

From the Editors

What's in an Editorial?

DEAR READERS,

Why does a journal need an editorial? Partly, we think, because editorials do not only reflect the stakes and interests of editors (which they certainly do too), they also point to broader orientations and aspirations and are often sites of collective enunciations and community building (see Lykke 2004; Dahl forthcoming). Editorials say something about what kind of space a journal aims to create and how it changes over time.

The feeling that we editors have, when yet another issue is ready to materialize after many, many months of work, and we arrive at writing our editorial remarks, is hard to describe. We are proud, excited for our authors, and we want to share it with you, our readers. Also, feeling a bit as the coach wanting to shout: Well done team, we did it again! Truth be told, at many stages of working with a journal, we are unsure of whether there will, in fact, be another issue or when it will be ready to go to print. Lately not so much because of financial concerns, as because of the time it takes for thinking and writing to emerge and for the wheels of transforming it into a finished piece to turn. Research is, as we know, creative work, often done in spite of it all; against severe time constraints of teaching and administration, stumbling over writing blocks, even doubts about why do it at all, managing pressures to choose one form of publication over another, for the sake of institutional-turned-personal gain, and so on. We are at the end of that

process, wondering: Will authors submit their work to us and will it come in on time? Will reviewers respond, have time and be willing to read revised versions? Will we, as editors, have time to read and engage with submissions in due time? Despite the multiple time frames at work simultaneously, again and again we do go to print, and for the past six years we have been publishing new, emerging, strong, peer-reviewed work. As editors, we never tire of the moment of completion, and always take this moment to acknowledge the labor, much of which remains invisible, that it involves.

The feeling upon completion of an issue is also retrospective, reflective: What turned out this time? What can be said about this particular collection of articles, essays, and reviews, completed at this particular time? How will it be evaluated and who will read it? Issue number 1/2015, now in your hand or on your screen, is a special one, in that it is the first of two anniversary issues this year, the second will be an issue dedicated to the 25th anniversary of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*. As the cover indicates, and just in time for Stockholm Pride, this issue celebrates the journal itself; which, depending on how we count, is either turning 20 this year or turned 25 last year (see further, Söderström, this issue). No small feat for a small journal! As with every open issue of *lambda nordica*, we present quite a diverse set of articles. Topically, they extend new perspectives on some of the many themes that have characterized the field of LGBTQ studies over the years; living with HIV, Swedish lesbian letter archives, and the implications of Norwegian asylum law for LGBTQ claimants. In addition, our founding editor Göran Söderström offers his personal reflections, especially on the early years of the journal's history. Marking the "we're here"-moment in the final section, we present an essay on the complex and timely topic of "trigger warnings."

Before we present this issue's articles in a little more depth, a few more words on the politics of editing and editorials. *lambda nordica* is unique in that, unlike many other fellow Nordic and international journals where editorship frequently rotates every few years, it has had an editor, Göran Söderström, who has served since the journal's resurrection in 1995 and who also was part of its very formation in 1989. For

us current editors, who in some respects belong to a different academic generation and have come along much later, such a long service is impressive, but neither possible nor desirable in the current climate. We are extremely thrilled that the journal's readership continues to grow and indeed, the journal is not ours; it belongs to you, who are engaged in the field that we serve, and the time will come when we hand over the torch to new editors. An anniversary offers a good opportunity both for editorial retrospection, as Söderström presents, and for thinking about new directions. In this editorial we also want to briefly take stock of the past and offer our reflections as current editors. As we were not "there" when the journal started, the online archive, including editorials, are useful in that task and we will focus primarily on the past six or so years.

Looking back at the past twenty-five years on how a Scandinavian-language cultural journal on homosexuality studies has turned into a peer-reviewed academic journal on LGBTQ studies, where authors are increasingly opting to publish in English and with support from the Swedish Research Council, we can see that journals and perhaps even more so their editorials, are indeed reflective of their times and of how research fields take shape and change. In recent years, we have found it increasingly important to comment on our work with the journal, in part because we want to share and politicize the labor of journal production with our readers as a collective process. By contrast, in the early years, if there were any editorials at all, they were brief. The papers presented in each issue do nevertheless reflect editorial work and strategies. It is worth noting that already issue number 2/1989 had a theme and it was entitled "Lesbian Research!" [Forska lesbiskt!]. There the by now rather obvious argument was made that there is no such thing as a universal experience of homosexuality; that indeed, gender is central to how our orientations and desires are experienced. In recent years the field of LGBTQ studies has, as Kulick (2005) and Juvonen and Hekanaho (2008) have noted, become more populated by lesbians and other queers than by (gay) men. Thankfully, the kind of misogyny that characterized some moments of gay activism and that reproduced heterosexist gender divisions has since been thoroughly addressed and mostly eradicated. It

is significant, however, that it is really not until the late 1990s that the figure of the lesbian emerges more prominently in public debates and research. In 1996 the topic of lesbians as subjects and objects in academia was further elaborated in an article by Tamsin Wilton; a theme that has been extended in different ways since, most recently in an article by Michela Baldo (2014) on the queer researcher's body; we still need more work on queer male bodies of different kinds.

Over time, we can see that the journal has never presented one unified framework for understanding homosexuality. In retrospective, we can also see that the timely and often cited issue on queer theory edited by Don Kulick in 1996, forever shifted the focus from solely being on "homosexuality" – even if the question of whether the letter "Q" should be added to the title of the journal, took more than fifteen years to solve, despite that a rapidly growing interest in queer theory quickly replaced the focus on homosexuality in the Nordic region. If a journal is a reflection of a larger field and political context, perhaps Kulick (2005, 16–8) is right; in the Nordic context, queer has found a much more productive home in feminist/gender studies than in "homosexuality studies," whatever that may be. To us it seemed self-evident that an interdisciplinary journal dealing with "non-normative sexualities" such as ours and where so many of our authors engage with queer theory, clearly deserves to be a queer studies journal. When we compare our developments to those of other journals in the field, it is clear that Nordic research emerged very much in dialogue with Anglo-American scholarship, both before and after "the arrival" of queer (Dahl 2011), even if the conversations for a long time were limited to those who read the three Scandinavian languages.

In recent years we have sought to critically reflect on the territorialization of knowledge and tried to both widen our readership and our base of authors and to put geopolitics more centrally in discussions about queer knowledge, by featuring issues on Central/Eastern European themes (2012) and Southern European themes (2014). Thinking queer politics and research through temporality, increasing right wing politics, as well as austerity offers important insights into our differently situated stakes.

Keeping the relationship between identity and research topics, a dis-

cussion no less important and sore today than when the journal was first founded in mind, the relatively small number of scholars who focus on gay (cis)male sexuality remains noteworthy, perhaps indicative of broader patterns in academia. Whether queer in its many variations has in some ways absorbed the question of bisexuality in its fluid frame is another question we continue to ponder. However, we find that the underrepresentation of trans scholars in the Nordic academy is even more alarming at this point, especially since the field of transgender studies is rapidly becoming central to gender and sexuality studies worldwide. In future issues *lambda nordica* hopes to become a vital journal for transgender studies and we especially want to urge scholars to contribute their work in this field to us.

We have taken up the "alphabet" question in many previous editorials but what is perhaps more noteworthy at this point is that this journal is not primarily about the various letters of the queer alphabet and their respective representation. Rather, the growing range of themes and topics that are now central to the larger field and that have been reflected in both special issues and individual contributions, are indicative, we think, of the diversity of the field today. *lambda nordica* is no longer simply a journal dedicated to researching and rendering visible LGBTQ livelihoods, even if that too, remains a central issue. We have published special issues on methodologies, geopolitics, activism, health, animal studies, fashion, reproduction, and children, along with issues on particular researchers and authors. We have reflected on new publications, timely political themes, and the conditions of academic labor. The fact that our range of topics is now so wide is indicative of the strength of the field, as well as of the continued effort to make *lambda nordica* a viable choice for publication in a "publishing market" comprised of ever-increasing numbers of journals.

The thematic issues published in the last five or six years, guest edited by experts, have sought both to democratize and expand the editorial work and to reflect the diversification of our interdisciplinary field. Ulrika Dahl joined as editor in 2009, partly because the board of the journal saw that it was necessary to further widen the scope and networks of

the journal and to involve areas not represented at that time, including a stronger emphasis on social scientific research. It was a time when the journal, much thanks to the persistent work of former editor Dirk Gindt, decided on the one hand to formalize the peer-review process, and on the other to invite authors to also publish in English. It has been an exciting and increasingly smooth process of learning to manage a lot of correspondence, deadlines, and affects, and ultimately, as a result our journal has also expanded its reach. The first few years of working with themed peer-reviewed issues, the then three editors divided the responsibility between us, partly because the high aspirations of the journal were at times challenging to combine with the precarious and pressured positions as junior academics. When Jenny Björklund joined as editor in 2012, the journal got two editors with a strong commitment not only to editing but also to teaching, research, and supervision, combined with a keen wish to make *lambda nordica* more than a journal for a small, mostly Swedish-reading circle. Promptly we found that working more closely together as editors, as well as working with our amazing book review editor, and sometimes acting guest editor, Ann-Sofie Lönngrén, and very importantly, with our superb editorial secretary Karin Lindqvist have made for a pleasurable, stimulating, and creative editorial board. As every single issue shows, it takes a small village to put out an issue and pooling resources, expertise, and ideas, we hope to continue to strengthen the journal and as always we welcome all suggestions and feedback.

So, where do we go from here? We think that continuing to offer relatively swift publication (about a year on average, which compared to most journals is significantly shorter) and to address timely issues in our section *We're Here*, will make *lambda nordica* an increasingly advantageous choice for publication. We will continue to do special issues because we find that we get more abstracts and interest in such issues, and that readers get a lot of reading a set of papers together. As we have previously stated in our editorials, we are quite proud that the Swedish Research Council has granted financial support for the journal and we aim to keep it open access for the sake of making this research available

to more than those whose institutional affiliations afford them subscriptions to corporately run journals. While our funds from the council and from Amundson's fund hardly cover all the labor that goes into editing the journal, its symbolic significance cannot be overestimated. We are also ensuring inclusion in international databases and are working toward spreading the journal through social media, as well as research networks. We would like to urge our readers to do the same. All in all, while some loyal readers may lament the change from the more popular style and Scandinavian-language articles of the early years, partly required in order to get funding from the Swedish Arts Council, it seems to us that these days there are a variety of publishing options for those kinds of pieces, from online journals to cultural journals of a range of persuasions. What continues to be needed, we think, is to strengthen the status of *lambda nordica* as an academic journal whose central scope is not primarily that of (engaging with) an Anglo-American framework, even if we do that as well. Upcoming issues will deal with subjects such as aging, femininities, postcolonial queer Europe, and queer temporalities and histories. We also have plans to revisit the question of pornography and to publish more work in transgender studies, among other things. And as always, we would like to encourage our readers to let us know if there is any topic in particular that you would like us to focus on in the coming years and of course, to propose special issues.

The Issue at Hand

As we said above, we think this issue points to some of the diversity of the work being done in our field at the moment. Deniz Akin studies the Norwegian practices of asylum evaluation of gay and lesbian claimants. She has conducted interviews with caseworkers at the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration in order to understand how they make assessments of the asylum seekers' sexual orientation and the risk of persecution in their home countries. Akin finds that although caseworkers differ in their understandings of credible sexual orientations, ideas of shame, stigmatization, and vulnerability are keys to their decision-making, and they seem to find stories of romanticized, love-seeking non-heterosex-

uals more credible than stories of sexual experiences, since accounts of excessive sexual behavior are thought to reflect forged testimony.

Desirée Ljungcrantz uses a mixed-method approach (interviews, autoethnographic writing, and close reading of autobiographies) to investigate what it is like to have an HIV-diagnosis in contemporary Sweden, where good access to antiretroviral therapy has made it possible for many HIV-positive people to live with HIV as a chronic illness rather than a deadly disease. However, Ljungcrantz shows that people who live with HIV still have to negotiate emotions such as shame and fear that were linked to the cultural imaginaries of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s and 1990s. These emotions appear in certain so-called threshold moments, in which HIV is done through performativity. To live with HIV entails dealing with and fearing other people's fear, and Ljungcrantz argues that the negative attitudes to HIV in society need to be changed.

Cecilia Hedlund discusses lesbian identity formation in Sweden between 1950 and 1965. Her article is based on a study of personal letters to RFSL (a Swedish organization for lesbians and gays), and she argues that the lesbian identity in these letters is formed in relation to the scientific discourses on lesbianism that dominated the Swedish society at the time. Hence, lesbianism was primarily seen as a problem, and many of the women express feelings of loneliness and isolation. However, as Hedlund shows, the letters also contain acts of resistance to the dominant discourse. Toward the end of the period new ways of naming desire between women, as well as more positive attitudes to lesbianism emerge in the letters, and the women use RFSL to get in contact with other lesbians and to find meeting places.

lambda nordica's long-time editor Göran Söderström resigned earlier this year. He was, as mentioned above, one of the contributors to the journal's first issue in 1989 and was also part of the advisory board. When the journal was reborn in 1995, he became editor. In this anniversary issue he contributes with a personal account of the history of the journal. He tells the story of how it all started and how the journal has developed over the years and revisits some of his favorite issues and articles.

Finally, in the *We're Here*-section, Katariina Kyrölä approaches the much-debated subject of trigger warnings. Using her own experiences as a teacher and researcher, Kyrölä navigates the messy field of the recent debates: she unpacks and contextualizes the debate by providing an "analysis of how exactly trigger warnings are being used and misused in various situations."

We want to take this opportunity to thank Göran Söderström for his long service and enduring commitment to *lambda nordica*. Given our retrospection, we also want to thank Dirk Gindt, again, for setting us on a track toward becoming a strong scientific journal and above all, our editorial secretary Karin Lindeqvist for tirelessly and with sharp attention to detail, ensuring that each article looks its best and meets the criteria of "scholarship." Since she became book review editor in 2011, Ann-Sofie Lönngren has improved the book review section enormously, making sure that all the latest work in our field is reviewed by the most qualified scholars. The board of the journal continues to offer tremendous support to us as editors and we are especially happy that experienced editors such as Ulla Manns and Janne Bromseth have been able to join in recent years. Lastly but above all, as always, our endless thanks to all of you who write, review, read, cite, circulate, teach, and support the journal. As always, all previous issues, along with other news, can be found on our website, www.lambdanordica.se.

Enjoy the reading!

JENNY BJÖRKLUND *and*
ULRIKA DAHL, CO-EDITORS

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