

From the Editors

DEAR READERS,

What does it mean to be a queer academic, to do queer academic work today? We might be inclined to argue that ours is by now a thriving, established field and that, in the Nordic region at least, we are also secured by a range of political rights, that perhaps we should relax, kick back, and enjoy the ride. In a recent study, however, sociologist Kerstin Sandell (2014) shows that lesbian and gay academics continue to experience marginalization, homophobia, and exclusion from heteronormatively organized socialities. Drawing on interviews with a "senior" and fairly established cohort of academics (among which the numbers of non-white and non-cisgendered bodies are horrifyingly scarce), Sandell proposes that despite policies and awareness-training most find that they are experiencing a kind of "conditional inclusion." The climate, it seems, is one where "sexual orientation" and gender expression is presumed to make "no difference," indeed struggles of recognition are understood to be "over" and yet these issues continue to matter on a range of levels. We are here, we are queer, and even if they have gotten used to it, it is clear that some bodies of flesh and knowledge rather than others remain sore and precarious points in many (academic) locations.

Let us face it – ours are gloomy times – and we do not mean that November darkness is upon us, or even the sense that we are so often "behind" with everything, including meeting publication deadlines. Rather, the current state of politics in Europe and in the Nordic region,

with growing numbers of populist, fascist, and nationalist-racist parties gives all kinds of reason for what Ann Cvetkovich (2012) has called political depression, even if the tens of thousands of protesters at each democracy-defending, antiracist, and feminist demonstration organized around Europe in the past year also gives us strength and inspiration. On a more intimate level, global academic restructuring and new public management increasingly shape the terms of everyday life and work in the house known as Academia. Pressures of funding, publishing, and rating are ordinary topics of conversation among colleagues, as are the pedagogical effects of reduced numbers of hours in the classroom and for grading and interaction, not to mention how to deal with the growing significance of often fraught discussions in social media and other virtual spaces outside of, or parallel to, the classroom. How to keep up?

As editors, we are weekly reminded of the pressures under which our colleagues work, as we receive emails from our authors and peer reviewers who, always with deep regret and apology, ask for extensions for their articles, reviews, and revisions. Some are subsumed in urgent activist political projects pertaining to a range of issues ranging from saving queer community spaces to meeting refugee needs and following the atrocities that we are witnessing in the southeast corner of our continent. Others are caught up defending basic feminist gains such as birth control, or protecting queer marriage and family rights, and many are concerned with challenging cis-normativity, ageism, and ableism in feminism and society at large.

Quite frequently our friends who are involved in ensuring that you, dear readers, get to read regular issues of cutting-edge work in LGBTQ studies in this journal are suddenly faced with an increased teaching or administrative load that they cannot say no to because they lack job security. While readers are happy that we are an independent open access journal, we are also frequently asked by authors where the journal ranks, as increasing numbers of scholars are pressured by their institutions to consider only "high-impact journals," and we are often asked to write letters indicating that their articles have been accepted or to explain the process of peer-review and professionalization of the journal. As editors

of *lambda nordica* we see all these concerns as part of the conditions of queer academic knowledge production and we remain mindful of the toll they take on our bodies of flesh and knowledge. Indeed, while we have been fortunate to get some support for the journal and continue to be committed to making *lambda nordica* a strong counterpoint to what is often called "the Anglo-American hegemony" of academic work, to do queer academic work in times of austerity, is no walk in the park. Each issue, as we have so often pointed out, is the result of a lot of labor and for this we are proud and grateful. The value it is given, the degree to which it makes a difference, depends on *you*. Read it, cite it, engage it, teach it. Contribute to the conversation. Remember that it is by working together that we can make a difference – even in these times of divide and conquer tactics and when everyone is encouraged to fend only for themselves.

Given this situation, one which we must continue to reflect upon and strategize around, we are extremely pleased to offer you, dear readers, our second issue of this year, also our second special issue with a distinct *geopolitical* focus. Under guest editorship of long-term activists and highly esteemed queer feminist scholars Gracia Trujillo and Ana Cristina Santos, this issue hones in on queer feminist activism in Southern Europe. Indeed, as Audre Lorde (1984) once wrote, survival is not an academic skill, and the framework for this issue is not only the conditions for academic labor, but also the urgent need for analyzing social mobilizations and resistances enacted by queer and feminist groups in what is a very unfriendly context in contemporary Southern Europe.

Cesare Di Felicianantonio analyzes the rise of queer activism in Italy through a geographical lens. He uses the perspective of the "geographies of social movements" and the feminist principle of "starting from the self" as the article is based on the author's own engagement in queer activism. Di Felicianantonio's analysis of the spatialities of queer activism centers on the (micro)scales of the body and the everyday places where the activists live, especially the universities and social centers. However, the article does not underestimate the roles of other scales such as cities and (trans)national networks, and places queer activism within wider

leftist projects of social and economic change.

Eduarda Ferreira gives an overview of lesbian activism in Portugal. Her point of departure is semi-structured interviews with lesbian activists but she also uses printed material and online debate, as well as her own experiences as a lesbian activist in order to address the accomplishments and needs of lesbian activism in Portugal. Ferreira concludes by arguing for the need to build bridges between lesbian activism and other social mobilizations such as feminist, trans, and queer movements in order to promote a political lesbianism that stresses gender as an important axis of difference that intersects all the others.

Pablo Pérez Navarro discusses the queerification of social movements, and in particular the 15-M movement, which has been key to the response and resistance to the austerity politics in Spain. He shows how queer activism, especially the activism of the work group Asamblea Transmaricabollo de Sol, contributes to articulate the discourse of the 15-M movement, as well as its strategies such as the use of performances. Queer activism thus plays an important role within the 15-M movement, and the article stresses the importance of the process of queerification of contemporary social movements.

Our second invited contributor to the *We're Here* section, Michela Baldo, addresses the queer body of the researcher in academia by taking the case of Zarra Bonheur as a point of departure. Zarra Bonheur is an Italian collective creation initiated by researcher and performer Rachele Borghi, who aims at turning research into performance. Borghi also did this in a talk at University of Bordeaux where she undressed while presenting to the audience, an action that caused major debate and almost prevented her from getting hired by the University of Sorbonne a few months later. Baldo uses the case of Zarra Bonheur/Rachele Borghi to reflect on the strong boundaries between activism and academia, and argues that we need to reconsider the place of the body, relationships, and emotions in academic spaces.

Put together, this is a strong set of papers that we are extremely proud to share with our readership. We firmly believe that we have everything to gain from dialogues with one another and from sharing tools and

comparing notes on our struggles and strategies. We remain convinced that the lessons learned from activists in a range of locations around the world need to be circulated and discussed. To that end, we are keen to hear more from readers and scholars around the world, from the far northern corners of the Nordic region to the places where people are fighting for their lives as we speak.

Looking ahead and bearing in mind the long time frames that we work with to produce each issue of our journal, we would like to share that we are currently well under way with our special issue on *Gender Trouble*, an issue on (queer) aging, and an issue on queer femininities. Up next however, are issues on queer kinship and reproduction, and more open issues. Thanks for your support, send us your ideas and feedback, and keep the fire burning.

Happy reading!

ULRIKA DAHL *and*
JENNY BJÖRKLUND, EDITORS

REFERENCES

- Cvetkovich, Ann. 2012. *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg: Crossing Press.
- Sandell, Kerstin. 2014. "Framgångsrika homosexuella akademiker: Ett villkorat innanförskap?". In *Att bryta innanförskapet: Kritiska perspektiv på jämställdhet och mångfald i akademien*, edited by Kerstin Sandell, 218–50. Göteborg: Makadam.