

WRITING ACROSS DIFFERENCES

Open Cultural Studies (www.degruyter.com/CULTURE) invites submissions for a special issue entitled “Writing Across Differences,” edited by Gero Bauer, Ingrid Hotz-Davies, and Marion Müller (all University of Tübingen, Germany).

DESCRIPTION

For some years now, we have been witnessing heated debates about who may, can, or should write what about whom in a certain way. These debates are primarily fuelled by the question of how the (ascribed) identity of an author or speaker relates to what is being said. Cultural distinctions between people and corresponding group identities (such as race, class, gender, or sexual orientation) have become more and more significant over the course of the past fifty years. Often, the transgression of boundaries of identity – e.g. in the creation of fictional characters and worlds or in the production of knowledge – is framed as problematic. At the same time, the idealisation of discourses designed to establish a marked writing within boundaries carries its own implications and problems.

In all cases, ‘writing across’ – across boundaries but also possibly in the failure of crossings deemed necessary – in public discourse, in the creation of fiction, or in the production of knowledge has a high potential for scandalisation as the debates about speaking and writing across differences appear to be struggles over cultural hegemony and the distribution of power and resources which are fought out in academia, in the cultural and literary sector, in education, and in the media.

We assume that in late modernity, the (presumed or displayed) identity of authors and the associated positionality and (relative) power of definition in public perception have gained unprecedented political relevance and that expectations of their texts in terms of authenticity, experiential knowledge, and truthfulness are derived from this. These expectations, as well as the reaction to their disappointment or any scepticism about them, fuel new rhetorics, aesthetics, and text forms which urgently require an interdisciplinary debate, also in the sense of a self-reflexive analysis of academic writing in the humanities and social sciences.

We invite contributions that take an interdisciplinary look at the dynamics surrounding the crossing of cultural boundaries in literary, academic, and journalistic writing as well as their effects and consequences. Contributions should focus on analysing cases of writing across socially and culturally determined identity boundaries and their public negotiation.

We welcome contributions from different perspectives in the humanities and social sciences, such as literary and cultural studies, sociology, anthropology, media studies, educational science, and ethics, but also from interdisciplinary fields of study that engage with the historically contingent relevance of the question of who speaks in a text, in which contexts and with what authorisation, and who produces knowledge about whom.

Contributions may address, but are in no way limited to, the following questions:

- How has literary, academic, and journalistic writing ‘across differences’ changed in recent years and decades, and what are the reasons for this change?
- Which social structures enable which forms of text production, and who uses which communicative strategies to generate media attention in the context of ‘writing across differences’?
- From which cultural and social positionings, under which institutional conditions, and within (or outside of) which structures does a ‘writing across differences’ take place?
- How, when, and why is the positionality of (individual or collective) writers (made) relevant (and when does this not happen)?
- Which affiliations are actualised as determinants of social positionings? Or, put differently: when, why, and how are characteristics and interests attributed to, for example, an author’s gender, race, or class?
- Under what conditions do texts in which ‘writing across differences’ takes centre stage find a public sphere? What processes of ‘gatekeeping’ are there?
- Which contexts, collective stores of knowledge, and cultural repertoires favour or hinder whether authors can, may, or should imaginatively or methodically cross the boundaries of their own experiences?
- Through which rhetorical and aesthetic strategies, procedures, and methods does the transgression of cultural and social identity boundaries become manifest within texts themselves?
- What new thematic complexes, arguments, stylistic devices, text forms, text types, and genres does the historically situated intersection of the relationship between speaker position and text content produce?
- Is a ‘new’ literature emerging here?
- What role does the further development of certain methodological procedures (e.g. autoethnography) play in the social sciences?
- How (and when) do authors and their positioning become ‘visible’ in writing?
- What strategies are used to bring certain identity categories into the foreground or background?
- When and why do (no) frictions and conflicts arise in the reception and productive appropriation of texts written ‘across differences’?
- What do actors in a process of reception and appropriation ‘across differences’ do with texts by becoming text producers themselves, rewriting other texts, etc.?
- Under what circumstances are texts perceived as ‘inauthentic’ or ‘illegitimate’ (or not) and by whom?
- How, on what grounds, with what aims, and by what means is a ‘writing across differences’ thematised, problematised, defended, or scandalised?
- What justifications underlie positive or negative judgements about making authorial identity more relevant?
- Where are analogies and differences between current discussions and earlier controversies (e.g. feminist standpoint theories)?

- What are the consequences of the changing conditions of writing in the context of debates about the relationship between author identity and text content?
- Where and how are identities used in a 'strategically essentialist' way? What role does epistemic (in)justice play in the ambivalence of 'writing across differences'?
- What consequences do the shift in the meaning of objectivity as a scientific ideal, the localisation of knowledge, or considerations of understanding others have for the way in which knowledge is produced in the context of existing institutions?

HOW TO SUBMIT

Submissions will be collected by 31 March 2026 via the online submission system at <https://www.editorialmanager.com/culture/>

Choose "special issue: Writing Across Differences"

Before submission, authors should carefully read the Instructions for Authors, available at https://www.degruyter.com/publication/journal_key/CULTURE/downloadAsset/CULTURE_Instruction%20for%20Authors.pdf

All contributions will undergo critical peer review before being accepted for publication.

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Further questions about this thematic issue can be sent to Gero Bauer (gero.bauer@uni-tuebingen.de). In case of technical problems with submission, please write to AssistantManagingEditor@degruyterbrill.com.

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