

Kvinder, Køn og Forskning. (Women, Gender and Research)

Speech of Thanks. KRAKA prize award, 2016.

By Hilda Rømer Christensen, editor in Chief of Kvinder, Køn og Forskning

First of all, I would like to convey my most sincere thanks to you for awarding *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* the KRAKA prize in 2016. It is a big honor to receive this prize for both the present and past members of the editorial board and the many others who have been involved in the production of the journal over the years, and, of course, for myself as the editor-in-chief. It is also a great encouragement and boost for the journal to receive this prize precisely now, in 2016, when the journal is approaching its 25-year anniversary.

Gender research is still alive and kicking in the 21st century, and I have no fear that it may disappear or that the field will be imprisoned in a conceptual ivory tower in the near future. I make this statement despite recurrent reports of its death and dismissive descriptions of gender research. Among other things, it has been claimed that the field is too narrow, the preserve of a restricted clique, this being a main reason why gender research in Denmark has ended up in a marginalized and under-financed state.

While the 20th century has been called the age of political extremes, I would label the 21st century the age of gender extremes, with parallel and radical returns to both biology and tradition, as well as radical breaks from these same realms. This includes the application of new body technologies and the formation of new trans and gender identities, as well as new forms of kinship and family that are emerging all over the world. I see gender research, including research journals such as *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning*, taking a central position here. Current developments call for new interpretations and approaches, which have already surfaced in *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* in recent years in themed volumes on queer and transgender studies, family and kinship, and associated cultures and practices. All along the journal has kept an forward looking focus and presented new angles on well-known issues, such as equal pay, the labor market, the family and the welfare state. The journal has been regarded as an important pillar in the Danish community of gender researchers, with its long and outstanding history of co-operation between scholars across disciplines, institutions and universities.

The idea of launching an academic journal in Denmark, in what was then defined the discipline of Women's Studies, arose as far back as the late 1980s. At that time the vital channels of communication were the *Annual Book of Gender* research and a more popular magazine called "Æblebladet" – or Apple Magazine, a couple of its book covers can be seen here.

1988- 1991



Kvinder, Køn og Forskning was launched in 1992, together with *Foreningen for Kvindeforskning* (the Association for Women' Studies), its title later changed to *Foreningen for Kønsforskning* (The Association for Gender Research). Yet compared with the other Nordic countries, Denmark was a late-comer in this respect. In Norway, the *Tidsskrift for Kvinneforskning* was launched as far back as 1977 (it changed its title to *Tidsskrift for Kjønsforskning* in 2000). In Sweden, *Kvinnovetenskapligt Tidsskrift* started in 1980 (now called TGV or *Tidsskrift for Genusvetenskap*) and the Finnish journal *Naistukismu* or "Women's Research" both began in 1988. *Lamba Nordica*, now published in English, was launched in 1989, initially with a focus on sexuality, and today on LGBT and Queer Studies. In addition, there is *Nora, the Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, founded in 1992, and *Norma, the Journal for Masculinity Studies*, which was started as a Nordic journal in 2006 but now counts as an international journal. *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* still has the ambition to bring about closer Nordic co-operation in this field, for example, in the

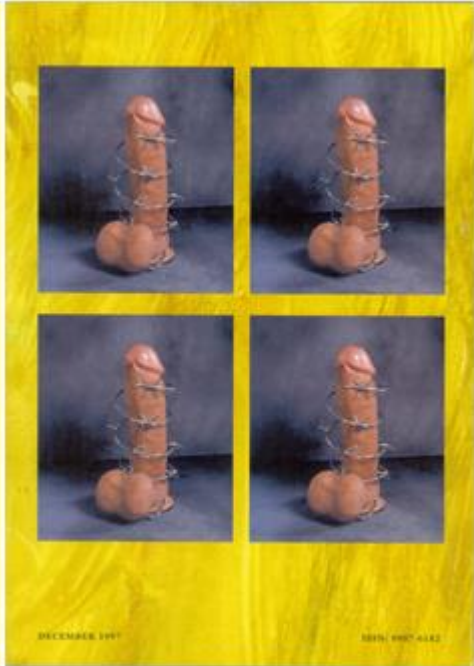
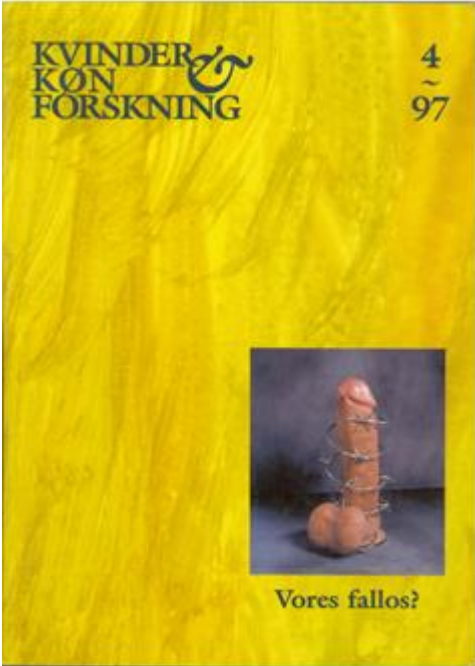
creation of a joint Nordic web portal to include all the Nordic Journals, and possibly an app in order to make Nordic voices and practices better known in the wider world.

Some of you might wonder why *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* has retained *kvinder* (women) in its title. This is an issue that from time to time has caused heated debates both within and outside the editorial board. Maybe it is time to reconsider the name again, or maybe not. Personally I am in favor of a certain continuity of names. For example, Denmark still features *Kvinden og Samfundet*, said to be the oldest women's journal in the world, having existed since the late 19th century. Maybe in a hundred years our descendants will celebrate us once again as the oldest scholarly journal. Also, it is useful to retain names for more practical reasons, not least for branding and bibliometrical reasons, search engines and the like.

Aesthetics and colors have been of vital importance to the spread of *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning*, and of course have also been subject to discussion and opposition. The journal started with what was then seen as an experimental layout set up by *Eksskolens trykkeri*, a famous avant-garde printing shop situated in Copenhagen.

In 1996 changes were made, with a new editor and a new enthusiastic and dedicated editorial board. At this point the journal also made a transfer to a cheaper printer, Specialtrykkeriet in Jutland. These changes were evident in brighter and more robust colors and with articles and aesthetics meant to provoke debate. One example is the themed volume "Vores penis?" (Our phallus?), which for me indicated a clear-cut return to the *Society for Cutting up Men* and the radical feminist tenets of the 1970s. Yet this was not what was intended at all by the editors of this thematic issue, who wanted instead to open up a discussion of blind spots in public images and studies of men's sexuality. Another path-breaking issue of the 1990s was themed *Køn, sprog, diskurs* (Gender, language, discourse), which focused on the poststructuralist break with earlier positions. The issue showed that the question was no longer *if* but *how* to handle constructionist positions; it was a destabilizing gesture mirrored in the title of one of the articles which compared the new epistemologies with "wet soap in soft-soaped fingers." More recently an issue on material feminism published in 2012 stimulated a heated debate in Danish newspapers on issues of power and epistemologies. I could list a range of other

cutting-edge and exciting volumes and moments, but time does not permit me to do so.



In this happy celebratory hour, let me also lessen the joy a little and list the challenges and delicate questions that are confronting journals such as *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* in these times of globalization, open science, new technologies and budget cuts, to name but a few.

“There are so many journals out there”, we are told; “Why not just let Danish scholars publish in them instead of keeping a small and expensive business running in times of change?”

“Why not go ‘all international’ and turn the journal into a genuine international journal in English – or Chinese if you like?”

“Why not turn the journal into an open-access channel and drop the printed version?”

“In the 21st century, the age of the death of distance in information and movement, is there still a need for a small journal located in a small and ‘insignificant’ nation state?”

These are challenges which concern us, the members of the editorial board. These are also challenges that concern the hands that still feed us: the deans of faculties and the management of the University of Copenhagen, as well as the Danish Research Council, who are eager to push us in new directions.

So far *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* has met these challenges through a middle-of-the-road strategy. The journal is issued in both a printed version and what is called delayed open access, which means that after one year one can download the articles for free via the Danish Royal Library’s open-access system. For the time being *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* appears in Danish and other Nordic languages and in at least one English-language issue a year. Ultimately the journal has also gone global, and many issues now act as melting pots and meeting places of Danish and international gender research.

A good example of all these multiple and cross-cutting ambitions is our latest annual volume for 2015, which focuses on Gender dynamics, Chinese and Nordic perspectives, on *Liv og Død* (Life and Death) and on Food. Together this latest

volume substantiates the ambition of *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* to be first movers, reflected in its presentation of cutting-edge theories, methodologies and themes in a variety of fields.

Excellent articles of high standard are not only to be found in so-called A-level journals, but also in journals at the level of *Kvinder, Køn and Forskning*, which is included in Danish, Nordic and European bibliometric lists. This represents emerging recognition even among top-level scholars. Proof of this is that several of the articles and research interviews first published by *Kvinder, Køn and Forskning* have been reprinted in international anthologies in English, German and Russian, and a translated volume is currently underway in Chinese! The journal has become a quality imprint and form of outreach which we intend to carry on and widen in the future.

Yet we must admit that our critics are right in claiming that it is expensive, time-consuming and from time to time also frustrating and irritating to run a research journal. Very probably all the many members of the various editorial boards over the past decades would agree. But I surely also speak for most of us in saying that all the problems are overshadowed by the excitement and thrilling moments that come with every new volume, finished, polished and published. The journal provides place and space for newcomers as well as “old rats”, and *Kvinder, Køn og Forskning* still provides one with a room of one’s own, so to speak.

In conclusion, then, it cannot be emphasized enough that the journal is the outcome of highly collective projects and processes, to which a lot of Danish, Nordic and also international scholars have contributed – as writers, editors, reviewers and proof-readers, who, together with our outstanding lay-out specialist, Anne Houe, have made continuity and quality possible. Last but not least, a journal is dependent on its readers – and here we owe *Foreningen*, the Association for Gender Research a big hug for keeping another ship on the sea. Our thanks go to you all.

To receive the KRAKA prize here today is a great honor. Cordial thanks go to Else Højrup, one of our “grand old ladies”, who provided the funds for the KRAKA prize, as well as to the KRAKA prize committee for nominating us.

I would now like to ask all the present and former members of the editorial board and of staff of the Co-ordination for Gender Studies to stand up and come to the stage to take part in the celebration.