Can We Think Homonationalism in Homophobic Eastern Europe?

Anna Rekhviashvili

This article explores the hesitance of scholars of Eastern Europe to engage with the concept of homonationalism for understanding Eastern European queer realities. I do not argue that engaging homonationalism is essential for such an understanding. Rather, I analyze how refusing the usefulness of homonational critique forecloses possibilities for understanding Eastern Europe. I argue that this refusal limits possibilities for critical analysis, and provides a partial and essentializing understanding of Eastern European homophobias. It also forecloses critique of the strategies of LGBTQ actors, and their complicity with Eastern European white nationalisms and the racialized discourses of modernity and progress.

Introduction

Denouncing homonationalism as a "Western" concept not helpful for understanding Eastern European queer realities has become habitual not only in Eastern European activist spaces but in scholarly writings as well. Except for few examples of homonational analysis of the politics of sexuality within Eastern European states (Woodcock 2011; Kahlina 2015; Slootmaeckers 2017), homonationalism is usually mentioned in the works on sexuality or LGBTQ activism only to be refuted as irrelevant or inadequate (Kulpa 2011, 2014a; Moss 2014; Szulc 2016; Leksikov and Rachok 2020; Stella and Nartova 2015).[1] Recently, the reasons for this disengagement were elaborated and explored in more detail by Roman Leksikov and Dafna Rachok (2020) in a chapter titled "Beyond Western Theories: On the Use and Abuse of 'Homonationalism' in Eastern Europe." By exploring the case of Ukraine as paradigmatic of the rest of the Eastern European states as well, Leksikov and Rachok (2020) claim that a critique of local LGBTQ activism through a homonational lens is a colonial move of applying Western theory to the non-Western world. Homonationalism, a concept which was conceived as a critique of the politics of sexuality within post-9/11 America, they argue, "when taken out of its context and pasted onto the realities of the Second World, [...] is of limited explanatory and theoretical use" (Leksikov and Rachok 2020, 30).

Such critiques of the applicability of homonationalism only appear when the analysis concerns specific Eastern European LGBTQ movements, communities, and their strategies—for example LGBTQ attempts at negotiating their space within their national communities (Kulpa 2014b; Szulc 2016), organizing pride parades, or employing EU-supported human rights rhetoric (Moss 2014; Leksikov and Rachok 2020). However, when the critical gaze is directed towards the politics of the broadly conceived West or more specifically Western Europe, the usefulness of homonationalism is never questioned. In fact, an analysis of homonationalism has informed much rich and prolific work about hierarchical divisions between Europe's East and West (Klapeer 2017; Kulpa 2014a; Slootmaeckers 2019; Ammaturo 2015; Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; Ulbricht, Sircar, and Slootmaeckers 2015). These works explore and detail the ways in which

Europe's or the European Union's legal, cultural, or social discourses construct West European moral and civilizational superiority by depicting Europe as a "beacon of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) friendliness in the world" (Slootmaeckers 2019, 2). However, this construction solidifies Europe's internal divisions, within which Western Europe defines the essence of European values and Eastern Europe is Orientalized as inherently homophobic and therefore not quite European (Ammaturo 2015; Kulpa 2014a; Colpani and Habed 2014). Even those scholars who were pivotal in developing the critique of Western Europe's homonationalist politics and practices and their role in the construction of Eastern European "backwardness"[2] find the concept inapplicable for thinking about LGBTQ communities within their own countries (for example, see Kulpa 2014a and Kulpa 2014b, but also Szulc and Smets 2015 and Szulc 2016).

In this article I want to explore such refusals to engage with the concept of homonationalism for thinking about not-fully-Western and non-hegemonic Eastern European spaces and LGBTQ actors. I am interested in understanding what analytic opportunities the act of mentioning and then immediately dismissing homonationalism enables and forecloses for the scholars of Eastern Europe. What kind of critiques does homonationalism offer for understanding Eastern European spaces and why do the scholars of Eastern Europe refuse to take them up? By exploring these questions, I by no means aim to argue that homonationalism is the only analytic tool available for scholars of Eastern Europe to make sense of the complex entanglements of nationalisms and sexualities within their own national contexts. In fact, I share their concerns over the problematic tendencies in most theorizations of homonationalism to focus on the West, and offer only limited tools for unpacking social and political realities within non-hegemonic contexts. Or as decolonial scholars would say, they engage in "Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism" that produces knowledge "*about* the subaltern rather than studies *with* and *from* a subaltern perspective" (Grosfoguel 2007, 211; emphasis in original). In such analyses, while the evils of the hegemonic spaces are detailed, the lived realities of those located at the margins are, if at all, only mentioned in passing. However, I still argue that the *active refusal* to engage with homonationalism as a transnational condition which structures and affects the politics of sexuality within particular localities, including within Eastern Europe, limits possibilities for critical analysis of the region.[3] Such refusal provides a partial and essentializing understanding of Eastern European homophobias. At the same time, it forecloses the opportunity of critiquing the strategies of LGBTQ actors that are modelled on the Western ideals of sexual democracy, and their complicity with Eastern European white nationalisms as well as with the racialized discourses of modernity and progress. I think that only by engaging with self-reflexive and critical analysis from an Eastern European position can we challenge the Western-centrism of the these critical concepts.

In what follows, I first briefly discuss transnational theorizations of homonationalism. I also explore the usefulness of the concept for understanding the role of sexuality in constructing Europe's internal hierarchies. Then, I unpack the two major arguments employed by scholars of Eastern Europe in their critique of homonationalism as an irrelevant concept for understanding Eastern European realities. First, they claim an absence of a homonationalist state in predominantly homophobic and peripheral (hence non-imperial) Eastern Europe. Second, they claim an absence of a homonationalist queer[4] subject in the spaces where a homonationalist shift—the embracement of LGBTQ subjects by the state and vice versa—has not yet taken place, and where racial hierarchies are configured differently from those in the West. By taking a close and critical look at these claims, I demonstrate the analytic opportunities that the refusal to engage with homonationalism forecloses.

The first claim prevents an exploration of the ways in which global and European versions of homonationalism widen the gap between so called "traditionalist" and "modernist" social positions, and also depict LGBTQ rights as a Western import. The insistence on Eastern Europe's homophobic (versus homonationalist) nature solidifies Eastern Europe's status as homophobic instead of challenging it. And finally, the refusal to discuss the transnational effects of homonationalism on the politics of sexuality in non-Western spaces precludes critical analysis of the effects of particular Western strategies of sexual liberation on the lives and activism of Eastern European queers. The second claim, of the absence of a homonationalist subject, allows scholars of Eastern Europe to disengage with race as an analytic category for understanding Eastern Europe's positioning not only vis-a-vis Western Europe, but in relation to the rest of the post-colonial world as well. Even if Eastern Europe is often depicted as Europe's underdeveloped other, whiteness plays a central role for Eastern Europe's claim to Europeanness, and its ability to distinguish itself from the so called "Third World." Instead, the claim serves the purpose of constructing Eastern European whiteness as innocent of the evils of colonialism and imperialism, and thus constructs LGBTQ actors' participation in heteronormative or queer nationalisms as racially innocent as well. The refusal to critically account for the role of whiteness in the construction of various Eastern European national identities by the scholars of sexuality is particularly disturbing in the current context of the rise of extreme right-wing sentiments in many Eastern European countries, in which racist, anti-immigrant, anti-gender, and homophobic discourses are so clearly entangled.

Transnationalizing Homonationalism

Homonationalism of the Global North

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Jasbir Puar (2007, xxiv) defined homonationalism as "the dual movement in which certain homosexual constituencies have embraced U.S. nationalist agendas and have also been embraced by nationalist agendas." It can be argued that Puar's analysis of homonationalism was inherently transnational from its inception because it explored the ways in which the national inclusion of particular homonormative bodies became a moral argument for justifying America's racist politics and its imperial and colonial agendas. In fact, in her later texts, Puar clarified the meaning of homonationalism as "an analytic category necessary for understanding and historicising why a nation's status as 'gay-friendly' has become desirable in the first place" (Puar 2015, 319), a meaning which challenged popular readings of homonationalism simply as LGBTQ actors' racist politics.

Puar explored how issues of sexual citizenship became central to Western narratives of modernity and progress, arguing that sexual inclusion became "a barometer by which the legitimacy of, and capacity for, national sovereignty is evaluated" (Puar 2015, 320). This analysis inspired transnational conversations about the ways in which LGBTQ tolerance had been used in the interest of various and mostly Western imperialist discourses and practices. For example, homonationalism has been employed as an analytic that helps critique the use of LGBTQ rights as an argument to justify war, or racist and anti-immigration policies and practices of various states in the Global North (Agathangelou 2013; Stella et al. 2015; Mole 2017; Murray 2014; Wahab 2016b). Scholars have critiqued LGBTQ rights activists and organizations in the West for reviving the old and imperial feminist sentiment of "saving brown women from the brown men,"

but replacing the figure of a brown woman with a figure of a repressed gay man (Bacchetta and Haritaworn 2011; Rao 2014; Bracke 2012). In fact, Paola Bacchetta and Jin Haritaworn (2011) claim that the interest of paid and organized European gay and lesbian activists in the oppression of queer subjects in the Global South can only be understood in the light of the "wider racialization of sexuality transnationally" (132). The homonationalist politics of the West have also been criticized for giving Western states moral authority to define what sexual democracy should look like in non-Western spaces and thus predetermining the goals of LGBTQ and queer movements elsewhere (Sabsay 2013; 2012). Together with the concept of homonationalism, Joseph A. Massad's (2007) influential work *Desiring Arabs* helped to problematize the concept of homosexuality, LGBTQ subjectivities, and human rights intervention models in these transnational conversations. Specifically, Massad's (2007) work challenges the ways in which what he calls "Gay International"—the international LGBTQ rights lobby—constructs universal gay subjecthood where it doesn't exist and then works towards rescuing gays from oppression.

Most of the scholarly arguments denouncing homonationalism as a useful tool for understanding Eastern European realities usually dismiss these transnational aspects and effects of homonationalism. In the works of scholars of Eastern Europe, homonationalism is equated with the potentially racist or imperialist politics of Western states or LGBTQ actors, which they claim cannot describe the political and social realities of peripheral spaces, including Eastern Europe (Kulpa 2014; Moss 2014; Leksikov and Rachok 2020; Stella and Nartova 2015; Szulc 2016). A discussion of how the homonationalism of the West, broadly conceived, or Europe or the European Union more specifically, shape the politics of sexuality not only within the West but also within the East, and in this case Eastern Europe, is usually missing from the analysis of the scholars of Eastern Europe. A number of questions usually remain unexplored in these writings: questions about EU agenda-setting of LGBTQ liberation struggles in Eastern Europe; questions about how European investment in sexual democracy as a sign of modernity complicates Eastern European queer realities by intensifying the dichotomy and conflict between "traditionalist" and "modernist" sentiments in these spaces; and questions about the harms of reproducing Western-modelled liberation practices for local queer communities. Instead, these scholars present East European queer politics and subjects, including their desire for belonging within the racialized boundaries of various Eastern European nations, or within the symbolic boundaries of progress and modernity, as innocent and harmless.

Homonationalism and Europe's East and West

In order to understand the role of homonationalism in the construction of Eastern Europe as Europe's underdeveloped other we have to first unpack the concept of Eastern Europe itself. As Robert Kulpa (2014a) rightfully argues, Eastern Europe[5] is not only a geographical denominator but also a "political, cultural, historical, and temporal" category (3). Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the overnight disappearance of the category of the so-called Second World (Tlostanova 2016), many of the post-socialist states were forced into the "transition"—a process which was imagined as a transformation of their backwards totalitarian and socialist states into Western-type democracies. Thus, since their inception, what are now Eastern European states were imagined as lacking (in their knowledge and practice of democracy) and as lagging behind (Stenning & Hörschelmann 2008; King, 1994). According to this logic, which still informs the configuration of Europe's internal hierarchies, Alison Stenning and Kathrin Hörschelmann (2008, 320) argue that post-socialist and post-Soviet states "are perpetually

deemed to be 'catching up' in both material and institutional terms." While imagined as a coherent unity within this dichotomy and in Western discourses of the "developing" Second World, Eastern European states, however, can hardly be homogenized. Their experiences differ based on their geopolitical locations, their history in relation to European, Russian, Soviet or Ottoman empires, and their positionality within the global hierarchies currently.[6] Nevertheless, the category of Eastern Europe still functions as a loosely defined symbolic marker through which scholars from various post-socialist states try to make sense of their realities. The literature on sexuality scrutinized in this paper also deploys such ambivalent identification with the category of Eastern Europe, and such identification can often lead to interesting and insightful conversations, especially for exploring the hierarchies within Europe itself.

Despite the refusal to analyze the sexual politics within Eastern European states through a homonationalist lens, the role of sexual rights or the commitment to "LGBTQ tolerance" of particular states in configuring Europe's internal hierarchies has been explored by multiple scholars in last few years. These scholars, however, employ a homonationalist analytic for critiquing the politics of sexuality of Western Europe or the European Union. For example, in Kulpa's (2014a) reading, Western Europe presents itself as a teacher of democracy and human rights for supposedly homophobic Eastern European states, a relationship he calls "leveraged pedagogy." This pedagogical relationship universalizes the Western ideal of democracy and sustains the hierarchical relationship between Eastern and Western Europe by constructing Eastern Europe as "permanently 'post-communist'" and transitioning (Kulpa 2014a, 432). According to Francesca Romana Ammaturo (2015), the European Union's "pink agenda"— a set of political and juridical policies and practices employed by individual European countries, and by the administrative and legislative bodies of the Union itself, such as the Council of Europe—is concerned with promoting sexual rights, as defined under a liberal humanist framework, both within Europe and outside its borders. The pink agenda, Ammaturo (2015) claims, is supposedly concerned with protecting the rights of sexual subjects globally, but in fact it actively promotes specific types of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identities. At the same time, it constructs and sustains the binary between the civilized West (marked by tolerance and gay-inclusivity) and its backwards and racialized (marked by homophobia) internal and external "others." Phillip Ayoub and David Paternotte (2014), Koen Slootmaeckers (2019) and Christine M. Klapeer (2017) explore how the very notion of Europeanness became defined as "LGBTQ friendliness" within Europe's political discourse. Such definitions were crucial during the EU accession process for various Eastern and South-Eastern European countries, such as, for example, Serbia and Croatia, where organizing pride parades or the establishment of anti-discriminatory legal systems were seen as determining issues for evaluating their readiness for EU integration.

These works demonstrate the ways in which the homonational shift in the sexual politics of Western European countries as well as within the European Union's administrative and political practices is not bounded to specific Western nation-states, but structures and affects the politics of sexuality transnationally, including within Eastern Europe. In addition to the points discussed above, the commitment to sexual rights also actively contributes to defining the meaning of sexual democracy or sexual emancipation in various Eastern European spaces. Eastern European states or LGBTQ actors, in this context, can comply with, resist, or transform the transnational homonationalist configurations in which they are embedded, but they cannot be claimed to exist outside of them. As Puar (2013) herself argues, homonationalism, similar to modernity, "can be resisted and re-signified, but not opted out of" (336). However, the refusal of local scholars to engage with homonationalism as a useful concept for understanding Eastern European realities forecloses the possibility of exploring such transnational connections between

the global, Western European, or EU discourses of sexual emancipation and modernity, and Eastern European and local LGBTQ politics or homophobic resistance.

More importantly, although scholars of Eastern Europe rarely engage with the question of race when analyzing western European forms of homonationalism in relation to Eastern Europe, Eastern Europe's whiteness and predominant Christianity are central to the specific manifestations of homonationalism within Europe. For example, Kulpa, when discussing Eastern Europe's status as the other within Europe, differentiates it from Europe's "absolute" others (the Homophobic Muslim World) and "internal" others (Homophobic Eastern Europe). As Kulpa claims, Eastern Europe's role as Europe's other is more ambiguous than that of Islam, due to its geographical but also cultural proximity. It is "somehow 'European enough' to be 'taken care of' but not yet 'Western' so as to be allowed in the 'First World' club" (Kulpa 2014a, 2). Emphasizing Eastern Europe's "cultural proximity" to the West could well be a code for Eastern Europe's racial and religious closeness to the symbolic definition of Europeanness, which, as Fatima Al Tayeb argues in her book, is implicitly and silently modelled around whiteness (El-Tayeb 2011).

This racially coded cultural closeness with Western Europe distinguishes Eastern Europe from Europe's absolute others, racialized as "barbaric" and "uncivilized," and imagines Eastern Europeans as more European than Eastern. By bounding the analysis of homonationalism to the critique of Western Europe, by refusing to explore transnational connections, and by disregarding the effects of homonationalism on the politics of sexuality within Eastern European states, scholars of Eastern Europe also avoid the analysis of Eastern Europe's participation and role in the constructions of global racial, cultural, and civilizational hierarchies. The remainder of this article will explore these works more closely and demonstrate the ways in which the disengagement from the transnational effects of homonationalism as well as the analytic of race, inherent in homonationalist critique, forecloses important explanatory as well as self-reflexive critical possibilities for scholars of Eastern Europe.

What Does the Refusal of Homonationalism Really Deny?

Bacchetta and Haritaworn (2011) offer a useful breakdown of the various dimensions of homonationalism for understanding the critiques of the applicability of the concept for Eastern European spaces. They distinguish between three components: "homonationalism 1", which describes homonationalist politics and practices of the states; "homonationalism 2", which describes reproduction of homonationalism by white and Western queer and feminist discourses; and finally, homotransnationalism, which describes the transnational circulation of such homonationalist state or activist discourses. As we observed, scholars of Eastern Europe engage with the transnational form of homonationalism or homotransnationalism quite comfortably—specifically to outline Eastern Europe's marginal and otherized position vis-à-vis Western European states. However, what they discard as inapplicable is the possibility of a homonationalist state or homonationalist activist discourses and practices in Eastern Europe. Leksikov and Rachok (2020) observe that Western theoretical tools that are directed at understanding Western realities cannot account for the experiences of post-colonial (and in this case Eastern European) subjects, because they are inevitably distorting. There is a truth to this claim, especially considering that most transnational analysis of homonationalism is directed at unpacking the imperial and colonial projects within the Global North and do not quite explore the ways in which they affect the realities of the LGBTQ subjects in the non-Western world (for

example see Agathangelou 2013; Bracke 2012; Jungar and Peltonen 2017). Bacchetta and Haritaworn (2011) understand non-Western subjects' participation in the transnational flows of human and sexual rights discourses as "coercive mimeticism" (135). Such reading is indeed reductive of the intricacies of queer struggles in non-Western spaces. However, the desire to not be read as passive victims of Western domination should not lead scholars of Eastern Europe to refuse to understand the complexities of their own contexts within a homotransnational world order, or to the celebrate the problematic frameworks of sexual liberation struggle. Moreover, the desire to refuse the label of a "homonationalist" should not serve as a justification for their race-blindness, and of the limited reflection on the role of whiteness in the political aspirations and global positioning of Eastern Europe. Refusal to engage with homonationalism provides only partial and nationalist understandings of the nature of Eastern European homophobias. At the same time, it also fails to address the complications that the universalization of the goals and means of LGBTQ struggles causes for local queers. The disregarding of race as a category of analysis, and the assumption of the innocence of Eastern European whiteness is especially harmful in the current context of increased racist, anti-immigrant, as well as homophobic discourses within Eastern Europe.[7]

The Absence of a "Homonationalist State"

Kevin Moss (2014) argues that the concept of homonationalism cannot account for the experiences of nation-states where a homonational shift has not yet taken place and "good old-fashioned heteronationalism continues to flourish" (215). One of the most common arguments for not engaging with homonationalism within Eastern European scholarship is exactly the claim to the absence of a homonationalist state. Scholars cite various quantitative or qualitative data demonstrating homophobia in their respective states and also, importantly, emphasize non-imperial or non-hegemonic positions of Eastern European nation-states in a transnational context (Kulpa 2011; 2014b; Szulc 2016; Moss 2014; Leksikov and Rachok 2020). In these arguments one can read the post-colonial sensibilities of the scholars of Eastern Europe and the resistance towards the imposition of Western theoretical constructs for understanding local queer realities. Resistance towards the canonical position of various "Western theories" and the frustration about hierarchies of knowledge production and circulation in academia are not new or ungrounded in Eastern European scholarship (Tlostanova 2015; Cerwonka 2008; Kulpa, Mizielinska, and Stasinska 2012; Mizielinska and Kulpa 2011). If homonationalism is indeed another "Western theory" which doesn't apply to "local material," Leksikov and Rachok's (2020, 27) commitment to "analyze Eastern Europe on its own terms, privileging local perspective and emic categories" must also sound like a logical response.

But what if we challenge the very approach to homonationalism which understands it as a theory or as a concept that can be applied to various national contexts? Ironically, by trying to unsuccessfully apply homonationalism—a concept describing imperial and colonial aspects of the politics of sexuality within the United States—to Eastern realities, scholars of Eastern Europe reenact exactly what they argue against. They apply high theory to the local material when they know very well that setting up one's analysis as an exercise in theory application is doomed to failure. However, if we look at homonationalism not as a "theory" that can be transported from one country to another, but following Puar (2013), as an analytic describing and historicizing the shift in Western imperial modernities where the inclusion of particular non-heterosexual bodies into a nation-state became a marker of a state's civility and progress, we might have to ask

different questions. Specifically, how does such a shift in Western modernities structure and affect the politics of sexuality and national belonging transnationally? How does it restructure the relationship of non-Western states to their LGBTQ subjects? How do these dynamics play out in Eastern Europe?

Asking such questions not only requires scholars of Eastern Europe to broaden their understanding of homonationalism and its transnational implications, but also asks them to challenge their claims of Eastern European uniqueness. While transnational scholars do not doubt the importance of analyzing the specificities of individual national contexts (see Herr 2014; Grewal and Kaplan 2000), they are also wary of what Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002, 302) call "methodological nationalism": an assumption that the nation-state is "a natural social and political form of the modern world" that can be analyzed in a self-contained manner, without considering its place within transnational circulations of ideas, discourses, and peoples. The claims for the inapplicability of homonationalism for analyzing Eastern European nation-states often reproduce such methodological nationalism. The politics of sexuality of a particular nation-state are analyzed as uniquely heteronormative or heteronationalist without considering the ways in which these politics are shaped in relation to, and sometimes as a response to, the homonational politics of the West, and particularly the European Union.

For example, Stella and Nartova (2015) claim that Putin's later politics in Russia cannot be understood through the lens of homonationalism, which "hinge[s] on liberal attitudes towards sexual and reproductive rights as a defining feature of national identity," because of its "emphasis on 'traditional' family values, gender roles and sexual norms" instead (18). However, understanding Russian investment in building traditionalist nationalism without looking at its relation to Western homonationalism only gives a partial picture and misses the importance of Russian new conservativism for its internal and foreign politics. As various scholars have demonstrated, Russia's turn to "traditional and family values"—best exemplified by banning so-called homosexual propaganda— needs to be understood as a "key to Putin's broader political ideology of 'post-communist neo-Conservatism'" (Polyakova 2014, 39; Persson 2015; Laruelle 2015; Wilkinson 2014). Russia's pronounced commitment to protecting heterosexual families from the "dictatorship of liberal values" is explicitly aimed at "showing that Russia will not emulate Western modernity (Persson 2015, 268). In fact, for Wilkinson, (2014) this turn to "traditionalism" within Russia can be understood as a claim of "moral sovereignty," which helps the Russian state to maintain power over its populations and influence over its conservative neighbours (Riabov and Riabova 2014; Laruelle 2015). Similar rhetoric of opposing sexual democracy or feminist emancipation as part of resisting Western hegemony is a key component of the nationalist state or far-right actors in Hungary and Poland (Walker, Davies, and Tait 2019; Van Schijndel 2017). The European Union in these narratives is critiqued exactly for the processes that homonationalism describes, depicting particular commitment to sexual and more broadly human rights as a sign of moral authority, progress, or the very essence of Europeanness. Discussing local traditionalist nationalisms independently of the West's investment in a particular kind of sexual democracy as a marker of civilization misses important aspects of understanding and analyzing those nationalisms.

What is more, while Eastern European scholarship is critical of the ways in which Eastern Europe is essentialized as Europe's homophobic other (Kulpa and Mizielinska 2011; Klapeer 2017), in the writings about specific Eastern European contexts the claims to state homophobia or heteronormativity are rarely problematized or questioned. Such acts of uncritical confirmation of local homophobia, however, reinforce the dichotomy between the sexually liberated West and homophobic Eastern Europe instead of challenging it. According to Murray

(2009), homophobia as an analytic frame for understanding the relationship between the state, nation, and its sexual others is neither neutral nor universal and we need to "situate this prejudice in historically grounded relationships of inequality produced through the intersections of local and global social, political and economic forces" (3). Drawing on the work of Weiss and Bosia (2013) who look at homophobia as a political strategy, Wahab (2016) also points to the need to distinguish between the discourses against same sex relationships and the critiques of the "homotransnationalist human rights interventions" (696). His analysis of anti-gay mobilization around Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act demonstrates the ways in which "homophobic" organizing is often framed as an anti-imperial resistance, or a way of defending state sovereignty. Engaging with the concept of homonationalism and exploring how anti-gay organizing in Eastern Europe specifically critiques the West's imposition of particular sexual politics helps us untangle and challenge the problematic reading of Eastern Europe as essentially homophobic. In fact, homonationalism as a concept which challenges previously unquestioned and naturalized alliances between nationalisms and heteronormativity (i.e. Parker et al. 1991; Yuval-Davis 1997; Stoler 1991) should encourage us to question the reasons and forms of the heteronormativity and homophobia of particular states from a less essentializing perspective.

Denouncing homonationalism as an analytic also forecloses the possibilities of understanding the consequences of European homonationalism for Eastern Europe. For example, in their attempt to argue that the homophobic nature of the Ukrainian state is an indication of the inapplicability of homonationalism to that context, Leksikov and Rachok (2020) emphasize how Ukraine only "supports" its LGBTQ citizens when forced to do so by the requirements of the European Union or other international bodies. For example, the prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation was one of the requirements for Ukraine to be granted visa-free access to the European Union, and it was similar in the cases of Georgia and Moldova. However, these instances of instituting EU-mandated legal or policy protections for LGBTQ citizens by otherwise homophobic states say more about homonationalist governance on the part of the European Union and its implications for the Eastern states than it does about the inapplicability of homonationalism. Within the European enlargement process, which involved the evaluation of various Eastern European states' "readiness" for joining the European Union, the demonstration of a state's "tolerance" towards its LGBTQ subjects became a defining component of being seen as "European" enough on a symbolic level (Klapeer 2017, 46).

The implications of such symbolic gestures however are quite material and are also often harmful for the very local LGBTQ populations they supposedly aim to protect. For example, an adoption of anti-discrimination legislation required by the European Union for visa-free access for Georgia resulted in wide public debates, which gave Georgia's conservative and far right actors open access to mainstream media as well as parliamentary discussions (Voice of America 2014). In Ukraine the opportunity to adopt anti-discrimination legislation opened up a possibility for a Russian-style anti-homosexual propaganda law to be introduced and discussed in parliament several times (Miller 2018). These debates created a platform for conservative and right-wing actors to incite hatred and solidify particular homophobic discourse in the public, often leading to the increase of violence towards LGBTQ people on the streets or within their families (Ammaturo 2015; Slootmaeckers 2017; Human Rights Watch 2018).

The very usefulness of the EU-imposed "protective" measures for local queer struggles is questionable. In fact, Leksikov and Rachok (2020) themselves remark that the Ukrainian state's fulfilment of particular international obligations had "no real consequences for LGBTQI people" (36). Within the EU accession process, the measure for determining a state's "tolerance" towards LGBTQ citizens was defined by ensuring the safety of pride parades and the adoption of

the abovementioned anti-discrimination legislations. Some scholars see pride parades as a queer "struggle for elementary visibility against further marginalization" (Leksikov and Rachok 2020, 36) and the European Union's support for pride as an effective mechanism for ensuring the safety and success of the protests. However, Kahlina (2015, 75) is critical of taking "Pride Marches as the epitome of gay liberation," as this simplifies the complexities of local queer struggles and imposes a narrow definition of LGBTQ emancipation onto Eastern European countries. Slootmaeckers (2017) also remarks that in Serbia, because of the controversies around LGBTQ pride, organizing a parade became a goal on its own rather than a tool to achieve visibility, such that the holding of a pride parade was depicted as an achievement in itself, despite it contributing to higher visibility of right-wing rhetoric over that of the left.

In fact, as both Kahlina and Slootmaeckers show, pride parades contributed to further marginalization of LGBTQ activists and communities within their national contexts by defining their struggles as aligned with "European values" and themselves as "Westerners." While there is a general consensus that LGBTQ communities are often seen and depicted as Western imports, foreign agents, or outsiders by their national communities, within Eastern European scholarship only a few scholars untangle the link between Western-dictated tools of sexual liberation and this particular kind of othering. In fact, Leksikov and Rachok (2020) claim that one reason why we cannot engage with the concept of homonationalism when thinking about the Ukrainian context is exactly because of the state and societal disavowal of LGBTQ communities within Ukraine and their positioning as the nation's outsiders. I would however argue that in order to understand the particularities of this very process of othering, specifically how queer identifications and struggles become signifiers of Westernness, we need to analyze it precisely in relation to the transnational workings of homonationalism: the imposing of specific and narrow definitions of sexual democracy onto other states, and the defining of queer inclusion as a sign of progress. In the case of EU accession countries, homonationalism is also a necessary step towards being included in the symbolic boundaries of Europeanness. Such an analysis would help us reflect on the usefulness or potential harms of engaging with LGBTQ liberation discourses modeled around human rights and the politics of visibility that often incite backlash and violence by widening the gap between the so called "traditionalist" and "modernist" discourses. The refusal to engage with homonationalism, however, enables scholars of Eastern Europe to avoid questioning the effectiveness of such universalized LGBTQ activist strategies —if they cannot be homonationalist, they must therefore be successful or at least benevolent. Such a refusal thus implicitly serves the interests of universalizing Western models of human rights instead of questioning their relevance to the local context, and disregards their potential harmfulness for the very communities they claim to protect.

The Absence of a "Homonationalist Subject"

"What is so necessarily wrong with the willingness to be recognised as a part of the national community, to build one's own identification in relation to other nationals and not be left aside as encapsulated and self-contained, ab/sub/ob/ject?" (Kulpa 2011, 56) This question informs many scholars of Eastern Europe in their disengagement with homonationalism. Reading Eastern European LGBTQ activists or activist practices as homonationalist is usually seen as insensitive, colonial, and sometimes even ignorant by many scholars of Eastern Europe. They claim that within economically poor, politically unstable, and homophobic Eastern European states queer attempts to negotiate their place within the nation cannot be understood as

homonationalist. Homonationalism, they argue, describes a particular Western context with an imperial and capitalist state with very specific societal divides along the lines of race and class. Detailing the distinctions between the West and Eastern Europe then allows the same authors to read particular queer strategies not as homonationalist but as an act of "queering the nation," as an attempt at finding one's space within the national community (Kulpa 2014b, 2011; Szulc 2016).

It is not the goal of this article to refute the subversive potentialities of queering nationalisms in various contexts. It is also indeed important to establish the differences between colonial, imperial, and hegemonic nationalisms of Western states from post-colonial or non-hegemonic contexts (Bannerji 2011). And these differences often also inform how issues of belonging are negotiated by the nation's subjects (see for example Heng 1996). However, what interests me in this kind of analysis of queer attempts to be included within national spaces is that such actions are constructed by scholars as opposite to homonationalism, as they are discussed specifically in opposition to it. What kind of critiques and questions are prevented from being posed by the act of disavowing homonationalism? How are social, class, or race hierarchies configured within particular Eastern European nations? If these hierarchies are different from those within the United States, does this mean we do not have to engage with them? What kind of innocence of Eastern European LGBTQ communities does the denial of their potential homonationalism construct?

Before trying to untangle these questions, it is important to note that even if homonational analysis describes a very particular Western context, problematization of the desire for belonging to a particular national unity is not necessarily unique, or I would say, even central to Puar's analysis (2015, 2013). While for Puar, homonationalism marks an historical shift within Western modernity where tolerance towards homosexuality becomes a measure of a state's progress, the analysis of queer desire for inclusion in the nation-state or the analysis of gay racisms far precedes this shift. Leaving the work of prominent queer theorists aside (e.g. Warner 1999; Duggan 2003), George Mosse's groundbreaking work *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*, published in 1985, discusses the ways in which national norms of belonging and respectability constructed the normative ideas of femininities and masculinities within nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. It also demonstrates how early homosexual and feminist movements strived for inclusion exactly through adhering to these norms. What is more, Mosse is critical of the ways in which early homosexual movements often legitimized their adherence to national respectability by engaging in racist and anti-Jewish rhetoric. By refusing to engage with homonational critique, scholars of Eastern Europe also forget that living in a heteronormative state doesn't ensure the innocence of the politics of the nation's outsiders, in this case Eastern European LGBTQ movements and communities. This denial, however, lets the scholars of Eastern Europe get away with insufficient analysis and critique of local configurations of the politics of race, or the politics of queer rights struggles in general.

While most Eastern European disavowals of homonationalism acknowledge class hierarchies within Eastern European states,[8] they either outright deny the importance of race for thinking about Eastern European contexts or LGBTQ movements, or simply never engage with it. Leksikov and Rachok (2020) declare that Ukrainian society (and by implication other Eastern European states) is structured by class not race—making homonational analysis, the very existence of which depends on the oppositional figure of the homophobic Muslim, irrelevant. Moss (2014), in his description of Croatian LGBTQ movements claims that not only is Croatian LGBTQ activism less hierarchical than its US counterpart, but that also "there is no race" in

Croatia (Moss 2015, 216). Kulpa (2014b), by pointing out the ethnic homogeneity of Polish society, also discounts the possibility of the analysis of race as relevant for understanding Poland. Such refusals to engage with race as a relevant category for understanding social hierarchies within Eastern European spaces not only denies Eastern Europe's internal racialized divisions (for example anti-Roma racism and anti-Semitism), but also fails to understand the relationship of Eastern European whiteness to the racialization of the Third World or Muslim cultures. The claim to the racelessness of Eastern European states naturalizes its unspoken whiteness and constructs Eastern Europe as only ever dominated, and never a dominator. In such a configuration Eastern European LGBTQ attempts at claiming their space within their nations can also never be read as homonationalist or racist.

The few scholars who do engage with the concept of homonationalism demonstrate exactly what the refusal to acknowledge the possible existence of an Eastern European homonationalist subject tries to hide: LGBTQ activists often claim their space within their national contexts by disidentifying with the nation's racialized or classed others. However, these works refer to quite different Eastern European contexts compared to those discussed here (Kulpa, Szulc—Poland; Moss—Croatia). For example, Shannon Woodcock's (2011) analysis of Romanian LGBTQ movements is a good example. Romanian LGBTQ movements, she claims, were outraged when equated with Romania's Roma population in Madonna's call for inclusivity for "Gypsies, homosexuals, people who are different" at her concert in Bucharest in 2009 (Woodcock 2011, 63). According to Woodcock, Romanian LGBTQ movements' self-distancing from Roma communities was an attempt at emphasizing their shared racial belonging with other Romanians and thus their claim to national space which they felt excluded from. Another interesting example is Piro Rexhepi's (2016) discussion of the often neglected Muslim majority state of Kosovo. Rexhepi's analysis shows the ways in which the equation of sexual rights with Europeanness and modernity often pits local queers against the rest of their communities, imagined as religious, traditional, and backwards. By depicting Kosovan queers as emblems of Europeanness and modernity, Rexhepi argues, queer rights discourse become a way for the EU to discipline and police Muslim communities within Kosovo (Rexhepi 2016). Importantly Rexhepi demonstrates that often local LGBTQ and human rights groups contributed to proliferations of such socially divisive discourses of modernity and progress instead of challenging them.

While the example of Romania and its relationship to its Roma communities, or the example of Kosovo as a Muslim majority country can be read as too specific to be generalized to other places in Eastern Europe, what brings the Eastern European experience together is the shared but never explicitly articulated claim to whiteness. The whiteness of Eastern Europe is central to what makes it, in Michał Buchowski's (2006) words, a "stigmatized brother" instead of an "exotic other" for Western Europe. If Eastern Europe, within the global hierarchical order, functions as a border, as an ambivalent zone between the West and the East, between civilization and barbarism (Wolff 1994), it is precisely its whiteness that ensures it is not a complete other of the so-called "First World."[9]

The politics of invisibilizing race has been an important strategy for defining whiteness at the core of symbolic boundaries of Europeanness in general (El-Tayeb 2011; Baker 2018). While scholars of Eastern Europe have engaged extensively with the so called "hermeneutic" tools of post-colonial, and more recently decolonial, scholarship in order to make sense of their own peripheral positionality vis-à-vis Western Europe or the broadly conceived Western world (Moore 2001; Spivak et al. 2006; Tlostanova 2012; Koobak and Marling 2014), these post-colonial conversations, according to Catherine Baker (2018), often completely erase race as a

relevant category of analysis. If race does enter these conversations, it is usually discussed as a version of "racialized whiteness": whiteness that was deprived of white privilege due to unfortunate historical events (Wolff 1994; Law and Zakharov 2019). Such silent claim to whiteness, or only ever depicting oneself as underprivileged, according to Aniko Imre (2005) can be read as Eastern Europe's "most effective and least recognized means of asserting their European-ness" (82). What is more, because European colonialism in its narrow historical sense has indeed bypassed Eastern European spaces, Eastern European nations are able to lay claim to their "rightful" place within Western civilization without sharing the guilt over Europe's colonial and white supremacist past. Hence, within Eastern Europe it is common and less than controversial to claim that race is a foreign (usually American) problem but not a local one (Imre 2005).

Such a claim of racial innocence obscures some Eastern European states' historical complicities with the fascism and anti-Semitism of the twentieth century (for example Hungary, Poland) and racist configurations of today. Not only is it important to explore the ways in which the unspoken claim to whiteness structures racial hierarchies within various Eastern European states today, but we have to also understand that it is exactly Eastern Europe's perceived belonging within the boundaries of Europe and whiteness that fuels the strong and hostile anti-immigrant wave in these spaces, especially in the last few years. It is such unspoken whiteness that makes it possible for countries like Hungary to imagine themselves as the gatekeepers to maintaining the racial purity of the "Christian European culture" when organizing a racist and Islamophobic state-funded anti-immigration campaign (Gordoni 2019).

Unfortunately, scholars of Eastern European sexuality contribute to such erasure of race as a relevant category for analyzing the politics of inclusion of local LGBTQ subjects. Their claim to the racelessness and racial innocence of various Eastern European nation-states is what enables them to misunderstand the potentially problematic nature of the queer desire of belonging within the symbolic boundaries of their nations. In such a reading LGBTQ subjects can only be innocent, as their nation states are innocent as well: they may be homophobic, but they are not racist and colonial. The refusal of the applicability of homonationalism in these texts thus functions as an analytic move that enables these scholars to disregard local and regional configurations of racial hierarchies. While these hierarchies may indeed be quite different from those of the United States, this difference cannot lead to their erasure. It is, in fact, surprising that scholars of sexuality would disregard race as an important category of analysis in the contemporary context of the dramatic rise of right-wing and nationalist organizing all across Eastern Europe (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017; Köttig, Bitzan, and Petö 2017). This is especially so, considering the ways in which anti-gender, anti-gay, anti-immigrant, and racist discourses come together and are entangled within these nationalist discourses (Kovats and Poim 2015). Instead of insisting on the innocence and racelessness of Eastern European national projects, and hence on the innocence of the queer desire to belong, maybe we should question how the unarticulated assumptions of belonging to a patriarchal, Christian, and white European modernity inform many of the tensions around sexuality and race within these places. I think this kind of analysis would give us a clearer picture of our own place within our national communities as well.

Conclusion

Refusal to engage with homonationalism in Eastern European scholarly writing on sexuality serves as an analytic move that enables the construction of Eastern European innocence and

forecloses possibilities for exploring how a homotransnational world order structures the realities of Eastern European queers. The refusal of homonationalist analysis in Eastern European scholarship is often done with an explicit aim of giving agency to local LGBTQ activists, and at the same time sparing them from unnecessary and undeserved criticism. However, by not engaging with homonationalism, scholars of Eastern Europe simultaneously disengage from detailed analysis of Eastern European contexts, the specificities of state homophobias, and the complexities of local LGBTQ struggles, and they unwillingly reproduce the dominance of Western models of activism, often harmful for the very queer communities they aim to protect. By pitting the desire for belonging within a national community against homonationalism, and by claiming the irrelevance of race for Eastern European realities, not only do these scholars participate in Eastern Europe's "unspoken whiteness," but at the same time they refuse to connect the increased racist and anti-immigration sentiments within the region with the increase of homophobic and anti-gender discourses.

Notes

1. While the number of scholars of Eastern Europe who do so is small (in this article I refer to seven authors), the significance of their work cannot be overstated. Firstly, because the number of scholars writing about sexuality and Eastern Europe is already quite limited, and thus any publication on such issues is quite widely read and discussed by scholars in the area. Secondly, some of the cited authors have prolific publication dossiers about the politics of sexuality in Eastern Europe and are hugely influential in framing the discussions in the field (for example Kevin Moss, Robert Kulpa). In fact, the edited volume by Kulpa and Mizielinska in 2011 is one of the key contemporary readings on sexualities and Eastern Europe in recent years. In the volume Kulpa engages with the concept of homonationalism, only to argue that it's not relevant for Eastern European queer realities. Finally, when it comes to discussing homonationalism in relation to Eastern Europe, again Robert Kulpa's (2014) framing of Western Europe's role of teaching Eastern European states democracy and tolerance as "leveraged pedagogy" has become the primary theoretical groundings for number of scholarly articles and discussions. It is especially important to understand how Kulpa is interested in unpacking homonationalism when discussing the asymmetries between Eastern and Western Europe, but is reluctant to engage with the concept when talking about sexual politics within Eastern Europe itself. It is exactly because of the significance and discourse-setting influence of these (albeit) few scholars that I use the general term "scholars of Eastern Europe" throughout the article.

2. It is important to mention that most of the analysis cited here critiquing West Europe's investment in constructing Eastern European "backwardness" for its lack of sexual democracy is not engaging with the analytic category of race and how the labels of "backwardness" or "lack of democracy" are inherently racialized markers. Race as an important component in the process of constructing the backwardness of particular LGBTQ communities or states has been central to Puar's definition of homonationalism within the US. However, in the Eastern European adaptations of the concept, the analysis of race— and in particular how Eastern European backwardness relates to the question of race—is

missing. As will be evident from the rest of this paper, I demonstrate that the scholars of Eastern Europe often view race as an irrelevant category for understanding the region due to its presumed whiteness. Such gesture not only erases Eastern Europe's internal racial hierarchies (towards its Roma and Jewish communities), but also refuses to analyze the ways in which Eastern European whiteness in invested in maintaining broader racialized hierarchies, recently emblemized by various anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim demonstrations, policies and practices in various Eastern European states.

3. In "active refusal" I refer to scholarly writings which mention and engage with homonationalism, but argue against its relevance particularly for Eastern European cases. The works on Eastern European sexualities and nationalisms that find other theoretical frameworks for articulating specific arguments are not part of this critique.

4. Despite being aware of the critiques of using queer as an umbrella term for LGBTQ+ communities, in this paper I use the concept of queer to signify the variety of non-normative sexual and gender identities and lived practices in Eastern European spaces. The binary between queer as non-normative and a radical denominator in opposition to mainstream LGBTQ identities and politics is blurrier and more unclear in Eastern Europe than in the West due to the different historical as well as contemporary social conditions. See Kulpa, Mizielinska, and Stasinska (2012) for further discussion.

5. While most of the works cited in this paper use the concept of Central and Eastern Europe, I choose to refer to the spaces that CEE involve as simply Eastern European. The claim to Central Europeanness of particular states (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic) creates similar hierarchies to those it aims to resolve. Central Europe becomes distinguished from Eastern Europe by virtue of its geographic centrality within the European continent and more importantly by its closer proximity to Western Europe. Thus, the designation of Central Europe in Europe's East can be read as an attempt at refusing some of the stigma associated with this Easternness. However, if we are to challenge the hierarchical divisions within Europe, we shouldn't build more internal hierarchies.

6. For example, countries like Hungary and Poland, though imagined as Europe's others, are not quite excluded from the symbolic boundaries of Europeanness. However, countries like Georgia and Ukraine (not EU members) are read as European only in more generous understandings of Eastern Europe. The place of the Muslim majority countries of southeastern Europe within the EU and Europeanness also requires a separate analysis.

7. My analysis of the transnational effects of homonationalism on Eastern Europe engages with and compares multiple Eastern European states and contexts. I am fully aware that many of these states are not easily comparable: for example it is hard to compare Russia with EU member states, or Russia with cases like Georgia and Ukraine, which it is involved in armed conflict with. However, my argument here can be made despite the differences. Further research and analysis are needed to detail the specificities of the complications and resistances in each individual case.

8. While class hierarchies are often mentioned they are rarely explored and analyzed in depth or in relation to LGBTQ politics. However, due to space limitations I do not elaborate on the class question within Eastern European spaces.

9. This becomes clear if we think about how Russia, for example is still included in the definitions of Eastern Europe despite its geography. However, non-white post-Soviet and post-socialist spaces located farther east are never part of Eastern European conversations (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia). Even Muslim majority spaces in north Caucasus—for example Chechnya—are rarely ever thought of as Eastern European, while Christian Georgia is allowed more claim.

Works Cited

Agathangelou, Anna M. 2013. "Neoliberal Geopolitical Order and Value." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 15, no. 4: 453–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2013.841560.

Ammaturo, Francesca Romana. 2015. "The 'Pink Agenda': Questioning and Challenging European Homonationalist Sexual Citizenship." *Sociology* 49, no. 6: 1151–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038514559324.

Ayoub, Phillip, and David Paternotte. 2014. *LGBTQ Activism and the Making of Europe: A Rainbow Europe?* London: Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137391766.

Bacchetta, Paola, and Jin Haritaworn. 2011. "There Are Many Transatlantics: Homonationalism, Homotransnationalism." In *Transatlantic Conversations: Feminism as Travelling Theory*, edited by K. Davis and M. Evans, 127–44. London: Routledge.

Baker, Catherine. 2018. "Postcoloniality Without Race? Racial Exceptionalism and Southeast European Cultural Studies." *Interventions* 20, no. 6: 759–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2018.1492954.

Bannerji, Himani. 2011. *Demography and Democracy: Essays on Nationalism, Gender, and Ideology*. Toronto: Brown Bear Press.

Bracke, Sarah. 2012. "From 'Saving Women' to 'Saving Gays': Rescue Narratives and Their Dis/Continuities." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19, no. 2: 237–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506811435032.

Buchowski, Michał. 2006. "The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother." *Anthropological Quarterly* 79, no. 3: 463–82. https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2006.0032.

Cerwonka, Allaine. 2008. "Traveling Feminist Thought: Difference and Transculturation in Central and Eastern European Feminism." *Signs* 33, no. 4: 809–32. https://doi.org/10.1086/528852.

Colpani, Gianmaria, and Adriano José Habed. 2014. "'In Europe It's Different': Homonationalism and Peripheral Desires for Europe." In *LGBTQ Activism and the Making of Europe*, edited by Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte, 73–93. London: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137391766_4.

Duggan, Lisa. 2003. *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Beacon Press.

El-Tayeb, Fatima. 2011. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe*. Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press.

Gordoni, Pablo. 2019. "Hungarian PM Orban Launches Campaign with Anti-Migrant Plan." *AP News*, April 5, 2019. https://apnews.com/ddff4e9c32f74ffcac4fee3907a7f1e5.

Grewal, Inderpal, and Caren Kaplan. 2000. "Postcolonial Studies and Transnational Feminist Practices." *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 5, no. 1. https://legacy.chass.ncsu.edu/jouvert/v5i1/grewal.htm.

Grosfoguel, Ramón. 2007. "The Epistemic Decolonial Turn." *Cultural Studies* 21, nos. 2–3: 211–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162514.

Heng, Geraldine. 1996. "'A Great Way to Fly': Nationalism, the State, and the Varieties of Third-World Feminism." In *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, edited by M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 30–46. New York: Routledge.

Herr, Ranjoo Seodu. 2014. "Reclaiming Third World Feminism: Or Why Transnational Feminism Needs Third World Feminism." *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 12, no. 1: 1–30.

Human Rights Watch. 2018. "No Support: Russia's 'Gay Propaganda' Law Imperils LGBTQ Youth." December 11, 2018. https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/12/11/no-support/russias-gay-propaganda-law-imperils-LGBTQ-youth.

Imre, Aniko. 2005. "Whiteness in Post-Socialist Eastern Europe: The Time of the Gypsies, the End of Race." In *Postcolonial Whiteness: A Critical Reader on Race and Empire*, edited by Alfred López, 79–102. New York: State University of New York Press.

Jungar, Katarina, and Salla Peltonen. 2017. "Acts of Homonationalism: Mapping Africa in the Swedish Media." *Sexualities* 20, nos. 5/6: 715–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460716645806.

Kahlina, Katja. 2015. "Local Histories, European LGBTQ Designs: Sexual Citizenship, Nationalism, and 'Europeanisation' in Post-Yugoslav Croatia and Serbia." *Women's Studies International Forum* 49 (Supplement C): 73–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.07.006.

King, Charles. 1994. "Post-Sovietology: Area Studies or Social Science?" *International Affairs* 70, no. 2: 291–97. https://doi.org/10.2307/2625235.

Klapeer, Christine M. 2017. "Queering Development in Homotransnationalist Times." *Lambda Nordica* 22, nos. 2–3: 41–67.

Koobak, Redi, and Raili Marling. 2014. "The Decolonial Challenge: Framing Post-Socialist Central and Eastern Europe within Transnational Feminist Studies." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 21, no. 4: 330–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506814542882.

Köttig, Michaela, Renate Bitzan, and Andrea Petö, eds. 2017. *Gender and Far Right Politics in Europe*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kovats, Eszter, and Maari Poim, eds. 2015. "Gender as Symbolic Glue: The Position and Role of Conservative and Far Right Parties in the Anti-Gender Mobilizations in Europe." Foundation for European Progressive Studies und Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/budapest/11382.pdf.

Kuhar, Roman, and David Paternotte, eds. 2017. *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality*. London: Rowman & Littlefield International.

Kulpa, Robert. 2011. "Nations and Sexualities – 'West' and 'East.'" In *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, edited by Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska, 43–62. New York: Routledge.

———. 2014a. "Western Leveraged Pedagogy of Central and Eastern Europe: Discourses of Homophobia, Tolerance, and Nationhood." *Gender, Place & Culture* 21, no. 4: 431–48. https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2013.793656.

———. 2014b. "On Attachment and Belonging: Or Why Queers Mourn Homophobic President?" *Sexualities* 17, no. 7: 781–801. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460714553431.

Kulpa, Robert, and Joanna Mizielinska. 2011. De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives. New York: Routledge.

Kulpa, Robert, Joanna Mizielinska, and Agata Stasinska. 2012. "(Un)Translatable Queer? Or What Is Lost and Can Be Found in Translation…" *In Import - Export - Transport. Queer Theory, Queer Critique, and Activism in Motion*, edited by Sushiula Mesquita, Maria Katharina Wiedlack, and Katrin Lasthofer, 115–46. Vienna: Zaglossus.

Laruelle, Marlene. 2015. "The 'Russian World:' Russia's Soft Power and Geopolitical Imagination." Washington DC: Center on Global Interests. http://globalinterests.org/2015/05/26/the-russian-world-russias-soft-power-and-geopolitical-imagination/.

Law, Ian, and Nikolay Zakharov. 2019. "Race and Racism in Eastern Europe: Becoming White, Becoming Western." In *Relating Worlds of Racism: Dehumanisation, Belonging, and the Normativity of European Whiteness*, edited by Philomena Essed, Karen Farquharson, Kathryn Pillay, and Elisa Joy White, 113–39. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78990-3_5.

Leksikov, Roman, and Dafna Rachok. 2020. "Beyond Western Theories: On the Use and Abuse of 'Homonationalism' in Eastern Europe." In *LGBTQ+ Activism in Central and Eastern Europe: Resistance, Representation and Identity*, edited by Radzhana Buyantueva and Maryna Shevtsova, 25–49. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-20401-3_2.

Massad, Joseph A. 2002. "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World." *Public Culture* 14, no. 2: 361–85.

Massad, Joseph A. 2007. *Desiring Arabs*. Reprint edition. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press.

Miller, Christopher. 2018. "'It's Even Worse Than Before': How The 'Revolution Of Dignity' Failed LGBTQ Ukrainians." RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, 2018. https://www.rferl.org/a/it-s-even-worse-than-before-how-the-revolution-of-dignity-failed-LGBTQ-ukrainians/29613348.html.

Mizielinska, Joanna, and Robert Kulpa. 2011. "'Contemporary Peripheries': Queer Studies, Circulation of Knowledge and East/West Divide." In *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*, edited by Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska, 11–24. New York: Routledge.

Mole, Richard C. M. 2017. "Homonationalism: Resisting Nationalist Co-Optation of Sexual Diversity." *Sexualities* 20, nos. 5–6: 660–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460716645800.

Moore, David Chioni. 2001. "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Toward a Global Postcolonial Critique." *PMLA* 116, no. 1: 111–28.

Moss, Kevin. 2014. "Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia." In *LGBTQ Activism and the Making of Europe*, edited by Phillip Ayoub and David Paternotte, 212–32. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137391766_10.

Mosse, George Lachmann. 1985. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. Place: H. Fertig.

Murray, David A. B. 2009. *Homophobias: Lust and Loathing across Time and Space*. Duke University Press.

Murray, David A. B. 2014. "Real Queer: 'Authentic' LGBTQ Refugee Claimants and Homonationalism in the Canadian Refugee System." *Anthropologica* 56, no. 1: 21–32.

Parker, Andrew, Mary Russo, Doris Sommer, and Patricia Yaeger, eds. 1991. "Introduction." In *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, 1–21. New York: Routledge.

Persson, Emil. 2015. "Banning 'Homosexual Propaganda': Belonging and Visibility in Contemporary Russian Media." *Sexuality & Culture* 19, no. 2: 256–74. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-014-9254-1.

Polyakova, Alina. 2014. "Strange Bedfellows: Putin and Europe's Far Right." *World Affairs* 177, no. 3: 36–40.

Puar, Jasbir. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.

_____. 2013. "Rethinking Homonationalism." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2, no. 45: 336–39.

_____. 2015. "Homonationalism as Assemblage: Viral Travels, Affective Sexualities." *Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais* 3, no. 1: 319–37.

Rao, Rahul. 2014. "Queer Questions." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 16, no. 2: 199–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/14616742.2014.901817.

Rexhepi, Piro. 2016. "From Orientalism to Homonationalism: Queer Politics, Islamophobia and Europeanization in Kosovo." *Southeastern Europe* 40, no. 1: 32–53. https://doi.org/10.1163/18763332-03903014.

Riabov, Oleg, and Tatiana Riabova. 2014. "The Remasculinization of Russia?" *Problems of Post-Communism* 61, no. 2: 23–35. https://doi.org/10.2753/PPC1075-8216610202.

Sabsay, Leticia. 2012. "The Emergence of the Other Sexual Citizen: Orientalism and the Modernisation of Sexuality." *Citizenship Studies* 16, nos. 5–6: 605–23. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2012.698484.

_____. 2013. "Queering the Politics of Global Sexual Rights?" *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 13, no. 1: 80–90. https://doi.org/10.1111/sena.12019.

Slootmaeckers, Koen. 2017. "The Litmus Test of Pride: Analysing the Emergence of the Belgrade 'Ghost' Pride in the Context of EU Accession." *East European Politics* 33, no. 4: 517–35. https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2017.1367290.

_____. 2019. "Constructing European Union Identity through LGBTQ Equality Promotion: Crises and Shifting Othering Processes in the European Union Enlargement." *Political Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (September): 346–61. https://doi.org/10.1177/1478929919877624.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty, Nancy Condee, Harsha Ram, and Vitaly Chernetsky. 2006. "Are We Postcolonial? Post-Soviet Space." *PMLA* 121, no. 3: 828–36.

Stella, Francesca, and Nadya Nartova. 2015. "Sexual Citizenship, Nationalism and Biopolitics in Putin's Russia." In *Sexuality, Citizenship and Belonging: Trans-National and Intersectional Perspectives*, edited by Francesca Stella, Yvette Taylor, Tracey Reynolds, and Antoine Rogers, 17–36. New York: Routledge.

Stella, Francesca, Yvette Taylor, Tracey Reynolds, and Antoine Rogers. 2015. "Introduction." In *Sexuality, Citizenship and Belonging: Trans-National and Intersectional Perspectives*, edited by Francesca Stella, Yvette Taylor, Tracey Reynolds, and Antoine Rogers, 1–16. New York: Routledge.

Stenning, Alison, and Kathrin Hörschelmann. 2008. "History, Geography and Difference in the Post-Socialist World: Or, Do We Still Need Post-Socialism?" *Antipode* 40, no. 2: 312–35. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2008.00593.x.

Stoler, Ann Laura. 1991. "Sexual Affronts and Racial Frontiers: National Identity, 'Mixed Bloods' and the Cultural Genealogies of Europeans in Colonial Southeast Asia." CRSO Working Paper #454. https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/51220.

Szulc, Lukasz. 2016. "Domesticating the Nation Online: Banal Nationalism on LGBTQ Websites in Poland and Turkey." *Sexualities* 19, no. 3: 304–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460715583604.

Szulc, Lukasz, and Kevin Smets. 2015. "Homonationalism and Western Progressive Narrative: Locating 'Conservative Heartlands' with Zenne Dancer (2012) and Its Western Re-views." *Asian Journal of Communication* 25, no. 6: 551–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2015.1007334.

Tlostanova, Madina. 2012. "Postsocialist ≠ Postcolonial? On Post-Soviet Imaginary and Global Coloniality." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 48, no. 2: 130–42.

_____. 2015. "Can the Post-Soviet Think? On Coloniality of Knowledge, External Imperial and Double Colonial Difference." *Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics* 1, no. 2. https://doi.org/10.17356/ieejsp.v1i2.38.

_____. 2016. "Decolonizing East European Memory: Between Postdependence Traumas and Neo-Imperial Obsessions." In *The New Heroes, the Old Victims: Politics of Memory in Russia and the Baltics*, edited by Igors Gubenko, Deniss Hanovs, and Vladislavs Malahovskis, 16–29. Riga: Zinatne.

Ulbricht, Alexej, Indraneel Sircar, and Koen Slootmaeckers. 2015. "Queer to Be Kind: Exploring Western Media Discourses About the 'Eastern Bloc' During the 2007 and 2014 Eurovision Song Contests." *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 2, no. 1: 155–72.

Van Schijndel, Mariska. 2017. "Viktor Orbán's Anti-Enlightenment Discourse and Nationalism Stir Homophobia in Hungary." *Diggit Magazine*, December 4, 2017. https://www.diggitmagazine.com/articles/viktor-orb-ns-anti-enlightenment-nationalism-and-homophobia-hungary.

Voice of America. 2014. "რას გვეუბნება ანტიდისკრიმინაციული კანონი?" https://www.amerikiskhma.com/a/georgia_homophobia_law/1905414.html.

Wahab, Amar. 2016a. "'Homosexuality/Homophobia Is Un-African'?: Un-Mapping Transnational Discourses in the Context of Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill/Act." *Journal of Homosexuality* 63, no. 5: 685–718. https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2015.1111105.

_____. 2016b. "Calling 'Homophobia' into Place (Jamaica)." *Interventions* 18, no. 6: 908–28. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2015.1130641.

Walker, Shaun, Christian Davies, and Robert Tait. 2019. "Anti-LGBTQ Rhetoric Stokes Tensions in Eastern Europe." *The Guardian*, October 25, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/25/anti-LGBTQ-rhetoric-stokes-tensions-in-eastern-europe.

Warner, Michael. 1999. "Normal and Normaller: Beyond Gay Marriage." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 5, no. 2: 119–71. https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-5-2-119.

Weiss, Meredith L., and Michael J. Bosia. 2013. *Global Homophobia: States, Movements, and the Politics of Oppression*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press.

Wilkinson, Cai. 2014. "Putting 'Traditional Values' Into Practice: The Rise and Contestation of Anti-Homopropaganda Laws in Russia." *Journal of Human Rights* 13, no. 3: 363–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2014.919218.

Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 2002. "Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation–State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences." *Global Networks* 2, no. 4: 301–34. https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0374.00043.

Wolff, Larry. 1994. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Woodcock, Shannon. 2011. "A Short History of the Queer Time of Romania, or Are We There yet? Let's
   Ask Madonna!" In *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European
   Perspectives*, edited by Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska, 63–84. New York: Routledge.
Yuval-Davis, Nira. 1997. *Gender and Nation*. London: SAGE Publications.

ANNA REKHVIASHVILI is a doctoral student in Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies at York University, Toronto, Canada. Her dissertation project looks at the experiences of feminist scholars and activists in the context of the rise of anti-gender politics in contemporary Hungary. She studies feminist experiences of living and working in an environment influenced by multiple turmoils around the term "gender."