

# **"Athens as Setting, Character, Teacher and Muse – A Lecture"**

**Tuesday, 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

**13:00-14:00**

**Library of the School of Philosophy Auditorium**

**Hellenic Association for the Study of English (HASE)**

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**Department of English Language and Literature, NKUA**

Athens is a Literary Marvel: sprawling and interconnected, a hybrid of cultural voices and signifiers, a place steeped in its own complex history, a locus of resistance and struggle and beauty, and of course a birthplace of epic storytelling. This modern and ancient city has been the inspiration to my writing for decades. In fact I began my writing career in Athens when I was twenty working at a hotel across from Larissis Train Station. I credit the city with teaching me how to write—the sounds, sights, smells, cadences of the day, people, traffic, ruins, and spirit of Athens made me a writer. And the setting of this city is nearly its own character in my work. How can we as creative writers use the lucid details of the world around us to make our work richer? How do we see and imagine the landscapes around us? How do we express the complexity of a place in words? In this lecture I will touch on the sensory experiences necessary for crafting novels and short stories and also my experiences as a creative writer: my journey from writing in a notebook in a tiny room near a train station seven thousand miles from my home, to publishing four award winning novels, writing for the New York Times, and Paris Review, and ultimately returning to Athens to live and write. Where my critically acclaimed novel RUNNING—based on my experiences here as an adolescent—is now being published in Greek.



Cara Hoffman is the author of *Running*, a New York Times Editor's Choice, an Esquire Magazine Best Book of the Year, and an Autostraddle Best Queer and Feminist Book of the Year. It is forthcoming in Greek from Guttenberg. She first received national attention in 2011 with the publication of the feminist classic *So Much Pretty* which sparked a national dialogue on violence and retribution and was named a Best Novel of the year by the New York Times Book Review. Her second novel, *Be Safe I Love You*, was nominated for a Folio Prize, named one of the Five Best Modern War Novels by the Telegraph UK, and won a Sundance Institute Global Film Making Award. A MacDowell Fellow and an Edward Albee Fellow, she has written for the New York Times, The Paris Review, Bookforum, Bennington Review, The Daily Beast, Rolling Stone, Teen Vogue, Stylist, Elle, Marie Claire, Brooklyn Rail and NPR. She has been a visiting lecturer at Oxford University, St. Johns, and Columbia and is a professor of creative writing and literature at Goddard College. Her debut book of non-fiction, on the philosophy of LEAVING, is forthcoming from Duke University Press. She lives in New York City and Athens, Greece.