles consider ways in which we might reconceptualise our prefigured and configural experience, always taking into account the ways in which subjects, and by extension subjectivities, are *produced, created and enacted*. These complex processes of production which simultaneously systematise, countermand and reorganise the field of experience in relation to individuals, groups, institutions and societies, as well as material and immaterial flows, processes and forces demand ever-more ethical perceptiveness—sensibilities and choices in favour of richness and heterogeneity, as well as the development of a micropolitics that tends towards resingularisation and the effective subversion of ubiquitous neoliberal ideals and capitalist recuperation.

The first article, by the well-known gender scholars Robert Morell and Lindsay Clowes, looks at the marked incline in publications on gender and gender-related issues, especially in the second half of the 20th century. With a particular interest in Southern and South African theory, they bring to our attention the ways in which this research is united in terms of themes such as patriarchy and activism but, at the same time, frequently reflects sharp class and race distinctions, and what this might indicate about understandings around knowledge production and knowledge inequalities. This opening chapter, while not directly addressing decolonisation, nevertheless does so implicitly in its tracing of gender-focused research and its emphasis on locality, voice, critical gaze, power relations and practices, and socio-economic challenges.



The second article, by Natacha Vicente, moves away from the more macropolitical view of the first chapter to investigate feminist art activism as micropolitical resistance, although it follows a similar theme to the first's in terms of thinking about the ways in which subjectivities are produced, reproduced and maintained or, alternatively, reconfigured. Drawing on the activism of the Bolivian anarchy-feminist group *Mujeres Creando*, the author shows how the capitalist recuperation of revolutionary movements (as well as of any other productive forces) can in fact be subverted. This radical art collective relies on a number of tactics and strategies in their performances and direct actions, but always with the aim of building feminist solidarities with affinity groups and society in general. The article therefore asks important questions about individual-social relationality, the pervasiveness of neoliberal subjectivity, and the ways in which aesthetics may be reshaped as micropolitical intervention.

Tafadzwa Rugoho and France Maphosa bring our focus back to Africa, this time Zimbabwe, and the realities faced by the parents of disabled children. In this qualitative study, the authors interview the mothers of disabled children, collecting data from five focus groups based on age, namely 18–24, 25–30, 31–35, 36–43, and 44 and older. Once again the refrains of subjectivity are brought to our attention, as well as the ways in which different subjectivities are informed by normative, and often restrictive, categories—this time ableism. Importantly, the article shows that ableism has far-reaching affective corollaries in Zimbabwe as it is deeply tied to cultural beliefs, with disabilities still largely associated with witchcraft in this region. They also show the extent to which this is a gendered problem, with mothers—often single mothers—shouldering the burden in terms of psychological, financial and social obligations and challenges. Finally, the authors offer some suggestions towards amelioration with reference to government and non-governmental involvement, education, health care, counselling and mutual aid.

The fourth and final article in this volume, by Desiree Lewis and Cheryl Hendricks, directly addresses questions of decolonisation and how this, in turn, is related to notions of transformation, the redistribution of social and political power, epistemological arrangements and ontological hierarchising in educational institutions. Following the debates sparked by what is now known as the Fallist movement, the authors address the epistemic issues at the heart of these questions. They argue, however, that struggles for and towards decolonisation precede the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall protests, and that they can be traced back as far as the 1970s when, on 16 June 1976, school children in Soweto protested the use of Afrikaans as the compulsory medium of instruction. They argue, furthermore, that feminists and allied activists have long since resisted patriarchal and normative ways of being and seeing, and that feminist networks within the academy have addressed the same, or at least similar, questions regarding epistemic structures and processes as those raised by the Fallist movement. They caution, however, that while feminists gained much through resolute and ongoing efforts, they also had to compromise significantly in terms of their pedagogical practices which, essentially, had to conform to the models of white European males. With this in mind, the authors implore us to continue thinking about and fighting for real and lasting

structural change, refusing quick-fix auditing answers that do little more than pay lip-service to decolonisation.

We conclude this volume with a book review by Jacques Rothmann on *Queering Families of Origin*, edited by Chiara Bertone and Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli.

What we hope readers take from this volume is a deeper understanding of the complexity of gendered living which continues to be not only an important area of research, but a vital aspect of our daily experiences, always in flux, continually shaped by the many opposing forces traversing all spheres of life, as well as those edging towards greater freedom.