Abstract
from introduction article by Judit Takács and Anna Borgos

This special issue maps out real and symbolic spaces of women who are attracted to women in Eastern Europe, and highlights some of the challenges they face. One of the main themes emerging from the articles is that constructing spaces for women outside the heterosexual mainstream can be a useful political strategy in societies where non-conventional sexual interests, attractions, and gender expression have discriminative consequences. All of the eight articles in this special issue represent different voices, while demonstrating that there are many similar tendencies concerning the main goals and difficulties of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and lesbian movements of the region, in terms of legal and social developments related to the most heated issues of same-sex marriage and parenting on the one hand, and the violent attacks against pride marches and political backlash on the other.

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1. **Voicing Women in Eastern Europe—An Introduction**, 
   Judit Takács (Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (IS-HAS), Budapest),  
   Anna Borgos (Research Institute for Psychology, Budapest, Hungary)  
   pages 265-270

   ➔ Abstract above.

2. **Post-Communist Lavender Menace: Lesbians in Mainstream East European Film**  
   Kevin Moss (Russian Department, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont, USA),  
   Mima Simić (Independent Scholar, Zagreb, Croatia),  
   pages 271-283

   The article examines four films—Károly Makk’s *Egymásra nézve* (Another Way, Hungary, 1982),  
   Maja Weiss’s *Varuh meje* (Guardian of the Frontier, Slovenia 2002), Dalibor Matanić’s *Fine mrtve djevojke* (Fine Dead Girls, Croatia, 2002), and Dragan Marinković’s *Diši duboko* (Take a Deep Breath, Serbia, 2004)—as post-communist or dissident national allegories. In all of these films by straight directors the lesbians represent a metaphorical threat to the hetero/sexist national order, but they are unfortunately little more than simulacra. They can be emotionally real (and fun for the straight male audience to ogle), but that ultimately works against them, because instead of representing real lesbian communities, they still have to affirm the stereotype of tragic lesbian destiny straight audiences find comforting.

3. **Body or Soul: Representing Lesbians in Post-Soviet Russian Culture**  
   Brian James Baer (Institute for Applied Linguistics, Kent State University, USA)  
   pages 299-310

   This article contributes to recent scholarship on censorship and translation by exploring the phenomenon of productive censorship, or the artful evasion of censorship restrictions by authors and their readers, in the context of Soviet Russia. Specifically, the work of three homosexual-identified literary translators – Mikhail Kuzmin, Ivan Likhachev and Gennadii Shmakov – is examined in order to demonstrate how, under conditions of institutionalized homophobia, they were able to circulate translations of texts that were open to queer interpretations. Queer readings of works by such authors as William Shakespeare, Charles Baudelaire, Constantine Cavafy and James Baldwin were enabled by a variety of factors including biographical information about the source text author, sub-cultural interpretive traditions, and access to alternative interpretations, often from abroad. One effect of successful evasion of this kind is to establish alternative interpretive communities within the official literary culture.

4. **Kinging in Hungarian Lesbian Culture**  
   Andrea P. Balogh  
   (Institute of English and American Studies, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary)  
   pages 299-310

   This article looks at the position of the drag king in Hungarian lesbian culture. It focuses on *Bandage, Socks and Facial Hair* (2006), a documentary about a drag king workshop. The film documents the historical moment when the Hungarian workshop participants encounter the
drag king as a lesbian tool for parodying and repoliticizing mainstream masculinity. I examine the ways in which the participants interpret their performances of masculinity and the film negotiates heteronormativity. I argue that the political merits of the film can be spelled out by reading the participants’ (trans)gender politics from the perspective of the cultural specificities of post-socialist Hungary.

5. **From Globalization to Europeanization—And Then? Transnational Influences in Lesbian Activism of the Western Balkans**

Irene Dioli (Osservatorio Balcani Caucaso, Rovereto, Italy / University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy) pages 311-323

The article looks at transnational dynamics in lesbian activism in the Western Balkans, with particular focus on Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, over the last two decades. Based on 30 interviews with activists from local and international feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT), and queer organizations, the article discusses the role played by transnational contacts in the development of lesbian activism in the region and the related issues arising within the conflicting relationship between the “East” and the “West,” with special attention to trends related to international intervention and cooperation, globalization, and Europeanization.

6. **Polish Queer Lesbianism: Sexual Identity Without a Lesbian Community**

Alicja Kowalska (Graduate School for Social Research, Warsaw, Poland) pages 324-336

The article investigates the state of Polish lesbianism. It presents the history of lesbian groups, lesbian culture, and community in Poland. It puts social and political activism of lesbians in the context of the growing feminist movement and strong nationalism in Poland. Showing the important role of the Internet communication and the way in which queer philosophy is understood in this country, it investigates sexual identity formation and the process through which lesbian communities develop in Poland. The analysis of Polish lesbianism confirms the constructionists’ theory that sexual identity formation highly depends on cultural and political circumstances.

7. **“I was a Dark Horse in the Eyes of Her Family”: The Relationship of Cohabiting Female Couples and Their Families in Hungary**

Rita Béres-Deák (Gender Studies, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary) pages 337-355

This article focuses on the relationship of female couples with their parents, siblings, and other relatives by exploring various patterns of coming out and family attitudes. After reviewing existing literature in this field, the article explores the extent to which my interviewees are out to their family, the reasons for and the possible complications about staying in the closet. Next the parents’ reactions are discussed, which range from complete rejection through not admitting the truth to themselves to acceptance. Parents find it difficult to come out about their daughter to their immediate environment, as they fear prejudice and being blamed for her sexual orientation. This can also lead to conflict and alienation between parents and daughter. Accepting a person’s sexual orientation and relationship, however, is only the first step toward her full integration into the family. Full inclusion in the family is only present when the person's
same-sex partner is treated as kin to the same extent as an opposite-sex partner would be. This is demonstrated in a variety of ways, such as the names used (especially by the couple's children) and the system of obligations and favors constituting a formative element of kinship. There might be conflicts, however, when the two partners have different backgrounds and thus different expectations of family relations.

8. **Czech Lesbian Activism: Gay and Lesbian Parental Rights as a Challenge to Patriarchal Marriage**
   Simona Fojtová (Women's Studies, Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky, USA)
   pages 356-383

   In their advocacy for the legal recognition of same-sex relationships during the 1990s, prominent Czech gay rights activists focused only on issues of sexuality and did not question the essentialist understanding of gender, especially in parenting. Consequently, even though the Czech Republic legalized registered partnerships for gays and lesbians in 2006, legal barriers now exist regarding parental rights for same-sex couples, who are prohibited from adopting children and accessing reproductive technology once they register with the state. This article examines a rising, new wave of Czech lesbian activism that has focused on gaining legal parental rights for registered same-sex couples. While lesbian activists were disempowered in terms of their public visibility as well as political involvement during the 1990s, the recent growing prominence of lesbian groups has been enabled by their stronger political focus and organizational coherence. Analyzing the lesbian activists' strategies, I show not only how lesbian activism can advance the public debate about traditional gender roles, but also how lesbian activism can strengthen the critique of the ideology of marriage.

9. **Female Same-Sex Families in the Dialectics of Marginality and Conformity**
   Ana Marija Sobočan (Faculty for Social Work, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia)
   pages 384-405

   The article discusses the continuum between the personal and public roles of families, where two women parent together in Slovenia, against the background of the current marginal position of same-sex families in regard to rights and symbolic status, in claiming the position of same-sex parenting in the context of family models as well as in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movement agendas. It briefly outlines the situation in Slovenia in regard to homosexuality, and then moves to discussing the outcomes of the processes and experiences of lesbian mothers that are transgressing the borders of parental and homosexual identities. These outcomes are: “justifying” and demonstrating the “appropriateness” of family life in non-heteronormative families, constructing strategies for claiming a joint parental identity, and building a sense of belonging by forming a community that is both homosexual and parental. The article draws extensively on the lived (motherhood) experiences and stories of families where parents are two female partners and reads them as negotiating a constantly shifting place between a marginal status in the broader society and a conformist character in the perspective of their non-normative sexuality. In the article, it is recognized that same-sex families in Slovenia are entering the political agenda and are thus involved in transforming both contexts—the family and homosexual identities.

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