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A Note from the Guest Editors

Against reductive notions of commonality in Southeastern Europe (SEE), and essentialist notions of gender and sexuality, how can we queer the affinities that bind us together? This special issue includes work presented at the second international conference on Queer and Feminist Studies in Southeastern Europe (QueerFemSEE), which took place on 28–30 April 2023 in Athens, at the Feminist Autonomous Centre for Research (FAC).¹ The conference aimed to create a network of queer feminist solidarity across and against national borders in SEE. We sought to resist erasure, silencing, misrepresentation, tokenism, assimilation: to replace lost memory and counter the disappearance of queer histories. We sought community and connection: to listen to and learn from each other, have difficult conversations, disagree, laugh, and eat together. Queer feminist researchers working within and beyond academic institutions, activists and community organizers, and artists, came together for three unforgettable days in Athens. That ephemeral community and the relationalities we collectively created echo in the pages of this special issue.

Community is at the core of Angie Pantzartzidi and Gregory Pritsas' article. Drawing on challenges in building up and maintaining the students' union for gender and equality PHYL.IS in Greece, they show how such organic communities manage to create queer and feminist autonomous spaces while also pinpointing the vital role of having "uncomfortable" internal discussions.

Andreea Moise's contribution carefully looks at queerness and exile from a literary angle which intersects so many absences when it comes to queer culture in Southeastern Europe. Constructing its arguments and analysis starting from a play by Romanian-American writer Domnica Rădulescu, Moise reflects upon the process of queering exile, home, and finally, belonging itself.

Sofia Bemeza's article maps out the multiple transnational dimensions and national (Greek) reflections of those producing anti-gender discourse – from right-wing parties, conservative think-tanks and alt-right networks to

¹ The inaugural QueerFemSEE was held in Bucharest, Romania in 2017 and resulted in the special issue of *Feminist Critique: East European Journal of Feminist and Queer Studies*, guest eds. Ramona Dima and Simona Dumitriu, no. 4, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.52323/fc4>.

the church, ethnopatriarchy and the liberal control of reproduction. It also underlines local queer and feminist reactions, resistance and solidarization in the face of rising fascisms.

Simona Dumitriu looks at belonging from a queer angle and deconstructs the term through personal experiences woven with feminism, religion, queer activism and stories from the Scandinavian art scene. This essay traces the lines of how queer SEE migrants might find in each other's common struggles a sense of belonging whilst suggesting that the whole idea of belonging must be continuously scrutinised and adapted.

Sometimes, the violent realities in the region function as a strong catalyst for feelings, which trigger both activist responses and a sense of continuing the work and honouring the memory of people lost to border violence. It is how Eirini Dafermou sensibly constructs her intervention, starting from the femicide of three Afghan migrant women in 2018 which took place in Evros, on the Greek-Turkish border.

This issue is the result of specific sensitivities and experiences within and beyond SEE and offers ways of re-thinking how area-specific studies can enter into dialogue with different realities, activisms and ways of involvement in academia. It reflects some of the many important contributions punctuating the second edition of *QueerFemSEE* and makes us wonder, fear, and worry about so many futures. We hope to contribute with this conference and its proceedings to an archive of queer feminist resistance and commemoration.