

EDITORIAL

THIS FIRST ISSUE of 2023 is being published at the end of the academic term, just as the annual Pride season and summertime are kicking off in earnest in the Nordic region and beyond. Many, if not most of us, are at this point exhausted, but perhaps also expectant, hopeful, and optimistic about upcoming moments and pockets of celebration, protest, rest, coming-together, support, sharing good energies, building collective tools, and recharging before the next seasonal cycle of daily rut inevitably begins yet again – alternatively about facing the unknown future after endings and closures prior.

Times are difficult and unpredictable, both inside and outside the academy, for queer and LGBTQI+ research and people, for several reasons, many of which are discussed in our previous issue on anti-gender politics and queer theory. Hence, we wanted to begin this year, this new issue and this editorial by reflecting on the possibilities and actualities of positive, generative events that can stimulate the political and social potentials for scholarly engagements, theorising and world-making that are distinctively intersectional, trans-national, and about building expansive and resilient communities (see Tudor 2023, 291).

This spring, we have had the pleasure of organising and taking part in several conferences and seminars in Norway, Sweden, and continental Europe. Taken together these experiences have brought home to us the fact that it really is in times of great struggle and difficulty that creativity and solidarity really come to fruition.

In their capacity as the 2022 Kerstin Hesselgren Visiting Professor, funded by the Swedish Research Council, Jack Halberstam has attended several events in Sweden this spring, delivering public lectures, teaching classes, and participating in symposia. The symposium *Thinking Wildly with Jack Halberstam*, that took place in Uppsala in March, featured a conversation between queer scholars that addressed the status quo of queer studies at this time, aided by Halberstam's theoretical contributions (e.g., Halberstam 2020). One of the departures for the discussion was the importance of broader and more unruly understandings of academic disciplines, and of the willingness of academics to explore and integrate knowledge and experience from outside the known paths of academia, and to respond to ongoing crises of structural racism, nationalist necropolitics and state politics of abandonment. Another event, a public plenary panel at Gothenburg University, titled *Abiding by the Rules Will Not Be Enough: Challenging Anti-gender Politics in Academia and Beyond*,¹ similarly offered a platform for generative conversation and knowledge building on a topic that overall appears exhausting and wholly despairing. Halberstam's subsequent lecture, *Broken beyond Repair: Queer Theories of the Broken*, challenged the audience to think about brokenness as harbouring the potential for radical, transformative change, and engaging with afro-pessimism and anarchist thought.

Even more expressively focused on community-building beyond the confines of the academy and national borders, was the second edition of the *Queerfeminist Studies in South Eastern Europe International Conference*, in late April.² Hosted by the Feminist Autonomous Centre for Research (FAC) in Athens, Greece, it was a lesson in genuine, grounded, collaborative organising to engender intersectional solidarities across borders and communities of queer and feminist research and activism. It should however be noted that several would-be conference guests from Turkey were absent, having been barred from leaving the country. Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine constituted an omnipresent frame in several other participants' work on human rights and justice for gender, sexual, and racialized minorities in the Eastern European region.

This Issue

This issue marks a change in the editorial team as we part ways with Evelina Liliequist, who in an excellent capacity has acted as our editorial secretary for the last two years. We wish Evelina all the best in her endeavours as a postdoctoral fellow at Umeå University. As Evelina leaves the editorial team, we are joined by a new editorial assistant, Anna Bark Persson, who is already providing much needed support in the preparation of future issues.

The three research articles in this issue are indicative of the methodological and theoretical scope of contemporary queer studies – they range from digital ethnographic to discourse analysis of media material and archival research. The double bind of visibility is a common theme in all of them.

Mons Bissenbakker and Tobias Raun's article, "Transbekymringens cisnormative økonomi: Nye grænser for køn i diskurser om behandling af trans-børn", analyses the affective economies of "concern" in Danish mainstream media, brought on in the wake of heightened trans visibility but also the orchestrated attempts to question the scientific foundation of trans health care. The authors take departure in what they argue is a re-orientation of concern, away from concern over the inaccessibility of trans health care – with long waiting lines and rigorous gate-keeping – to concern over trans health care not being up to standard in terms of scientific evidence. Through the analysis of concern discourses, the authors scrutinize the cisnormative structures that underpin not only this specific re-orientation but mediated discourses on trans subjectivities as a whole. They conclude that the so-called "trans-inclusive" approach that has been established as an alternative to previous modes of trans governing, is in fact a new take on cisnormative readings of trans subjectivities.

In their article, "Jag söker gemenskap: Svenska sextidningar som transmöjliggörande rum under 1960-talet," Signe Bremer brings historical material from erotic magazines to the fore, and examines the narratives of gender non-conforming lives that these magazines featured. The article analyses reader letters and editorial responses to the

letters, with a special focus on how notions of temporality and futurity shape negotiations of trans desires and experiences. Bremer argues for an expansive reading of this, thus far, little-studied genre of materials, as a way of mapping the pasts and potential futures of trans visibility and community.

The third research article, Jenny Sundén's "Tracing Sexual Otherness in Sweden: The Opacity of Digital Kink", follows a different vein of queer scholarship: studies of queer intimacies and sexualities. Drawing on digital ethnography with members of *darkside.se*, and on material that tracks the changes in how kink has been enacted and negotiated since the inception of the platform, Sundén explores "ideas of sexual normalcy and sexual otherness in a Swedish context" with a focus on visibility and lingering stigma. Sundén argues for "opacity" as a frame through which we can understand the tensions between revealing and concealing, openness and secrecy, and resist the idea of public visibility as the only route to legitimacy of sexual otherness.

Visibility is thematized in this issue's essay, authored by Olov Kriström. In "Bokbål och höjda hyror: Queerhistoriens villkor sedda genom en bibliotekskatalog", Kriström meditates on queer histories and futures through a walkthrough of the library catalogue of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft in Berlin, ninety years after the library, built from the private collection of sexologist Magnus Hirschfeldt, was raided and burned by the Nazi regime on May 6, 1933. As one of the founders of QRAB – The Archives and Library of the Queer Movement, housed by the Regional State Archives in Gothenburg, Sweden – Kriström tarries by book burning as a symbol of the history of repression of non-normative expressions of sex, gender and sexuality. He asks what such a symbol might say about the state of queer historiography: where books are burned, they have also already been written, collected, catalogued and housed. What are the conditions for queer history and historiography in contemporary times?

This issue concludes with a review section containing two reviews of recently defended dissertations and a review of a collection of letters from the turn of the twentieth century. The review of Raili Uibo's doc-

toral dissertation, *And I don't know who we really are to each other: Queers doing close relationships in Estonia* (2021) is written by Ana Cristina Santos, and details a work at the intersection of gender studies and queer and kinship studies. With its mix of materials, the dissertation describes the complex negotiations of intimacy, visibility and opacity.

Tiina Rosenberg reviews Ellen Suneson's doctoral dissertation, *The Art and Politics of Uncomfortable Attachments* (2022), on how feminist and queer art is conceptualized as subversive – a type of political resistance. In dialogue with queer theorists such as José Esteban Muñoz, on hope and political pessimism, and Sara Ahmed, on the role of affect, Suneson explores how feminist and queer feminist art historians interpret specific works of art as radical and emancipatory, offering hope of a different world.

Per Esben Svelstad reviews a collection of letters exchanged between conservative Swedish-Norwegian civil servant and jurist Ebbe Hertzberg and Danish jurist and historian Poul Andræ at the turn of the twentieth century, called “*De har brudt isen her i Norden*”. *Ebbe Hertzberg: Brev til Poul Andræ 1892–1912* (2022) and edited by Runar Jordåen. The letters give readers a unique insight into how same-sex oriented men of high social and academic standing navigated contemporary and conflicting discourses of same-sex desires in sexology, medicine, law and politics. Published in 2022, marking the Skeivt kulturår (The year of queer culture) in Norway, the collection is a testament to the complexity of queer history and presence.

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LITERATURE

Halberstam, Jack. 2020. *Wild Things: The Reorder of Desire*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Tudor, Alyosxa. 2023. The Anti-feminism of Anti-trans Feminism. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 30(2): 290–302.

NOTES

1. <https://www.gu.se/evenemang/abiding-by-the-rules-will-not-be-enough-challenging-anti-gender-politics-in-academia-and-beyond>.
2. QueerFemSEE International Conference | Queer and Feminist Studies in South-eastern Europe 2 – April 28–30, 2023, Athens (wordpress.com).