

Prof. Dr. Caroline Lusin (Mannheim)
clusin@mail.uni-mannheim.de

Jun.-Prof. Dr. Christine Schwanecke (Mannheim)
c.schwanecke@uni-mannheim.de

Call for Papers | Anglistentag 2017

Section:

**WOMEN IN MEN'S SHOES:
'SHEROES' IN LITERATURES AND CULTURES OF THE
BRITISH ISLES, THE COMMONWEALTH, AND BEYOND**

'Women in men's shoes' – literally and metaphorically speaking – have existed for centuries: in history, cultural imaginaries, and literary and visual representations. The depiction of women literally wearing male gear can be traced back to the Renaissance (e.g., Mary Frith, Ill. 1). Women pursuing ways of life that were culturally assigned to males (e.g., female explorers, warriors, or rulers) not only highlighted hegemonic gender boundaries and hierarchies, but also challenged and transgressed them. Arguably, historical women in men's shoes have created spaces of friction and contestation, producing new semantic and conceptual fields; they have often become alluring female heroes – that is, 'sheroes' – of myths, highbrow literature, and popular culture (e.g., Lara Croft, Ill. 2).

Even though some of these 'women in men's shoes' are well-known and have had a long history, an increasing scholarly interest is only just emerging: Recently, critics have started to theorize how women appropriate and subvert hegemonic male practices, and how these acts of appropriation and subversion are represented in literature and art (Böger 2000; Cameron 2009; Garber 1997 [1992]). Since the year 2000 there have been lively debates on 'sheroes' (Richards 2004), 'women explorers' (Gilmartin 2007), 'viragos' (Meek/Lawless 2005), 'women warriors' (Capeloa Gil 2005; Mainon/Ursini 2006), or 'drag kings' (Schuster 2010). Both developments suggest that the topics of gender binaries, of norm and deviation, of gender transgression and subversion, and of hegemonic power relations are as relevant as ever – especially when it comes to exploring, conceptualizing, and discussing representations of 'women in men's shoes.'

The section organizers invite proposals for papers that (1) provide theoretical contributions to the discussion of 'sheroes,' (2) suggest concepts that allow for a better analysis of (historical) mediations of sheroes and their political implications, or (3) investigate into various historical and contemporary literary and cultural emanations of 'sheroes' (who both subvert and reconfirm traditional gender binaries).

Areas of discussion may include (but are by no means restricted to):

- various historical emanations of ‘sheroes,’ their different manifestations as ‘viragos,’ ‘female explorers, emperors, fighters ...’ and their historical or recent mediations and implicit evaluations;
- diachronic developments in representations of ‘sheroes’ (e.g., the ‘virago’ as an ‘intertextual’ phenomenon; the ‘warrior woman’ as a trans-cultural phenomenon, e.g. appropriations of the French ‘Joan of Arc myth,’ the Chinese ‘Fa Mulan myth,’ or representations of ancient Greek viragos, such as Minerva or amazons);
- the nature of ‘literary heroism’ and default heroes (can the *virago* only be defined in dependence of the *vir*? Are there any cultural specifics and trans-cultural universals?);
- the ‘shero’ across media and between media (e.g., ‘sheroes’ in poetry and drama; intermedial representations and evaluations of women in men’s shoes; frictions between images and imaginaries of ‘sheroes’);
- intersectional approaches to ‘sheroes’, e.g. gender and (hyper-)sexuality, race, religion, age, or social status, or queer readings of representations of ‘sheroes’;
- female cross-dressing and mechanisms of societal inclusion/exclusion or female cross-dressing and in-between spaces of (playful) exploration of liminality;
- cross-dressing and provocation, politics, and power; or
- historical ‘sheroes’ as well as their cultural (non-)acknowledgement and (non-)canonization.

Please send your proposals (200-300 words) and a short biographical note (ca. 200 words) to the section organizers by 15 October 2016. Thank you.



Ill. 1: ‘Roaring Girl’ Mary Frith, a.k.a. Moll Cutpurse (~1584-1659); frontispiece of *The Roaring Girl* by Thomas Middleton & Thomas Dekker (1611).



Ill. 2: Female explorer and fighter Lara Croft as depicted in the game “Angel of Darkness”; © ‘eidos;’ www.zeit.de/online/2009/29/bg-tomb-raider.

Literature

- Böger, Astrid. 2000. "“A Girl in Boys’ Clothes, or Any Clothes, or No Clothes’: Der offene Kleiderschrank im amerikanischen Roman des 19. Jahrhunderts.” In: Wilhelm Busse/Olaf Templin (eds.). *Der einsame Held*. Tübingen/Basel: Francke.
- Cameron, Rebecca. 2009. "From Great Women to Top Girls: Pageants of Sisterhood in British Feminist Theatre." In: *Comparative Drama* 43/2: 143-166.
- Capeloa Gil, Isabel. 2005. "“Arms and the Woman I Sing...’: The Woman Warrior Reloading the Can(n)on.” In: Maria Holmgren Troy/Elisabeth Wennö (eds.). *Memory, Haunting, Discourse*. Karlstad: Karlstad University Press. 229-242.
- Ferris, Lesley (ed.). 1993. *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Garber, Marjorie. 1997 [1992]. *Vested Interests: Cross Dressing and Cultural Anxiety*. New York: Routledge.
- Gilmartin, Patricia. 2007. "Women Explorers." In: David Buisseret (ed.). *The Oxford Companion to World Exploration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Online.
- Howard, Jean E. 1993. "Cross-Dressing, the Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." In: Lesley Ferris (ed.). *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing*. London/New York: Routledge. 20-46.
- Mainon, Dominique/James Ursini. 2006. *The Modern Amazons: Warrior Women On-Screen*. Pompton Plains (NJ): Limelight Editions.
- Meek, Christine/Catherine Lawless (eds.). 2005. *Victims or Viragos?* Dublin: Four Courts Press.
- Richard, Birgit. 2004. *Sheroes: Genderspiele im virtuellen Raum*. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Riviere de Carles, Nathalie. 2010. "Acceptable Amazons? Female Warriors on the English and French Early Modern Stage." In: *Anglophonia* 27: 203-217.
- Schuster, Nina. 2010. *Andere Räume: Soziale Praktiken der Raumproduktion von Drag Kings and Transgender*. Bielefeld: transcript.
- Wells, Stanley. 2009. "Boys Should Be Girls: Shakespeare’s Female Roles and the Boy Players." In: *New Theatre Quarterly* 25/2: 172-177.