

# On Queer Funding, #metoo, and Giving Gay People a Bad Name

**AS WE PUT** the finishing touches on the last and open issue of 2017 in dark November, it seems that two discussions are peaking, at least where we are located. One is the annual one that erupts after the national funding bodies announce whose belabored grant applications have been granted, typically in Sweden that is 8–11% of all submitted proposals. The other one is the growing discussion about #metoo, focusing primarily, but not only, on (hetero)sexual harassment of women by men in major cultural and educational institutions and in society more broadly.

The former topic, the funding lottery, is frequently filled with collegial salutations and endorsements of those who have been successful. At the same time, as is tradition by now, it revisits an ongoing discussion, namely the overall funding of university research and the working conditions of both tenured and precarious researchers, and is often followed by a broader one of overall working conditions in academia. The latter issue, the #metoo campaign, has by now touched on almost all elitist institutions including universities, at least in Sweden, and has been described as “a new feminist wave” or as “the biggest movement since suffrage.” At the same time, as the media-frenzy turns into court

house, some worry that we run the risk of reducing a systemic problem, namely that of heterosexism, to the singling out and frequent vigilante sentences of individuals who have “behaved badly” or to yet another round of abstract and tame equal opportunities, gender equality, and diversity plans. For LGBTQ folks and other others, these questions are neither new nor quite that simple, even if some of us might experience sexism and sexual harassment in ways that are downplayed right now. What, we might ask, do these debates and the phenomena they concern have in common?

Funding announcement time conjures up a very real, ambivalent feeling connected to being rewarded/funded. For one thing, as many of us are acutely aware, with this seeming “lottery-like” funding system also comes a range of publication pressures. Not only are we expected to work fast and publish extensively, we must do so, we are sometimes told, in “top-ranking journals.” When we consider the manuscripts submitted to us, we note that many come from junior researchers: PhD candidates, master’s students, and early career scholars. We are as we frequently say, keen to support this work, especially as we note that these scholars are frequently offering new and emergent research topics and asking new questions. At the same time, we have been surprised in recent years at how often we have been told by accomplished researchers whose papers we have heard at conferences, that they are “not allowed” to publish in certain journals, let alone in some cases, to work on certain topics. We understand those constraints, they are real and can determine our futures, even as we think they must be questioned and most certainly *queered*. When have we ever been obedient and if we had been, would we have a field of research called LGBTQ studies? It seems unlikely. Our aim with *lambda nordica* continues to be to work both within and against these current structures and on our own terms. To that end, we believe in the importance of working with colleagues through using the true meaning of “peer review,” namely to be in dialogue and conversation, to support one another’s efforts and to help strengthen the field, and to offer a high-quality, accessible arena for publication of LGBTQ research. For this to work, we need to sign up to review, read, circulate,

and cite one another's work. *lambda nordica* is proud to say that we work with a large number of loyal, ambitious, and generous reviewers, without whom this journal would not function or reach its goals to become a journal that is central to ongoing discussions and developments of the field. And we do continue to need the support of the larger community, via endorsements, citations, and circulations of our articles and we are grateful to all those who support the journal in this way. First and foremost however, we need scholars at all levels to submit their work to us.

If the "funding lottery" conjures up ambivalence, some of it has to do with the question of whom and what gets funded. A conversation with a colleague who was successful this year, after having been turned down six times recently, illuminated how funding can also come with feelings of guilt. Said colleague explained that she always thinks of all those who did not succeed and feels more concerned for those who were unsuccessful, despite the hard work she did put into getting the funding. It is unfortunate, though not surprising, that a competitive funding system also has a tendency to foster envy and resentment among colleagues. While it is often hard to understand what factors drive the distribution of funding, it seems to us as editors that very few senior queer researchers in the region seem to be funded at the moment, in some cases, even to have jobs. Indeed, we cannot help but notice that after a few years in the early 2000s when queer researchers frequently (at least in retrospect) received funding, the number of empirical research projects concerned with LGBTQ-related questions in some form has gone down significantly. How are we to interpret this trend? Are we done with these topics? Is there nothing left of/in queer theory? What will happen with junior scholars who enter into our field? We are keen to hear from our readers and authors about how things are unfolding both around the Nordic region and more broadly in the international research field. How can we support and strengthen the field itself? To our minds, a journal of our own is an important site to do such work.

Speaking of rooms of our own, the question of research funding and support for LGBTQ research and how this relates to the development of this journal and a range of other sites of publication and discussions,

can perhaps be related to the current debates about #metoo. Who and what is this really about? What has been striking to those of us whose job it is to think about not only how compulsory heterosexuality, to use Adrienne Rich's (1980) famous formulation, shapes gendered power relations, but also about how colonialism, racism, economic inequalities, ableism, ageism, and other norms come into play, is the degree to which these debates seem to once again reassert heterosexism, especially against white women, as the universal question to rally around. As Rich's classic text on the lesbian continuum taught us, it may still be that it is counterintuitive to heterosexual women to choose solidarity with one another over identification with (their) men, and of course, we understand the revolutionary potential in this move if and when it does happen. But what are we to do with the homophobia, past and present, which so many lesbians, including academics, experience? Can we expect the same solidarity there? Regrettably, history has not provided us with too many examples of this.

In some spaces, #metoo has once again brought up the question of whether trans\* people's experiences should be included in this critique of sexism, even though we know that trans\* scholars, as well as actors, authors, and sports stars experience both traditional and oppositional sexism, to use Julia Serrano's (2007) terms. Furthermore, over the past thirty years, intersectional analyses and critiques of white dominated radical feminism have illuminated how the presumed "universal" experience of sexism shared by "all women" has a tendency to silence or subordinate both racism and the distinct forms of sexism experienced by scholars of color. Instead, what we are seeing is a certain degree of silencing and anxiety around the fact that this movement does not leave gay men and lesbians out of the possibility of being charged. Abuses of power and sexual harassment are not limited to men against women, needless to say. The point for us is not so much that we think the allegations against Kevin Spacey and other gay icons "give gay people a bad name" – but it seems that history has far too often taught us that LGBTQ people are more likely to be persecuted than straight men any time sexual politics are brought up. An intersectional analysis of power,

rather than some abstract liberal theory of equality, it seems to us, is what is needed in order to fully address these questions. And for that, one of the things we need is research into heterosexuality as well as into LGBTQ livelihoods and experiences.

None of these fairly obvious reservations concerning the current movement are meant to discount the horrifying stories that are now coming forward by the thousands across all cultural and political institutions and sectors of working life. It is only a gentle hope for us not to once again repeat divisive mistakes or create hierarchies of oppression or to stop addressing other issues. In the moment of writing this, we do not yet know what will come of this debate, but we can hope that it will provide us with more than a clean up of those particularly “bad” individuals or another “policy document.” Instead it can be another opportunity to look critically at the reproduction of hierarchy and the relationship between heterosexism and other forms of harassments and systemic inclusions and exclusions, including of scholars in our field. On this topic too, we welcome reflections from our readers and authors!

## **This Issue**

Despite the seemingly rather gloomy state of the world and of academic research funding, we note that the number of submitted manuscripts to the journal is slowly, but steadily, growing. We are extremely pleased to complete this year in a timely fashion. As we frequently state on these pages, it is a complex endeavor to put together an issue, working with a range of temporalities of authors, reviewers, editors, and editorial assistants. Each time it feels like a community effort!

The articles in this issue are, as all our open issues are, a display of the breadth and diversity of the field of queer studies, in this case featuring scholarship from several Nordic countries as well as from across disciplines.

Dag Heede traces the ancient myth of Antinous in two forgotten Danish plays from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Konrad Simonsen’s *Hadrian* (1899) and Palle Rosenkrantz’ *Antinous* (1909). The Antinous myth was a signifier for male homosexuality at the time, Heede shows,

and he further explores how this myth is brought into play in different ways in Simonsen's and Rosenkratz' plays. Still, despite their differences, both plays associate active homosexuality with death and thus incorporates homosexuality into a heteronormative logic according to which same-sex desire can only be tolerated as long as it is not acted upon.

Linda Sólveigar Guðmundsdóttir and Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir explore LGBTQ migrants' experiences of living in Iceland. They focus particularly on migrants from the Global South, and their study shows how the image of Iceland as LGBTQ friendly is counteracted by their interviewees' experiences of processes of racialization. Further, Guðmundsdóttir and Skaptadóttir discuss how the migrants adopt a bifocal world view, where they compare Iceland to their country of origin, as well as their senses of (un)belonging both in relation to their immigrant communities and the queer community. This article extends the theme of the previous double issue on postcolonial perspectives on contemporary queer livelihoods in Europe, one which we hope to publish more on in issues to come and we are especially delighted to feature Icelandic work in the journal.

We are happy to have a contribution to the journal from the field of psychology. As a recent and much discussed book by Tove Lundberg et al. (2017) on the topic attests, this is a field where there is a lot of "norm-critical" work to be done. Tove Lundberg, Lisa Nordlund, and Julia Narvola argue that psychology, especially as a clinical practice, can benefit from including feminist and norm-critical approaches. Ethical guidelines and recent policies underscore that psychologists should respect their clients' dignity and rights and take their sociocultural contexts into account. Lundberg, Nordlund, and Narvola discuss what implications these statements could have by investigating how psychologists can use norm-critical perspectives focusing on gender and sexuality in their practice. Their article includes a number of approaches that can be used in clinical practice in order to treat all clients with respect and take their sociocultural contexts into account.

This issue's *We're Here* essay is a multilingual essay co-written by a group of teachers and students at Uppsala University and UC Berkeley.

In the spring of 2017 they met in California to discuss the conditions for knowledge production in the current political situation, and the essay is one of the results of this meeting – a poetic reflection on what it means to be an academic working for social change in a time of increasing polarization, economic inequalities, and “post truth.”

We will be back in 2018 where first out is a double special issue that revisits the question of “Queer Readings,” followed by at least one issue focused on “what is new in LGBTQ studies.” Please submit your work to the journal, please let us know if you have themes or work you would like to see presented here. We want to take this opportunity once again to thank all our readers as well as all our reviewers, our editorial board, and of course, our authors. We wish you all a good end of this politically depressing year and as much light in the current darkness as you need to carry on.

**JENNY BJÖRKLUND** *and*  
**ULRIKA DAHL**, CO-EDITORS

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