

Věra Sokolová and Kateřina Kolářová, "Gender and Generation in Mutual Perspective." In *Gender and Generation: Interdisciplinary Intersections and Perspectives*, Kateřina Kolářová and Věra Sokolová, eds. (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2007): 1-20.

Věra Sokolová and Kateřina Kolářová

*Introduction:*

## Gender and Generation in Mutual Perspective

### *Intersections*

Generation, as this collection of essays argues, is by no means a gender-neutral concept. Rather, constructions of gender are equally informed by both explicit and implicit connotations of the concept of generation. When thinking about the history, academic usage and analytical potential of both concepts, it becomes clear that they have a symbiotic existence and yet, it is only recently that their common ground and fruitful intersections attracted serious scholarly attention and research. Somewhat surprisingly, studying generational aspects of gender on the one hand and the "gender of generation" on the other hand are relatively new phenomena. Growing out of an interdisciplinary international conference "Gender and Generation,"<sup>1</sup> the present volume brings together essays that speak from diverse disciplinary contexts and analytic perspectives in an attempt to explore

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was organised in March 2007 by the Department of Gender Studies at the School of Humanities of Charles University in Prague, with the financial support of the European Social Funds and the City of Prague grant.

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and formulate the ways in which generation interlinks with gender. In this respect generation must be understood as an analytically critical term, a conceptual tool to define specific experience and/or a position shared by a distinct social group and as a culturally specific concept structuring human kinships and/or locating the individual within social structures.

In their specific and individual ways, all the essays in this collection recognise the increasing significance of the new and different ways gender and generation interact and shape both human lives and the conceptual constructions that strive to research, record and represent those experiences. The research inspired by the concept of generation has flourished and diversified in the past century and to a significant degree reflect national as well as disciplinary diversity and the idiosyncrasies of academic contexts. Nonetheless, generation as an organisational and conceptual tool has remained a very selective, specific and homogenised, concept. Selective in that, regardless of the notable differences in socio-cultural and historical contexts, the structuring and the perceptions of generation(s) tend to parallel mainstream discussions and constructions of collective memory and experience at the expense of marginalised and subversive voices. Significantly, one of the conference Round Table discussions revealed that while its participants disclosed radically different experiences and understandings of the constructions and meanings of gender based on their diverse cultural and national backgrounds, there were no major disagreements among them over the concept of generation. So while the conference explored and exposed the interrelated workings of gender and generation and strove—through the lens of gender—to challenge the traditional understandings of generation, paradoxically, the concept of generation served as a uniting tool for negotiating different national and cultural gender constructions.

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Perhaps the striking degree to which scholars from a variety of academic disciplines and over a dozen countries as historically and culturally diverse as India, Bulgaria, Germany and Canada, were able to agree on a common concept of generation (while strongly disagreeing on the generational implications for an understanding of national and political constructions of gender), is not so surprising after all. It is virtually impossible to overlook the manifest paucity of scholarship focused upon women and their experiences and competent to explore these experiences for their generational potential. Surveying the results of the research concerned with different generations and their impact upon history, Christina Benninghaus, among others, notes that it appears as though history has been the exclusive work of men. Like so many historians before her Benninghaus demonstrates the historical marginalisation of women's experiences, this time by examining history through the perspective of generation.<sup>2</sup>

Reading Karl Mannheim's classic and trend-setting work against the broader socio-cultural context, Benninghaus convincingly demonstrates how the concept of the formation of a distinct "generation" is always already embedded within preconceptions that are both class and gender specific as well as biased. She argues that the challenge to historical gender-informed research of generations lies in its capacity to expose the ways in which the varying notions of generationality/generation intersect with gender and further, how they reflect the transformation of gender order.<sup>3</sup> More specifically, her criticism of the term reveals that the concepts of generation and generationality (Generationalität) correlate with constructions of masculinity (as it engages the public sphere) as the force which propels social progress and political changes.<sup>4</sup> Thence, Benninghaus concludes,

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<sup>2</sup> Christina Benninghaus, "Das Geschlecht der Generation. Zum Zusammenhang von Generationalität und Männlichkeit um 1930," *Generationen. Zur Relevanz eines wissenschaftlichen Grundbegriffs*, eds. Ulrike Jureit, Michael Wildt (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005) 127-159, 127.

<sup>3</sup> Benninghaus, "Das Geschlecht der Generation," 129.

<sup>4</sup> Benninghaus, "Das Geschlecht der Generation," 129.

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it is hardly surprising that concepts of generation that do not acknowledge this historical lineage, cannot—by definition—encompass the experiences of social and cultural groups that are perceived to stand apart or even in contrast to “social development” and its dynamic.<sup>5</sup> However, it goes almost without saying that subjecting the concept of generation to critical investigation from a gender perspective needs to go far beyond the contributory approach of simply expanding research to include women.

Approaching generation in ways sensitive to gender dimensions and biases and examining the “gender of generation” brings up broader concerns and allows us to ask more stimulating questions. For example, in terms of generations as social formations, how are the temporal as well as structural and social locations of individuals constructed and linked in conceptions of generations? And how do they intersect with gender, age, class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and geo-political location? In what ways do different understandings and perceptions of gender transform the notions of generations as social formations? And, topically, how do generation(s) and constructions of intra—and/or intergenerational conflicts relate to the re/allocation of resources? In terms of epistemology, how do particular concepts of generation help to secure an epistemic privilege for a certain group? Do generations act as keepers of knowledge? Does generation represent a useful analytic tool for studying the dynamics of intellectual exchange?

Generation, Ulrike Jureit and Michael Wildt point out, always operates as a category of difference.<sup>6</sup> In this regard, gender and generation are obviously related, not only in the processes of their

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<sup>5</sup> Benninghaus notes explicitly: “Daß ein solches Konzept wenig dazu geeinigt ist, die Lebensumstände, Handlungsweisen und Erfahrungen von Frauen in den Blick zu nehmen, ist nicht erstaunlich. Ebensovienig verwundert es, daß es sich überzeugend auf bestimmte Gruppen von (jungen) Männern anwenden läßt.” Benninghaus, “Das Geschlecht der Generation,” 138.

<sup>6</sup> Ulrike Jureit and Michael Wildt, “Generationen,” *Generationen. Zur Relevanz eines wissenschaftlichen Grundbegriffs*, eds. Ulrike Jureit, Michael Wildt (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005) 11.

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construction but also deconstruction. Gender enables us to elevate questions of generation from the realm of the purely biological to levels concerned with the social construction of reproduction. It allows us to ask, for example, what discourses and power mechanisms invest and regulate reproduction? The concept of generation prompts us to investigate how meaningful the canonical questions are which excavate the "founding mothers" of feminist theory. Can the study and critical application of the concept of generation challenge current understandings of feminist history and thought? Finally, deconstructing the intersections of gender and generation necessarily involves a question: how, and in what ways, do both categories depend upon the matrix of heteronormativity? How has queer politics interacted with and transformed the concept of generation? Can "degenerate" function as bearers of regeneration? How do new notions of generation, based upon "queer time and place"<sup>7</sup> reconfigure both inter—and intra-generational relations? And do they have the potential to further enrich the intricacies of gender? Already from this small catalogue of questions, it seems clear that interactions between gender and generation never form a one-dimensional or one-way relationship.

### *Aims and Ambitions*

The present collection of texts is not meant to provide either a comprehensive overview of the state of current research or of the theoretical debates presently ongoing. Instead, the critical focus of this volume is directed at illuminating some of the ways in which the application of gender analysis and an awareness of different gender positioning can help in refiguring the concept of generation. Conversely and equally importantly, it brings challenges in

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<sup>7</sup> Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place* (New York: University Press, 2005).

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demonstrating that generational positionality plays an integral and crucial role in gender configurations and identifications.<sup>8</sup>

First, the essays collected in this volume strive to lay bare the gender bias inherent in the ways generation(s) are conceptualised and represented. If the deconstruction of the concept of generation indicates how much the values and images inherent to concept of generation correspond with gender-specific values, it is further important to realise that also the "biological facts"—considered as constituting the "natural" and obvious framework to generational relationship and generational exchange—are grounded in normative notions of life course, life span and of the passing-on of social and political agency. It is essential to note that reference to the assumed basics of human life (i.e. not only the "facts" of birth and death, but also the notion that human life provides a limited and definable time scope of years for physical and intellectual activities), situates the analysis of social and historical change within the framework of "naturalised" and "biologised" preconceptions about human life span. It is thus the span between parent and child (read: father and son) that is customarily considered to constitute the time-frame for generational change, the time "until political power is handed from father to son."<sup>9</sup> Julián Marínas's conviction that "history is made largely by men between the ages of 30 and 60"<sup>10</sup> further elucidates gender-relevant preconceptions, both in terms of patriarchal order and the heteronormative duality of gender. The tension between old and young, which the concept of generation so often preconceives and

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<sup>8</sup> Most directly is this relationship discussed in texts of Paul Scheibelhofer and Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer.

<sup>9</sup> Marvin Rintala, "Political Generations," *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sill (London: Collier Macmillan, 1968) 93; qtd. in Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer, *The Gendered Politics of Generational Contracts. Changing Discourses and Practices of Intergenerational Commitments in West German* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2000).

<sup>10</sup> Julián Marínas, "Generations: The Concept," *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. David L. Sill (London: Collier Macmillan, 1968) 90; qtd. Lorenz-Meyer, *The Gendered Politics of Generational Contracts*.

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assumes<sup>11</sup>, naturally expresses itself as the gendered binary juxtaposition of vigorous youth and emasculated and passive old age. Needless to say, this binary difference is only one in a rich repertoire of differentials, albeit perhaps the most obvious one. The very definition of the activity/agency time-scope, furthermore, appears to correspond to the life-data of a distinct socially, culturally and gender-defined group of citizens. The essays in this volume aim to work against the naturalised and normative notions of both gender and generation.

Second, gender has been long recognised as a process rather than a product of its constructions; as dependent upon its "doings" and "undoings." Individual essays in this volume demonstrate very clearly that generational locations also need to be recognised as a phenomenon that requires to be "done," to be performed in order to be constituted and brought into speech and public representation in order to achieve substantiality and historical significance. It is this performative nature of generation, which is revealed for instance in the way the so-called "generation '68" has achieved such historical significance in German society, providing the discursive framework for self-positioning and identity fashioning for the general public regardless of its actual involvement in the political protests and events of 1968. On the contrary, the discussions of silent generation(s) that several contributions in this book explore indicate that unless individual experience finds discursive support and becomes articulate, it cannot become an experience with generational potential.

In addition, gender-informed criticism needs to provoke reconsideration of which groups are regarded as embodying an authentic generational experience and whose experiences, activities, life conditions etc. are selected as representative for a given generation. Just as importantly, gender also stimulates us to reassess whether (and

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<sup>11</sup> See Hans Dubs, "Der Konflikt der Generationen in kriminologischer Sicht," *Der Konflikt der Generationen: Fünf akademische Vorträge gehalten von W. Neidhart, H. Dubs, P. Kielholz, K. Rossmann and A. Portmann* (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt Verlag, 1966) qtd. in Lorenz-Meyer, *The Gendered Politics of Generational Contracts*.

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how) the experiences presented as entailing generational potential are in fact linked to reproduction and to the reinforcement of social hierarchies, systems of inequalities and symbolic violence.

The second aim of the book thus splits into two, at first glance contradictory, tasks. On the one hand, it is directed at counteracting the tendency to render women (and the specificities of women's lives and historical experiences) as an empty, silent and inarticulate element of the discourse on generation(s); "eine Leerstelle im Generationendiskurs."<sup>12</sup> This objective is prosecuted by the collation of diverse research findings across academic disciplines that provide analysis of sources and material explicitly related to women's (generational) experiences and also by discussion of gender-specific research on generations. On the other hand, the performativity of generational and gender positions, as well as the social constructions of generational and gender experience, expose the limits of speaking about "women's" or "men's" experiences and/or generations as they are defined as self-evident notions. In fact, several essays point explicitly to the need to transcend this heteronormative gender binary. The emancipatory dimension shared by all generational and gender narratives, always functions simultaneously as building block (for new inclusions and identities) and as proof of the indefensibility of any fixed positions and collective power grabs.

The third objective of the text is directed at rethinking concepts of generation and intragenerational links. So far these have been referred to as being constituted through correspondences in social time-location, through shared experiences and through the impact of cultural, social and political situations (age-cohorts, coevals). We now want to invite another perspective. As Sigrid Weigel remarks, generation is a term characterised by its "dual semantic" (*doppelte*

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<sup>12</sup> Benninghaus, "Das Geschlecht der Generation," 130.

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Semantik)<sup>13</sup>, where the other, so far unmentioned, axis extends vertically and refers to genealogical relation. Customarily, genealogical reference is perceived in terms of the succession of historical generations. Through its etymological origins, generation always indicates the passage of time measured in terms of human life, and thus references aging, mortality and sexual reproduction. Generation, Weigel argues, is a figuration of origin that provides the guarantee of history as well as organising genealogy and lineage in terms of concepts of descent and sequence. Perhaps this semantic axis reveals more clearly that the location of the concept of generation lies upon the interstice of nature and culture.<sup>14</sup> Notions of historical cultural lineage clearly overlap here with those of biological descent, family lineage or alternatively with membership of a specific age group.

The emphasis upon the meaning of generation that references similarities/differences within individual cohort-groups reflects, as Weigel notes, a relatively recent paradigm shift inaugurated by modernity itself.<sup>15</sup> Hence, while research on generations is mostly directed by the synchronic perspective, and the genealogical concern seems to surface exclusively in the discourse of intergenerational conflict(s)<sup>16</sup>, a number of contributions in this volume foreground their exploration of generations in a critical revisitation of concepts of genealogy both in terms of cultural as well as family lineage.

Inevitably, the discursive construction of generation as defined by genealogical sequence brings us to examine the ways in which the concept of generation and generational lineages correlates (or depends upon) cultural gendered preconceptions of sexual reproduction and is

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<sup>13</sup> Sigrid Weigel, "Familienbände, Phantome und die Vergangenheitspolitik des Generationsdiskurses," *Generationen. Zur Relevanz eines wissenschaftlichen Grundbegriffs*, eds. Ulrike Jureit, Michael Wildt (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2005) 108-126, 116. See also, Sigrid Weigel, "'Generation' as a Symbolic Form: On the Genealogical Discourse of Memory since 1945," *The Germanic Review* (September 2002): 264-277.

<sup>14</sup> Weigel, "Familienbände, Phantome und die Vergangenheitspolitik des Generationsdiskurses," 118.

<sup>15</sup> Weigel, "Familienbände, Phantome und die Vergangenheitspolitik des Generationsdiskurses," 117.

<sup>16</sup> This claim refers predominantly to the situation in the German-speaking as well as central European academic context.

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thus inscribed in the legitimisation of sexual/gender difference. We would like to reiterate the importance of unveiling the ways in which nature intersects with culture, in that notions of assumed biological "facts" affect the understanding of generations as social phenomena. The following quote taken from a recent publication, which maps the methodological intricacies of research on generations, illustrates the point:

It is a biological fact that every individual has parents and simultaneously that most people have children so that every one of us—as a general rule—lives to see three generations and belongs to those personal experiences, which anchor "generation" as a self-evident concept in our language that mediates between the levels of individual biography and society.<sup>17</sup>

Tellingly, it is the biologised conception of reproduction that appears to create the (unreflectedly) normative background against which we are assumed to make sense of "generations." Needless to stress, such a definition of generation cannot be abstracted from the heteronormative outlines of reproduction and family lineage.

### *Applications*

Clearly, the essays in this volume do not literally "apply" the notions and arguments mentioned in the first two parts of the introduction. However, by exploring the various ways in which concepts of generation, generativity, genealogy and generational collaboration and/or conflict depend upon gender constructions and

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<sup>17</sup> Ulrike Jureit and Michael Wildt, "Generationen," 7; emphasis added.

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vice versa, these texts take on many of the challenges and questions raised by the intersections of these two concepts.

Eva-Maria Silies and Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer engage with the West German historical and cultural context. Their chapters add to the rich corpus of scholarship concerned with post-WWII German history and the social upheaval of the late nineteen-sixties. Lorenz-Meyer brings together gender and generation and generational constructions of gendered experience in her aptly titled essay "The Gender of Generation: Daughterwork and Need-related Economies in Postwar Germany." The latter constructions are then explored by Silies in her "'Love Is All Around': The Pill as a Female Generational Experience in 1960s and 1970s West Germany." Both Lorenz-Meyer and Silies record the experiences and voices of women as (so far) still underrepresented historical and social agents, thus revealing the gendered bias of mainstream historical discourse. As both authors argue, the selected historical periods are significant for contemporary generation-based research in Germany; hence it is the notion of "fatherless sons"<sup>18</sup> and the historical narratives of the '68 generation that constitute the contextual backgrounds against which they probe the possibility of employing the concept of distinct historical generations for researching women's experiences in the given periods.

For her part, Eva-Maria Silies initiates a critical dialogue with predominant research on generations and generationality (concerned with the public sphere) which valorises narratives of dramatic change as the foil of social and cultural transformations. In contrast to this trend, Silies's text focuses on the every-day, private and highly intimate experiences of young women as they renegotiate their sexuality following the invention of the contraceptive pill.

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. Hermann Schulz, Hartmut Radebold, and Jürgen Reulecke eds., *Söhne ohne Väter: Erfahrungen der Kriegsgeneration* (Berlin: Christoph Links, 2005); at the conference, Lu Seegers has discussed critically the gender bias of such historiographical discourse.

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To draw out the gendered nature of public discourse on historical generations, both authors deploy the concept of the "silent generation" allowing them to identify several stumbling blocks which have prevented women from recognising themselves as members of a distinct historical generation. First, the concept frames women's discursive difficulties in regarding their experiences as having more than a parochial, individual relevance and as being more than merely private herstories. Freed from this bind, they may thus represent shared generational experience worthy of historical and cultural record. Second, it alludes to a different seam of silence which Lorenz-Meyer's analysis brings to light. Focusing on the intergenerational relationships between mothers and daughters and their need-coerced collaboration and cohabitation, her analysis reveals why certain experiences remain inarticulate and "silent." Based on 52 in-depth interviews, the study unmasks the pivotal role of the location of these relationships in the private, familial sphere and their intergenerational nature. Particularly with regard to women and prescriptions of femininity, this domain is widely assumed as a sphere of voluntary, selfless help and assistance, thus rendering such experiences as both deliberate and mute.

Mariya Stoilova, in her essay "Gender, Generations and Post-Socialism: Bulgarian Women's Individual Experiences as Historical Experiences," examines women's experiences of the post-socialist transformation of Bulgaria, while underlining the importance of personal experiences in assessing and studying the processes of this social transformation. Exploring the changes underway in women's lives with respect to patterns of partnership as well as their social organisation, Stoilova subscribes to the feminist assertion of the close and indivisible correlation between the public and private domains. Thus, Stoilova's study of intergenerational divides (defined through marked changes in the arrangements of (women's) private lives)

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represents an important contribution to the study of post-communist transformations, which have a tendency to focus predominantly upon changes and developments in political and economic structures.

Importantly, generation is an identity-relevant category.<sup>19</sup> It provides the individual with the possibility of self-positioning within a given cultural lineage and genealogy, and it enables the fashioning of a sense of cultural belonging in the sense of Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities."<sup>20</sup> The conceptual proximity of generation and identity accentuates the fact that generations and generational belongings are not given communalities but rather need to be constructed along the lines of perceived analogy, around correspondences and similitude within a given generational group. Here, however, the dual semantic of generation—belonging to a coeval group as opposed to belonging defined along genealogical lines—generates conflict.

The clash between the two semantic meanings of generation represents a rich source of inspiration for the migration research.<sup>21</sup> Paul Scheibelhofer's text "Migrant Masculinity Beyond Linear Assimilation: Young Turkish Migrant Men Negotiate the Meaning of Gender and Generation" contributes to this discussion with an important observation that the concept of linear generational lineage and generational change with which groups of ethnically and/or racially distinct migrants are confronted, covertly formulates the normative expectation of assimilation into hegemonic society. Within this white-hegemonic context the discourse of "the second generation" more often than not entails the racist demands of "normalisation" and "progress" that presuppose the cultural superiority of the dominant white society.

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<sup>19</sup> Weigel, "Familienbände, Phantome und die Vergangenheitspolitik des Generationsdiskurses," 115.

<sup>20</sup> See Ulrike Jureit, *Generationenforschung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006) 41.

<sup>21</sup> Jureit, *Generationenforschung*, 64-66.

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Rosa Reitsamer's text "This Island Where We Came From: Notes on Gender and Generation in the Viennese Lesbian-Queer Subculture" also addresses intersections of generation and identity. A valuable contribution to the effort to record and piece together the history of the lesbian-queer subculture in Vienna of the last several decades, her text further nuances the concept of generational identity. Reitsamer identifies forms of identity-politics as being generation-constitutive. In contrast to concepts of subculture that subscribe to the conflicting and oppositional relationship between a "youth subculture" and a "parent culture," Reitsamer conceives a feminist-queer counterculture as allowing for a more fluid and nuanced construction of generational positionings. She argues that (in relation to feminism) this incites us to accentuate cooperation and mutual inspiration as propellants of the dynamic of intellectual, cultural and identity change.

Emily Gray's and Kateřina Kolářová's texts, in their different ways, concern the modes in which (hetero)normative definitions of relationships between individual generations entail and reinvigorate homophobic potential. Emily Gray's contribution entitled "'Are You Married, Sir?': Heteronormativity in British Schools" offers a generational perspective upon the situation of both GLBTQ staff and pupils within the British educational system. Her find that there exists a marked generational gap between these two groups (in terms of their possibilities for identity politics, their open and public self-identification as GLBTQ, or simply in terms of their confronting homophobia) enables Gray to question other binaries that disable GLBTQ teachers and pupils from communicating about issues of sexual identity and from forging relations of mutual support.

Kateřina Kolářová's essay "'The Event of Death' and (De)Generation: Aids and Representations of Motherwork" discusses Thomas Fitzgerald's 2003 film *The Event*. Focusing upon the representation of the (generational) relationship between a mother and

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her gay son dying of Aids, the text interrogates the ways, in which the mother-son bond (with its high cultural profile) can be deployed as a means of governance and to eradicate the "degenerate." Likewise, engaging in a critical debate about the film's representation of a voluntary death and an assisted suicide, Kolářová expands her discussion of the intersections between gender and generativity to include another key element: (dis)ability.

Located in post-colonial studies, Sreemati Mukherjee's essay "Orality as Aesthetic and Generational Strategy" reveals how intergenerational bonds between women have become a means of symbolic empowerment that has helped to generate women's gendered cultural consciousness and identity. Mukherjee assesses the custom of passing oral stories as a healing practice and a dissenting strategy. In so doing, she explores the role of (the representation of) women's intergenerational relations as a means of cultural survival in the face of colonialism. Mukherjee's essay reappraises the capacity of orality to establish a powerful and empowering lineage that endows women with the potential to counteract subjection and violence from colonial and patriarchal society, to which they were exposed. Mukherjee focuses on orality, on private work space, and on the remedial, therapeutic and supportive role of generational relations between women (often mother and daughter). In this way, Mukherjee's text challenges those conceptions of generational lineage that focus on men as historical and social agents and which accentuate the conflicts and tensions entailed in the act of passing social and political power within a male-dominated sequence.

The remaining two essays in the collection explore how notions of generativity and intergenerational relations correlate and effect concepts of "proper sexuality," sexual difference and gender identity. Kristen J. Collins and Kateřina Zábrodská investigate how the performative constitution of generational position intersects with

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gender performativity. In particular, both authors are concerned with the fashioning of female/feminine gender identity along the notion of generativity. Zábrodská, in her essay "Arguing for Motherhood: the Role of Desire in the Re-production of Gender Subjectivity," discusses gender subjection via the ambivalence-ridden desires attached to motherhood. Simultaneously a desired and rejected gendered status, motherhood serves as a ground to examine gender identity and the possibility of its transformation. Zábrodská's text provides an insight into the plurality of choices of (not) becoming a mother as available to one specific generation of women in the Czech Republic. At the same time, her paper explores the necessity to negotiate one's motherhood (or lack of it) and how this represents a mainstay of the day-dreaming fantasies of the interviewed young women and by this means documents convincingly how generational location operates in terms of the construction of gender identity.

Collins's argument, formulated in the chapter "From Mary to Carrie: 30 Years of Media Representations and Lived Experiences of Single Women," appears to lead to similar conclusions. The focus upon Canadian and American media representations of single women and the reception among women audiences reveals significant generational shifts in the meaning attributed to a woman's single status in the course of the last three decades. Collins very adroitly demonstrates that the potent social anxiety ascribed to women's single status requires being located at the intersection of heterosexist prescriptions concerning women's coupling and reproduction. Particularly, her discussion of women's audience-response to these media representations reveals the extent to which normative concepts of generational lineage persist as correlates of female/feminine gender identity.

Věra Sokolová and Kateřina Kolářová, "Gender and Generation in Mutual Perspective." In *Gender and Generation: Interdisciplinary Intersections and Perspectives*, Kateřina Kolářová and Věra Sokolová, eds. (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2007): 1-20.

### *Inspirations*

We wish to conclude this introductory essay by reiterating and highlighting several interrelated issues which we have found particularly enticing and inspirational as a means of bridging dualities and antagonisms seemingly inherent to both gender and generation.

It has long been critically noted that the patriarchal gender order is based on the generational lineage of "fathers and sons." It seems, however, that feminist gender discourse has not quite managed to shed this legacy. On the contrary, it has remained rooted in it, albeit in its own (significantly transformed) ways. Nonetheless, whenever the intersections of gender, feminism and generation are crossed, motherhood comes up repeatedly as a pivotal theme. Even at the conference, and in this book for that matter, diverse discourses of motherhood (or a pointed absence thereof) appear over and over again. Feminist treatments of the relationship between motherhood and generation come mainly in two distinct ways: either as a disciplinary tool of familial and cultural knowledge and value transmission (as, for example, the essays of Lorenz-Meyer, Stoilova or Kolářová show) or as the route to emancipation, legitimacy and maturity (as seen, for example, in the texts of Mukherjee, Collins, Silies or Zábrodská). Either way, as with the criticised lineage of "fathers and sons," the lineage of "mothers and daughters," or "mothers and children," seems to be accepted as a naturalised and preferred form of generational gender and feminist narratives. Moreover, as one of the participants at the conference Round Table observed, the widely accepted conceptualisation of feminism as a generational construction (in several successive waves) has resulted in the fact that "feminism now is generationally structured as a conflict."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Andrea O'Reilly at the Round Table "Western 'Founding Mothers': De—and Reconstruction. Feminist Generations in the 1970s and 2000." The transcription of this as well as of the second Round Table "Experiences of Women's Emancipation Prior and Subsequent to the 1989 Revolutions Through the Differing Perspectives of

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For this reason, queer critiques of the intersections of gender and generation can serve as one attractive example of a productive challenge to normative, static and antagonistic constructions of generational differences.<sup>23</sup> For example, Judith Halberstam argues that

queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe that their futures can be imagined according to logics that lie outside those paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely birth, marriage, reproduction and death.<sup>24</sup>

Halberstam's insightful proposition extends, of course, to the construction and conception of generational experience as well. She distinguishes between the concepts of "queer" and "family" time, arguing that "respectability and notions of the normal, on which it depends, may be upheld by middle-class logic of reproductive temporality." "Family time," "time of reproduction" or "generational time" are all synonyms used by Halberstam for normative practices, which are governed by the perceived biological clock for women, children's needs and the passing down of goods, morals, values and national past through "family ties from one generation to the next."<sup>25</sup> Her conception of a "queer time" then brings a potential to reformulate generational narrative in radically new (gendered) ways. It refers to new understandings of community, sexual identity, embodiment, time and space, which are all based in highly subjective and non-normative experiences and behaviour. Nonetheless, by challenging the oppressive weight of normative, homogenous constructions of

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Women's Generations" are archived at the Department of Gender Studies at the School of Humanities of Charles University in Prague.

<sup>23</sup> For inspirational work on this topic see especially: the already mentioned path-breaking monograph of Judith Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*; a collection by Joseph Allen Boone, Martin Dupuis, Martin Meeker, and Karin Quimby, eds. *Queer Frontiers: Millennial Geographies, Genders, and Generations* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000) or, for example, an article by Corinne P. Hayden, "Gender, Genetics, and Generation: Reformulating Biology in Lesbian Kinship," *Cultural Anthropology* 10.1. (1995): 41-63.

<sup>24</sup> Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Halberstam, *In a Queer Time and Place*, 3-4.

Věra Sokolová and Kateřina Kolářová, "Gender and Generation in Mutual Perspective." In *Gender and Generation: Interdisciplinary Intersections and Perspectives*, Kateřina Kolářová and Věra Sokolová, eds. (Prague: Litteraria Pragensia, 2007): 1-20.

biologised generational concepts and replacing them with a diffuse mode of temporality rooted in personal choice and self-understanding, "queer time" can provide a new mode for the sharing of collective experiences and identities, and thus for creating new alternative bases for the (re)formulation of both gender and generation.

Some of the texts in this volume already take up Halberstam's suggestions and map out new terrain for generational and gender narratives through explicit discussion of queer politics (Reitsamer and Kolářová for example) or expose the heteronormative and heterosexist practices integral to intergenerational encounters (as, for example, Gray and Collins do). However, if we take up the challenge posed by Halberstam and rethink the contributions in this volume from the perspective of "queer time" we find that even texts far removed from any "queer" discourse may open new and perhaps unexpected spaces, in which we can explore the mutual enrichment of gender and generation.

As an example we may consider how Halberstam's somewhat overly neat and non-conflicting interpretation of "family time" is challenged by Paul Scheibelhofer's findings that "family time" is not always the smooth, middle-class, bourgeois model of generational transmission that Halberstam seems to suggest. Scheibelhofer demonstrates that even "family time" can be full of tensions and may be a source of rebellion and subversion: when considered from the viewpoint of ethnic and migrant minorities, it is often problematic from the point of view of the majority because it prevents that which is always at least latently expected, if not openly requested—assimilation. Inside ethnic and migrant communities, the familial generational transmission of cultural values usually works against the normative construction of a mainstream national narrative. "Family time" rethought in this way is thus far from functioning as an anchor for "middle class," socially conformist practices. Also Mukherjee's and

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Stoilova's essays remind us yet again how crucial particular cultural and historical contexts are and that the relatively abstract form of "family time" is not merely about the heteronormative-queer duality. Quite clearly, even "family time" is a selective variant of a preferred particular "family" model, which often operates at the expense of "other" families and forms of cohabitation—that are nonetheless equally heteronormative.

All this said, we offer this collection mainly as an invitation to discuss issues which we believe have the potential to broaden the ways we think about, and work with, the concepts of gender and generation but which we have found so far largely missing in lively scholarly debate in and among our varied academic contexts. We hope that colleagues and students alike will find it a worthy and inspirational contribution to their own intellectual enterprises and academic projects.