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Editorial

AS THE FIRST weeks of the fall term slip by, marked by the lingering intensity of late summer heat, the microcosm that is academia and higher education could benefit from some introspection, to find its footing in the midst of genocide, war, climate crisis, and neoliberal capitalism. There are ample signs that such reflection is overdue, not least the frequent invocation of academic freedom as a shield for avoiding condemnation of the Israeli government's ongoing genocide in Palestine. In early September, Israeli scholar Maya Wind gave lectures at several universities and student-led encampments in the Nordic countries on her book *Towers of Ivory and Steel: How Israeli Universities Deny Palestinian Freedom* (2024). In her detailed account of how Israeli universities are complicit in Israel's settler-colonial project, Wind argues that meaningful discussions about academic freedom are impossible – not only in Israel, where critical scholarly voices are suppressed, but globally – unless we acknowledge and respond to the scholasticide – the systematic destruction – of Palestinian higher education as a key aspect of the ongoing conflict.

"The image of dark academe is that of a rotting cadaver," Jeffrey R. Di Leo writes in the newly published *Dark Academe: Capitalism, Theory, and the Death Drive in Higher Education* (2024), citing Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacres et simulation*. Di Leo, a professor of English and Philosophy, argues that "dark academe" is that which obstructs "democratic education and critical citizenship," identifying neoliberalism as the main,

DOI: 10.34041/ln.v29.950
lambda nordica **2–3/2024**

though not the only, culprit. Reading Di Leo in dialogue with the queer and Black studies-centered anthology *Queer Sharing in the Marketized University* (2022) is valuable. Written in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, the anthology addresses the long-standing yet intensified tensions that emerge when feminist and queer scholars fail to attend to codes of responsibility, recognition, and sharing, both within and beyond the academy. One of the chapters, "Wages Against Inclusion! Full Inclusion Now! Towards a Queer Manifesto Against LGBT+ Inclusion in Universities," is a manifesto against LGBT+ inclusion in higher education, a call to arms against "the harm to queer students and workers caused by exploitative diversity work in universities" (Breeze & Leigh 2022). Such introspection, that centers on what queer theory and practice hold as promises of a different way of learning, knowing and living, is as urgent as it is challenging.

A more light-hearted version of queer introspection, that takes its departure in the creation of a breathing pocket outside of academia, can be found in the *We're Here* of this open issue of *lambda nordica*. The *We're Here* is a conversation between Makz Bjuggfält and Lou Mattei, two of the people behind the Sweden-based Prisma Literary Award that celebrates disruptive and queer literature in the Nordic countries. Their conversation spans from the dreams and desires that lit the spark that is now Prisma to the challenges and critiques they bring with them in the development of the project. It is a text full of joy and anticipation, and it is a text that begs the question of what it means to be in dialogue with an imagined, and actual, community of queers.

The issue opens with Rikke Andreassen's reckoning with a common trope in queer and LGBT studies: the lack of historical sources that can provide insights into the everyday life of people with same-sex desires and practices. In "Sex and Women in the Archive and New Imaginaries of Female Same-Sex Relations in the Late Nineteenth Century," Andreassen turns not to accounts of same-sex relationships found in the love letters and diaries of the upper and middle classes, but to medical sources detailing state-regulated statutory prostitution in Denmark – sources populated by women living in financial poverty. Inspired by

decolonial and queer theory on the archives of the marginalized and dispossessed, Andreassen makes room for the explicit descriptions of carnal relations between women, as well as the silences and absences in the archival material. Andreassen argues that sexual relationships between women were understood, by their nineteenth-century contemporaries, as widely practiced, and that they constitute "the contributions of marginalised individuals to our common LGBTQ history."

Mariya Levitanus and Polina Kislitsyna explore how narratives of emigration play out in queer post-Soviet identities, based on two studies conducted in Russia and Kazakhstan. Their article "'I love my country even if it does not love me back': Queer (Inner) Emigration Narratives in Kazakhstan and Russia" traces the various ways in which emigration – imagined as something that might be actualized in the future, or understood and lived as a an unattainable fantasy – impacts queer life narratives and everyday experiences. Differences can be traced through the intersections of gender, sexuality, class, and national identity, and the authors emphasize that such differences are important to take into account for anyone interested in understanding the dynamics of queer emigration. They suggest that the concept of inner emigration may be particularly useful in postcolonial contexts.

In the article "Intimate Partner Violence Victimization and Perpetration among Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals: Evidence from Norway," Esra Ummak, Ezgi Toplu-Demirtas and Reidar Schei Jessen study the phenomena of intimate partner violence among lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Norway. Against the backdrop of research on experiences of intimate partner violence among heterosexuals, the authors explore the prevalence of, and sexual orientation differences in, psychological aggression, physical assault, and sexual coercion perpetration and victimization. In addition to analyzing the empirical material, the authors make an important methodological contribution to the Nordic field of study, as this is one of the first studies to test the Revised Conflict Tactics Scale on Norwegian data.

Vilja Jaaksi and David Fong both engage with queer cultural expressions, though of quite different sorts. Jaaksi's "Managing Unpredictabil-

ity: The Intimate Public of Finnish Trans Memes on Instagram" analyzes the affective impact of Finnish trans memes, drawing on interviews and media diaries. In critical dialogue with Lauren Berlant's notion of intimate publics, Jaaksi argues that the discussed memes works both as a critique of social structures and as the glue that binds together "an intimate public, within which feelings of vulnerability can be collectively alleviated." The article is a contribution to the growing field of study of memes as a popular cultural phenomenon with political potential, and marks an increased interest in memes produced and consumed by marginalized communities. David Fong's "'Be a man!': Embodied Auto-Narratives of the Effeminate Body in Opera" is an autoethnographic exploration of the violence experienced by a young opera singer in training. Through embodied writing, and in dialogue with queer and Deleuzian theory, Fong describes the harmful effects of the "be a man" discourse, and situates these experiences in a historical and scholarly context, with the aim of opening up new paths in opera and opera studies.

The issue closes with Makz Bjuggfält and Lou Mattei's *We're Here*, discussed above, and two reviews: one of Rebeka Põldsam's doctoral dissertation *"Why are we still abnormal?!" History of Discourses on Non-Normative Sex-Gender Subjects in Estonia* (2023), and of one recently published book, *Gender Without Identity* (2023) by Avgi Saketopoulou and Ann Pellegrini.

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