Sexuality in Eastern European Scholarship

Thinking Backwardness and Difference through the Lens of Postcolonial Theory

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Acknowledgements

First of all I want to thank my supervisor prof. Berteke Waaldijk for invaluable feedback, inspiring conversations, a great sense of humour and always sharp and unexpected questions that made me think harder and write better. Thanks to Roman Kuhar, Judit Takacs, Roberto Kulpa, Joanna Mizieliñska, Aleksander Štulhofer, Gert Hekma and others for our e-mail communication. Thanks for their time and the information they shared with me. I have written this thesis only because I admire the work that they are doing.

I want to thank my fellow students at the Research Design seminars for their comments: Whitney, Milica, Anne, Goffredo, Safir, Alexandra, Viola, Efaf, Sandra, Lisa. Thanks to the teachers Bettina Papenburg and Domitila Olivieri for helpful advice. Thanks also to all the teachers that I had pleasure to get to know during my studies. Iris van der Tuin, Kathrin Thiele, Rosemarie Buikema, Sandra Ponzanesi and others introduced me to feminist and postcolonial theoretical thinking, as well as to feminist academic practice. Thanks to Anne-Marie Korte, for her feedback which put me on the right track, and for the books. Thanks to everyone at the Noster reading group, especially Rahil for her insightful feedback. Thanks to Eliza Steinbock for her feedback during the NOG day.

Warmest thanks to my Reading Group friends: Gianmaria, Adriano, Natashe, Virginia, Michelle, Mari, Anne and Goffredo, for our intellectually stimulating discussions and self-help sessions. Also I want to thank Kat for her patience. Thanks for brainstorming together and for reading my texts and always giving positive and encouraging feedback. Finally, I want to thank my parents, who trust me so much, even though they cannot read this thesis, as it is written in "global" English. *Ačiū, kad visada manimi pasitikite ir palaikote!*

08/08/2013, Utrecht

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Introduction

...my suggestion here is that the way in which debates within sexual politics are framed are already imbued with the problem of time, of progress in particular, and in certain notions of what it means to unfold a future of freedom in time

Judith Butler

Just before finishing writing this thesis I participated in a Gay Pride in Vilnius, Lithuania, my home country. It was the second time that a gay pride took place in Vilnius and the organization of this event, just like a few years ago in 2010, was surrounded by an intense societal dispute. The participation, as well as the scandal, has increased since the last time. In 2013 about 500 people, sexual minorities and their friends and families, also many foreign supporters, politicians, were marching down the main street of the old town of Vilnius. The Pride (called Baltic Pride 2013) was heavily protected by the police, which had a lot of work trying to withhold the right-wing protesters from throwing eggs at the Pride participants. Some eggs still landed on the clothes of EU politicians, without destroying however, the general euphoria of those for whom it was the first time to be "out of the closet".

This Pride was personally very important to me. I have been volunteering in Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) for some time before leaving to study abroad and ever since coming out as a lesbian to my family when I was 19, I am trying to live as openly as possible to fight the prejudices against LGBTQ[1] people through my everyday life. This event was a sign for me that Lithuanian society is becoming more open, that indeed, as they say in United States, 'it gets better'. There was also a side of the Pride which was of a great importance for

[1] Lesbian, gay bisexual, transsexual and queer. Sometimes I deliberately use "LGBT" instead of "LGBTQ", when referring to a particular movement, described by an author discussed.

my academic interests, especially in relation to this thesis. It was a great opportunity to see the workings of different power and knowledge hierarchies and the collision of different discourses, which I have been observing for a few years already. Starting from a brief description of the Pride, I would like to explain in this introduction what is at the heart of the political and theoretical problem that I am aiming to disentangle in this thesis.

Between the East and the West

The Pride was intentionally organized in July 2013, because it was the month when Lithuania started chairing European Union. As the leader of LGL Vladimiras Simonko explained to journalists, "this is the best opportunity for Lithuania to show, that European values are also appreciated here".[2] The connection of gay rights with the power of the EU and the general authority of "the West" became the centre of the debate about the Pride, while the actual demands and rights of LGBTQ people were displaced to the background and hardly discussed at all. On the one hand, gay activists and supporters of the Pride were stressing the necessity for Lithuania to finally Westernize and become more European. The Pride week was full of receptions at the foreign embassies, where politicians encouraged Lithuania's determination to go towards the so called Western standards of human rights. At the front line of the Pride march, the one which got the most of the eggs, half of the people were foreign activists and EU politicians. The EU flag was flying in the march and on the main stage during the speeches it was greeted with applause. Dozens of little U.S. flags decorated the only Vilnius night club, which hosted all of the Pride parties, including a concert by an American lesbian rock band *Betty*. But this is only one side of the picture.

On the other hand, protesters of the Pride were carrying posters, blaming Western European countries for being a place of sodomy and for seeking to demoralize and destroy the

[2] http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/kitamet-vilniuje-vel-planuojamos-homoseksualu-eitynes.d?id=58651183

presumably pure Lithuanian nation and family. As Claire Hemmings rightfully notices, nationalist discourses can easily reverse sexuality as a "Western freedom" into sexuality as "Western decadence" (Hemmings 2011, 146). "Go home! We don't want you in Lithuania!" aggressive protesters shouted at the colourful crowd of people. While a big part of participants were indeed foreign, the rest of the crowd live either around the corner, or came to Vilnius from the smaller cities of Lithuania, just to participate in the Pride. Regardless, the Pride as the whole was interpreted by protesters as an invasion of Western moral decadence. Even more interestingly, one poster said "EU = USSR", in this way signalling, that gay rights are understood by the radical-right as a new form of imperialism and foreign pressure on Lithuania – an Eastern European country with the history of many occupations, Soviet Union being the last of them. While these words, slogans and posters directly reflect only an opinion of a small radical group of nationalistic people, they give an insight into widely held societal imaginaries as well.

For these reasons, participation in this event reaffirmed my conviction about the important role that the imaginaries about "the East" and "the West" have in the discussion about the rights of sexual minorities, sexual education, etc., in Eastern Europe, Lithuania being only one example among others. As Judith Butler in the opening quote suggests, sexual politics are always framed in relation to the notions of "what it means to unfold the future of freedom in time" (Butler 2009), and as she explains in the article "Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time", time is often imagined as neatly pinned down to a certain location, a relevant geographical space. "The West" becomes the space of the radical "now" of sexual politics, the most advanced, progressive place of sexual freedom, making non-Western others both temporarily backward and less sexually advanced. Drawing from her argument, I propose that to understand the discourses of sexuality in Eastern Europe, one must take into account the particular social imaginaries which link sexuality with time and space, with

geography and history, and especially with the images of the post-communist nationalist "here and now" *versus* the images of "the West". What is at the focus of this thesis is the specific *scholarly* discourse of sexuality, academic texts about sexuality in Eastern Europe and the way it deals with the social imaginary of time, space and progress.

Before proceeding to actually explain these imaginaries and my research object choice, I must clarify what I mean by the concept "imaginary", which should not be understood as something opposite to "reality". Imaginaries neither should be understood as equivalent to the theoretical schemas to explain the world in an academic way, although they can reinforce each other. Rather, as Charles Taylor puts it, social imaginaries are the ways in which people make sense of their existence, of how they fit in the world among other people and things, as well as normative notions and expectations from life (Taylor 2002, 106). This concept of "imaginary", as a certain common social construction is close to the one used by Benedict Anderson in his famous book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (1991). Anderson argued that national communities are socially constructed, thus they give the sense of unity for the groups of people, who do not actually know each other on the face-to-face basis. This does not mean, argues Anderson that these communities are not real or authentic, but simply that they are based on the social imaginary (Anderson 1991, 7-8). Similarly, Edward Said coined the concept of 'imaginary geographies' (Said 1979) to talk about popular perceptions about geographical places, which are taken for granted and thus powerful, regardless their ability to represent reality. In line with these definitions, I use the concept of imaginary to speak about social constructions, which determine how people perceive geography, temporality or sexuality.

Post-communism and postcolonial theory

In this thesis my aim is to demonstrate how *academic* discourses about sexualities are dealing with, criticizing and sometimes getting lost in the social imaginaries about "the East" and the

West". I ask how knowledge about sexuality is produced in relation to imaginary geographies and vice-versa – how imaginaries about geography and temporality are reproduced in the scholarship on sexuality? Why is it important to ask this? From my experience in activism and following the media, "the West" in Eastern (and Western) European societies is taken for granted to be the place of sexual freedom, to be more progressive, more advanced than the East in the sphere of sexual rights, while the East is seen as a backward place, lagging behind or actively resisting more sexual freedom (or debauchery, depending on who is talking). This dualist imaginary is based on the Western-centric progress narrative and is unquestionable among activists who fight for sexual freedom in the human rights framework. In a reversed form it is also taken for granted among those who would be happy to suppress sexuality under religious, nationalistic and bourgeois moral norms as I will demonstrate it in the Chapter 2.

While reading scholarly books about sexuality in Eastern Europe published in the last ten years, I realised that this dualist imaginary remains intact also in the works which aim to provide an alternative and sophisticated academic perspective on social reality. This observation inspired me to take a critical look at the Eastern European academic works and reveal the ways in which they take for granted East-West dualism and the progress narrative that it implies – this is the main goal of the Chapter 3. What seems to be a common sense is actually problematic both politically and from a critical theoretical point of view. Actually, as it becomes clear in the Chapter 4, even the reflection on the common sense understandings of "the East" and "the West", can lead to simple inversion of stereotypes, instead of eradication of the dualist way of thinking. How do we as scholars make sense of Eastern European reality and the pervasive dualism, which operates in the sphere of sexual politics, without getting trapped in the same "technologies of the presumed" (Hemmings 2011, 19) that we aim to criticize? Even if there is no single answer, we have to do our best to avoid the illusion about the "transparency" of an intellectual (Spivak 1988a, 74-75) and instead, as Gayatri

Chakravorty Spivak says, understand the responsibility and institutional situatedness of those, who have the privilege to represent.

The biggest inspiration for this critical endeavour for me was postcolonial theory and especially feminist and queer authors who work within the postcolonial frame. The application of postcolonial theory for the post-Communist context is, however, not unproblematic. At first sight the conviction of Western superiority, characteristic to people on the both imaginary sides of the fallen Iron Curtain, falls perfectly in the frame of the global illusion about the Western sexual progressiveness in contrast to the backwardness of the rest of the world, which has been theorized by people like Jasbir Puar, Joseph Massad and Judith Butler. The well-known authors I have just mentioned are talking mainly about the relationship between the Western and Arab "worlds", and not for example, the specific situation of the post-communist context. This is connected with the fact that postcolonial theory, which inspired critique of the Western hegemony in the politics of sexuality, comes from the point of view of regions and peoples which were colonized by Western powers.

Eastern Europe, on the contrary, has not been colonized by the West, although it fits into the frame of issues, which characterize postcolonial societies (Chioni Moore 2001, 114). Therefore, the global illusion of Western precedence takes a particular form in Eastern Europe, as it is framed in the narrative of the post-communist *return to Europe*. In the narrative of the "return", countries, societies and individuals in Eastern Europe are presumed to be lagging behind Western Europe on the teleological road of Western modernization, because of their suspension for a half of the century in the "history's freezer" (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2012, 23), Soviet Union. As Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizieliñska notice, the Soviet experiment is not understood as an alternative project of modernity (however failed), thus leaving the path of Western modernity the only possible, desirable and even the only "normal" one. Soviet occupation is therefore taken to be only a deviation from this path

(Ibid.). Therefore the critique of the West from the side of post-communism must take into account that the experience of Eastern Europe is that of the Europe, which feels that it was forcefully *stopped from becoming* the true Europe.

The postcolonial theoretical frame therefore has to be attuned to the specificities of Eastern European post-communism and only in a careful way can be a used as a tool for understanding complicated East-West relationships. The inherent potential of Europeanness, according to the narrative of the return, is pulling Eastern European countries inevitably to come back to their European "home". As Jacques Derrida has put it, after the *perestroika* and the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989, countries of the former Eastern Bloc joined the almost 'planetary' tendency to see the European model as exemplary. The geographical, political and symbolic center of cultural hegemony, Europe has become the object of desire, the heading for CEE societies he argued (Derrida 1990, 37-38). Derrida was sceptical about the advantages of thinking this process as a "return" to Europe, as a "reunion", and questioned the very idea of the origins of Europe, as if they simply have to be "rediscovered" in the post-Cold War era (Derrida 1990, 8). His scepticism echoed numerous post-socialist theorists who criticise the popular discourse of CEE transformations as inevitable "transition" towards the pre-determined endpoint of Western style liberal democracy (e.g. Burawoy and Verdery 1999). However, the narrative of "the return" remained extremely influential in thinking about post-communist Eastern European realities[3].

Sexuality and knowledge

How do scholars deal with the imaginary of the Eastern European necessary 'return to Europe', when talking about sexuality in post-communism? To what extent is postcolonial theory helpful to answer questions about the discourse of Eastern European scholars? These are the two driving questions of this thesis, which reflect the double sided character of my

[3] I will talk more about it in Chapter 3, when presenting the work by Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka.

research. First, I am interested in the connections of the imaginaries about geographies, temporalities and sexualities, about "the East", "the West" and LGBTQ politics in the discourse of scholars. Second, I want to explore the possibilities and limitations of the application of postcolonial theory in the post-communist context in the field of epistemological analysis. But why is the main object of my analysis the *scholarship* of sexuality? Why not to analyze the complex node of sexual identities, embodied experiences, choices of lifestyles, political discourses, activist achievements and artistic representations?

First of all, research on the academic discourses is extremely lacking in the field of gender and sexuality studies in Eastern Europe, as much as it is in post-communist postcolonial analysis. Postcolonial theory at its best (I will present an overview of the most influential works in the Chapter 1) has focused on the questions of epistemology and criticized the position and discourse of the scholars who aim to represent the realities of "the other" to "the West". Postsocialist studies so far have largely avoided these epistemological questions (Chari and Verdery 2009, 11). Moreover, the questions of knowledge seem to point straight to the questions of power. Sexuality is not merely a recipient of power, which merely adapts to or revolts against the changes inaugurated by historical and political transformations. Although it is the most naturalized sphere of life, sexuality is not only about our intimate desires and authentic embodied experiences. Sexuality is also a *discourse*, which, as Michel Foucault has famously shown in his *History of Sexuality Volume I,* should be seen as "an especially dense transfer point for relations of power" (Foucault 1978, 103). Sexuality therefore must be approached not as a natural domain which power and knowledge tries to lay hands on, argues Foucault, but as:

> a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, *the formation of special knowledges*, the strengthening of

> controls and resistances, are linked to one another, *in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power* (Foucault 1978, 105-106; emphasis mine)

Sexuality, according to Foucault, is a societal construct, the field of power play and the field of knowledge, the source of creation of "truths" about society and individual. Following the concept of sexuality developed by Foucault it is important therefore to understand how sexuality as a scholarly discourse, as a scientific knowledge in many ways participates in the major narratives which continue to structure understandings and power hierarchies of the post-Cold War reality. I was curious how scholarly discourses deal with the imaginations about "the East" and "the West" and the temporal progress narratives, and whether they manage to remain critical, or, on the contrary start working "in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power" (Foucault 1978, 106). An analysis of the three major books, collections of articles about post-communist sexualities, which I will present in the following chapter, give a significant insight into the popular societal imaginaries as well as the ways that scholars try to deal with them.

Outline

In the theoretical Chapter 1 I introduce the object of my analysis – three scholarly books on Eastern European sexualities. I describe the importance of these books and the relevance of my research. I explain some methodological and ethical issues, which I encountered in my research. Then I present the research question, my feminist postcolonial approach and the goal of my project. Finally in the last two sections I elaborate more on my take on postcolonial theory. First I explain how postcolonial is applicable in the sphere of global sexual discourses and politics and then I ask specifically about the applicability of postcolonial in the region of Eastern Europe. Second, I elaborate more on the special focus that postcolonial theory provided for the analysis of scholarly texts and the issues which have to be taken into account when approaching my research object from this perspective.

In Chapter 2 I present more thoroughly the context of my particular theoretical intervention. I present the nationalistic discourse and its importance for the scholarship of sexuality, which aims to resist this discourse. Most importantly, I show how the images of "the West" are sexualized in different and contradictory ways, either presenting it as an idealized place of sexual freedom or as a demonized place of sexual debauchery. Then I analyze the prefaces from two of the books, which present an example of "Western" scholarly gaze towards Eastern Europe, to open up the discussion of problematic orientalising presumptions about "the East" that this discourse implies. I ask about the connection between this "Western" representation and the imaginaries of the self by the Eastern European scholars themselves. This leads me straight into Chapter 3, dedicated to the postcolonial analysis of the scholarship of sexuality by Eastern European scholars.

Chapters 3 and 4 are devoted for an analysis of two narratives about East-West relationships, which I call, respectively "backwardness" and "difference". In Chapter 3 I analyse selected chapters from the two of the books and demonstrate the problematic one-sided presumptions about "the West" and re-production of orientalising imaginaries about "the East". Using postcolonial feminist theory I show how sexual freedom works as a temporal scale, in which different geographical locations are placed, forming and illusion of Western-oriented sexual progress and Eastern backwardness. I ask about the theoretical and political issues that this way of thinking might induce. In the final, and probably the most innovative chapter, I take one step further and analyse examples of critical feminist approaches towards Western-centrism, which stress the differences of post-communism. These selected texts are rare attempts to produce critique of Western privilege in the sphere of sexual politics from the point of view of Eastern Europe. In Chapter 4 I analyze the way authors in these texts employ postcolonial theory and point out slippages, which reproduce the taken for granted societal imaginaries.

Albeit still relatively small, the body of scholarship on sexuality in Eastern Europe is rapidly growing. It is high time to take a more careful look at the way production of knowledge about sexuality participates in larger discourses and power plays. My research, which covers a significant part of this scholarship – three major collections of articles – aims to provide such an epistemological reflection.

1. Theoretical frame

Research Object

At this moment (summer 2013) there exist only three edited volumes in English[4] which are dedicated to discussing the questions of sexuality in post-communist Europe[5]: *Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia* (2005), edited by Aleksandar Stulhofer and Theo Sandfort; *Beyond the Pink Curtain. Everyday Life of LGBT People in Eastern Europe* (2007), edited by Judit Takács and Roman Kuhar; and *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives* (2011), edited by Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizieliñska. These books, all written in the last ten years, form the main object of my analysis.[6] Why did I decide to approach these books and how am I doing it? I will explain this before giving a more detailed account of my theoretical framework, which consists of a combination of postcolonial and feminist/queer poststructuralist approaches and critical tools.

Writing my thesis about sexuality in Eastern Europe and studying in Utrecht University, it was not so easy to get the hard copies of the relevant books – not a single one of them was standing on the shelf at the UU library. The most recent publication on Eastern European sexualities, *De-centring Western Sexualities*, first came into my hands in a form of copied and stapled texts with many critical comments on the margins – a Lithuanian PhD student from Canada was visiting me in the Netherlands and she had the copy of this book. Later I found a hard copy of this book in Amsterdam women's library *Atria*. I was obviously

[4] There is a lot of scholarship done on sexualities in the national languages of different Eastern European countries. English however, is the *lingua franca* for sexuality studies scholars across Eastern Europe as much as elsewhere. Global English in many ways has replaced Russian, which used to be a means of communication for people from the different communist countries. Basically only English written texts nowadays can circulate widely and be read by people of different language backgrounds in the region.

[5] At July 15, just before the last corrections of this thesis, a new book was released, called *Queer Visibility in Postsocialist Cultures*, edited by Nárcisz Fejes and Andrea P. Balogh.

[6] For ease of use I will call them respectively *Sexuality and Gender*, *Beyond the Pink Curtain* and *De-Centring Western Sexualities.*

the first person to borrow the book from there – the pages still had a smell of the *Ashgate's*[7] printing-ink. This book intrigued me with a bold application of postcolonial critique, criticising some of the presumptions about the sexuality in Eastern Europe, which I used to take for granted. So I started researching more sources – that's how I found *Sexuality and Gender*, the first ever book on post-communist sphere from this perspective, published by the publishing giant *Routledge*[8] a few years earlier. By a happy coincidence, just in a couple of weeks I met a teacher who was working on the infamous case of *Pussy Riot* and had just ordered this book to provide some background information on the unfamiliar post-communist context.[9] She kindly suggested lending me the book for my thesis project. Finally, I found an online version of *Beyond the Pink Curtain*. To my excitement, all the texts were legally accessible online[10], enabled by the Peace Institute[11]. Later I got this book also in a hard copy from another university in the Netherlands, just as untouched as the other two.

The cleanness of the margins of these books signified to me that the context of post-communist Europe is still a "clean" white spot on the imaginary map of the hundreds of local and international students, who enrol every year in those many programs dedicated to feminist/queer/gender studies that one can find in the Netherlands. These books are not a part of the study material at any Dutch university class and Eastern European sexualities is hardly

[7] Ashgate Publishing is a United Kingdom based academic book and journal publisher since 1967, specialized in social sciences and humanities. It has notably published a collection of articles about gender in Eastern Europe, called *Women and Citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe* and edited by Jasmina Lukic, Joanna Regulska and Darja Zaviršek in 2006.

[8] Routledge is a well known global publisher of academic books and journals, based in London, UK.

[9] "Everything is just the opposite of what you expect it to be" commented my teacher Anne-Marie Korte, a feminist professor of theology, about the *Pussy Riot* case. The specificity of the relationships between the church and the state, public-private divide, secularization of society, many societal believes, including gender roles – many aspects of life in Russia are quite different from the Western context. Therefore any kind of feminist theorizing on such complicated issues as *Pussy Riot* case have to take this context into account. The books such as *Sexuality and Gender* serve as a source of background information, although at the same time it might create an illusion of homogeneity of the "region". See for example the critique of Laurie Essig (2008).

[10] http://www.mirovni-institut.si/Publikacija/Detail/en/publikacija/Beyond-the-Pink-Curtain-Everyday-Life-of-LGBT-People-in-Eastern-Europe/

[11] Peace Institute is a Ljuljana based non-profit research institute since 1991, established by civil society activists and concerned with linking academic research with urgent societal issues.

an object of research for local scholars, except from some MA theses[12]. This is of course something to be worked on, given the persistence of Cold War stereotypes in the Dutch society at large and in the academy in particular. Obviously the lack of interest is not universal. *Beyond the Pink Curtain*, for example, is used as a teaching material at the University of Ljubljana, ELTE University of Budapest (by the editors) and the University of Toronto. It has become a material for numerous MA theses at the Central European University as well as several PhD students from USA and Western Europe. *Sexuality and Gender* was also used in the classes of University of Ljubljana, as well as the London School of Economics. There have been numerous reviews of the books written, *De-Centring Western Sexualities*, for example, has 12 reviews in peer-reviewed journals. All in all, the three books seem to circulate in the region as well as outside of it, disseminating different knowledges and theoretical points. At this moment these three books are the only collections of this kind, which relate the focus on the post-communist region with the topic of sexuality.[13]

The three books are different from each other quite significantly in the editors' approach towards the subject matter. The individual chapters of all the three books are also diverse in their method, approach and object of analysis. A few trends, however, would be the following. *Sexuality and Gender* has more texts coming from the social science background, basing their argument in statistic analysis, but has also many essays written from the cultural studies perspective. It was born out of a conference, which took place in Dubrovnik in 2001, just like *Beyond the Pink Curtain* is a collection of papers mainly taken from the conference in Ljubljana in 2005[14]. *De-Centring Western Sexualities* is, differently, more of an individual initiative by the editors, coming from their wish to make a theoretical intervention. Although

[12] From the personal e-mail correspondence with Gert Hekma, one of the most prominent lesbian and gay studies scholar in the country, a professor at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The cases of *Pussy Riot* and *Femen* are quite an exception, but I cannot elaborate more on this point in this thesis.

[13] Thanks to Aleksander Stulhofer, Judit Takács, Roman Kuhar, Joanna Mizieliñska and Robert Kulpa for sharing the information about the production of the books.

[14] http://www2.mirovni-institut.si/razlicnost/eng/referati.html

only *Beyond the Pink Curtain* is explicitly devoted to the LGBT rights issues, actually the majority of the articles in *De-Centring Western Sexualities*, as well as *Sexuality and Gender* are also mostly connected with the sexualities which might be called minority, or queer[15]. Some of the chapters are also devoted to a discussion of what can be called women's issues (human trafficking, gender violence) and more widely understood gender issues (gender regime, artistic representation).[16] The approaches in all three books vary from anthropological, social sciences, to the analysis of art and philosophical reflections.

Although in different ways, all three books aspire to cover the same geographical, political, historical area, which is then called in the titles, respectively, "postcommunist", "Eastern European" or "Central and Eastern European". The region, depending on editors' attitude is called differently. Nevertheless, the countries covered in these collections are from the same "assortment" (the choice of countries was mostly determined by the ability of authors from each country to contribute), all marked by the histories and memories of the failed project of communism and a certain combination of power relations in the contemporary world[17]. Similarly, they all aim to talk about the experience and structures of "sexuality", "sexualities" or, exclusively, "LGBT" experiences in this region. This specific combination of "sexuality" *and* the particular "region" motivated me to focus on these books even if such a narrowing down excluded other similar articles which were, for example, printed in differently accumulated edited volumes (e.g. Oleksy, Petö and Waaldijk 2008; Downing and Gillett 2011)). The choice of research object was crucial for my findings. As the geographical binding implies shared histories and memories, as well as future hopes, the

[15] The word queer, however, is very rare in all the books, more often it appears only in the latest one – a phenomenon, which probably requires more attention than I can devote in this thesis.

[16] I paid less attention to this part of the books, as research on women's issues is already quite well established in Eastern Europe. Instead I focused on sexuality.

[17] The list of countries is: Serbia, Slovenia (all books), Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Belarus, Estonia, Russia, Slovakia (two of the books), Bulgaria, Macedonia (only *De-Centring Western Sexualities*), Lithuania, Hungary, East Germany, Latvia, Croatia (only *Beyond the Pink Curtain*). Some of the articles are written taking into account a few countries as a unity, for example "former Yugoslavia" in Kevin Moss' article in *Sexuality and Gender.*

sexuality in these texts is inevitably discussed in relation to geography and temporality. Hence it becomes also the subject and object in the temporal narratives of the books I analyse. And inevitably, the region is not only represented, but also produced, performed through these sexualized narratives, just like sexuality is produced through the geographical and temporal fantasies.

My choice to focus on these books was determined by a wish to record and scrutinize the first steps of the emerging post-communist scholarly work on sexualities, as much as this is possible in the increasingly globalised world. I wanted to take a closer look at the scholars who are claiming to analyze Eastern European sexualities *from inside* (and to the large extent the texts in these books are written from the local perspective) and to see how they establish their authority in writing about sexuality. Obviously, in this endeavour I was, as anyone else who aims to analyze Eastern Europe, either "indigenous" or not, constrained by my linguistic abilities. Therefore, I also have not taken into account any of the work done on sexualities in the national languages of this region, not even in my native Lithuanian[18]. As English has become *lingua franca* for the different countries of the region, only English publications can actually circulate freely inside the region, as well as outside of it and be approachable for the people of all different Eastern European and non-Eastern European nationalities. Thus it makes "us" all, in a way, outsiders in relation to "our" region at the same time as it makes "us" a part of the global scholarly economy.

The three books form 'the object of my thesis', but they have also influenced my thinking and critical points. [19] Thus simultaneously with being the object of research, they are also an important part of my worldview, and consequentially, my methodology. While I had certain knowledge about the particular Lithuanian context, when it comes to the politics of

[18] For example, work by Artūras Tereškinas.

[19] It might be useful here to remember Karen Barad's notion of intra-action, which refers to the inseparability of the "object of observation" from the "observer" (Barad 2010, 253). Both do not exist as such, but are created in the encounter.

sexuality my knowledge about other Eastern European contexts was very scattered and mainly based on Lithuanian perspective. These books provided me with much wider empirical context on the sexualities, politics, nationalisms, ideologies of various kinds. As feminist scholarship is born out of and always keep in touch with emancipatory political movements, I also to a large extent I also share the political commitment of the authors I analyse. However, I still feel the need to establish a critical distance from these works and analyse the main presumptions that they are based on, even if (or maybe because of the fact that!) I might be equally immersed in these presumptions. Hence my analysis of these texts should be probably understood as a meditation of the ideas which I partially share with the authors I question, inspired by postcolonial critique. Hopefully it will be of interest for sexuality researchers and those interested in the post-Cold War imaginaries on the both imaginary sides of the fallen Iron Curtain.

Research Questions and Approach

While reading these books I ask: *How are the imaginaries of sexuality connected with the temporal and geographical imaginaries of "the East" and "the West" in the post-communist scholarly discourse*? *What are advantages and limitations of postcolonial theory in an epistemological analysis of post-communist scholarship of sexuality?* There is not a one clear method which would allow me to do the analysis of the texts in a way which would lead me straightforwardly to the answers of these questions. Therefore my inquiry is simply a careful interpretation, based on my theoretical postcolonial feminist awareness and politically contextualized knowledge, but first and foremost, on the close reading of the books *Sexuality and Gender, Beyond the Pink Curtain* and *De-Centring Western Sexualities.* Although there is a lot to see in these books, I pay the biggest attention to what is not explicitly said and argued but rather taken for granted, presumed to be the common knowledge between the authors and the readers. I focus on rhetorical strategies, and especially become alarmed when the images

of the "East" and the "West" come on stage to support the arguments about the knowledge of sexuality. I am interested in the creation of academic authority and the presumed reader.

My analysis thus should be seen as a certain intervention at the epistemological level which can provide new insights by taking a critical distance from usually unquestionable ways of telling truths. A big influence for my approach was the recent project by Clare Hemmings. Her book *Why Stories Matter. The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011) presents a ruthless and at the same time loving analysis of the narratives that feminists employ in establishing textual authority and proving political points. Hemmings demonstrates the pervasiveness of three narratives – progress, loss and return, as she calls them – in the feminist academic journals. There narratives are never neutral, but picture feminist past, present and future in different colors. Hemmings demonstrates how through these stories a textual affect is created, which establish the subject positions of the author as well as that of the reader says. "We agree or disagree with the narrative strand we encounter partly through how it constitutes us, what kind of subject it promotes to the status of feminist subject, and what that means for our own claims so to become" (Hemmings 2011, 133). Therefore one must be attentive to the personal investments in certain narratives in order to realize what kind of "technologies of the presumed" (Hemmings 2011, 19) might be involved in forming feminist knowledges. Such reflection is essential for critical theory, which wants to keep the distance from the societal narratives it wants to explore.

Hemmings, to put it in a nutshell, makes a twofold analysis. First she looks for coherence inside narrative structure of feminist stories and second, she connects these narratives with the mainstream discourses, which are often criticized and opposed by feminists. The same double move I hope to make in the analysis of the three books, paying a special attention to the way temporal narrative affects the position of the scholar and the reader. My analysis is, of course, also different from Hemmings in many ways. I take her

analytic frame to a different field of enquiry, from mainstream Western feminist theory to the scholarship of sexuality in the post-communist context. Her attention to the temporal narratives I attune to the specifically postcolonial/post-communist mode of critique of different manifestations of Western-centrism and imaginaries of the sexual progress and 'return to Europe'. Hemmings herself also pays quite a lot of attention to the Eurocentric presumptions in feminist theory, by showing how essentially anti-feminist they are. As she says, the fixing of non-Western and post-socialist contexts as the places of perpetual gender inequality and inherently backward, makes gender equality the privilege of the postmodern West. At the same time it fixes the past of the postmodern West as the time of feminist struggle, which is now surpassed. In this double move, the *place* of the West becomes the *time* of the now and the now is the time of gender equality, at the same time relegating other places into the time of the past, which is the time *before* gender equality. In this way the actual struggle for the equal rights becomes eradicated as irrelevant and the achievement of gender equality appears as historically inevitable and natural, something that happens "without upsetting families, or challenging democratic imaginary" (Hemmings 2011, 8-10).

Hemmings's attention to the intertwining of geographical and temporal imaginations in thinking gender and sexuality is very important in my project. But before delving into the detailed analysis of the three books, which forms the core of my thesis, I want to explain more thoroughly my theoretical postcolonial approach. Therefore in the next two sections I will outline my theoretical framework for studying "sexuality" as a concept in connection to the narrative of the "return to Europe". First of all I will present the interrelatedness between postcolonial and feminist/queer analysis of sexuality, power relations and imaginative geographies. Then I will show how postcolonial feminist approach is already employed in the analysis of post-socialist context. Finally I stress the importance of raising the questions of

epistemology in the scholarly work at the crossroads of feminist, postcolonial and post-communist studies.

Postcolonial Theory (I): Sexuality, Geography and Progress

The sexualisation of a geopolitical imaginary (and "geopolitization", so to say, of sexuality) in the context of Eastern Europe is not surprising for those feminist scholars who see sexuality at the very core of thinking the progress narrative of Western modernity and its' "others". Postcolonial theory in feminist and queer modes is a crucial area of analysis of this intersection of power dynamics. Here I will outline its tools and insights which are useful in trying to make sense of post-communist context and the role of sexuality in the fantasies of the "return to Europe". Although post-communist reality is not the primary region of interest for most of the postcolonial theory inspired authors that I am employing here, I presume that to some extent their insights are helpful in thinking Eastern Europe vis-á-vis "the West". I am aware of the complexities that the usage of postcolonial as the primary analytical tools poses in the region of Eastern Europe[20]. Most of these complexities are actually not that different from using any other theory, such as feminism, which was developed, just like postcolonial, mainly in the contexts of the universities in U.S. and Western Europe. I agree with Stuart Hall (1996), that the world is "postcolonial" in many different ways, and therefore I pay a lot of attention to the context in which the theories that I am using have been produced and keep an eye on the specificity of the post-communism, where I want to apply these theories.

In the well-known book *Imperial Leather: Race. Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1995), the feminist postcolonial thinker Anne McClintock demonstrates how the Western projects of imperialism were connected to the temporal imaginaries. The

[20] Eastern Europe is very much an in between region – historically it has been colonized by the West and has been a colonized itself, but recently mainly suffered from the colonization by Russia and the Soviet Union and therefore started seeing the West as the savior from the colonization (Chione Moore 2001). For this and other reasons Eastern Europe has a very different relationship with the West than the literally postcolonial parts of the world (see Chari and Verdery 2009). More on the advantages and disadvantages of using postcolonial in post-communist context see Owczarzak (2009), Hladic (2011).

most far-away, the most unknown, most non-European places are figured as being back in time, as backward.

> Imperial progress across the space of empire is figured as a journey *backward in time* to an anachronistic moment of prehistory. By extension, the return journey to Europe is seen as rehearsing the evolutionary logic of historical progress" *forward and upward* to the apogee of the Enlightenment in the European metropolis (McClintock 1995, 40; emphasis mine)

Sexuality, gender and race become markers of temporally restricted and spatially located backwardness. The supposed backwardness is epitomized in the figure of lascivious, irrational, sexually active black man, the fantasy, created in the modern colonial European mind (McClintock 1995, see also 113; Mosse 1985, 134). The temporal progress thus coincides with the sexual progress and is unequally distributed along geographic and racial lines, the white European spaces being supposedly the places of sexual progressiveness and civilization, while the racialized black spaces are imagined as the places of dark sexualized backwardness.

Contemporary Western context presents slightly different ways of employing sexuality in the mechanism of "othering". Together with changing moral norms of the Western societies, also the attributes to be attached to the non-Western "others" changes. Recently there has been an increase in the scholarly interest about the fantasies of Western sexual *emancipation* as a marker of the temporal stages of development for non-European "others". Many scholars (Massad 2002, Puar 2007, Butler 2009, Mepschen et al. 2010, Scott 2011) has focused on this topic, as well as a few notable international conferences have been held recently.[21] A special attention in this context goes to the universalistic feminist and gay rights discourses and issues of islamophobia, which seems to be a powerful form of racism in

[21] Amsterdam 2011, New York 2013.

contemporary Western societies.[22] Judith Butler, in her article which connects the secular imaginaries of temporal progress, gay rights and islamophobic sentiments in the Western societies, notices that Europe and modernity are very often depicted as "the privileged site where sexual radicalism can and does take place" (Butler 2009, 17). On the basis of this depiction, which appropriates sexual politics for racist means, non-western "others" are claimed to be inherently homophobic and misogynous, says Butler.

This contemporary European social imagery, as Butler explains it, is rather different from the self-image of Europeans from the Enlightenment up until XX century, described by McClintock, when sexual freedom was not an attribute and pride of the Western civilization, rather the opposite of its 'high morality'. This has changed in the common Western imaginary, at least for those invested in the notions of progress and freedom. Indeed, since the sexual revolution has been inaugurated in the self-image of Western societies, the "other" societies are now rendered to be back in time of the narrative of the sexual progress, still stuck in the modes of thought, which were characteristic to the West in the past. Hence, since the European secular democracy became to be understood as implying sexual freedom, that is, as a "sexular" democracy, as Joan W. Scott has playfully called it, the Muslim "other" started to signify not only excess, but at the same time also sexual restraint, especially repressive for women and gays (Scott 2012, 17). Repression of sexuality, which is supposedly overcome in Western societies in the marching of the societal progress, is relegated thus to the "other" cultures, the Western *past* stage is the *now* of the "others". This understanding is so pervasive, that the "others" are also inclined to believe in their lagging behind on the teleological road of modernity and often embrace this identity of the historical 'straggler' and turn to conservative nationalism. While in the idealized West, actually, as Hemmings puts it, "whatever

[22] Although some might argue that islamophobia is connected more with the cultural discrimination and not with the racism per se, I would argue differently. For me, as for (quote), islamophobia only shows how racism was never exclusively connected with the color but more with the minority position and the attached perception of the inner qualitative difference. Such an understanding might complicate to easy schemas and see racism also among differently white or even differently European people.

postfeminist discourse proclaims, young Western women do not occupy self evident positions of increased sexual agency, competency, or control, either compared to their own mothers or compared to non-Western women" (Hemmings 2011, 145). And neither, I would add to Hemmings, sexual minorities in the West live a life free of social stigma and without the risk of homophobic violence.

That fact that gay rights, just like gender equality are becoming more and more discursively used as an attribute of Western civilization, has become an object of critical scholarly reflection. Postcolonial critique inspired analysis show the implication of the movement of sexual emancipation in privileged Western societies in the creation of racialized, dehumanized "others". In dealing with this problematic topic probably no one has put the main argument as lucidly as Jasbir Puar, who introduced the concept 'homonationalism', or 'homosexual nationalism' in a book *Terrorist Assemblages. Homonationalism in Queer Times (2007).* According to her sophisticated analysis of the contemporary political discourses of the U.S. and some Western European contexts, "homosexual subjects are complicit with heterosexual nationalist formations rather than inherently or automatically excluded from or opposed to them" (Puar 2007, 4). Puar shows that the discursive inclusion of previously marginalised subjectivities of *queer* (read – sexually deviant, pervert or, without negative connotations, LGBTQ) people in the normative framework of society works together with the production of *new queer* (read, racially and thus, by definition, sexually deviant, or Muslim, that is "terrorist") people. Unfortunately, this formal inclusion does not actually mean the end of the discrimination of LGBTQ people – it only distributes institutionalized hatred according to racial and class lines.

Puar's impressively intersectional analysis, among other things, brings the framework of Edward Said's "orientalism" into a combination with queer theory. She demonstrates, how identity-based Western gay rights movements cannot escape reproduction

of the mainstream nationalist and orientalist discourse, while simultaneously the orientalised "other" becomes the bearer of the sign of sexual deviance (Puar 2007, 75). Puar's engagement with gay rights politics and queer critique in combination with postcolonial critique is pioneering, especially in a way, in which she bluntly shows that gay rights are becoming a part of the mainstream orientalising discourse in a few Western countries.[23]

Puar is surely not the only one, but probably the most influential one in the queer scholarly circles, who brought Said's "orientalism" in a controversial combination with the analysis of sexuality and gender. It has been done also in the context of Eastern Europe – the critical tools, developed by Said were employed also by some authors in post-communist context with an explicitly feminist focus. Women's issues are however, of the primary interest in these texts, while queer sexuality as a main topic comes up only in the last few years. For example, Joanna Regulska already employs Said's ideas in an article "The New Other European Women" which was written in 1996, in the light of the beginning of EU enlargement towards East. According to Regulska, post-communist societies are produced by the dominant Western European discourses as "lagging behind" and thus often excluded from becoming true Europeans. As Regulska puts it, the discourses of European enlargement show "striking signs of similarity in the way in which the construction of the Other has been produced by Europeans in regard to both the Orient and Africa" (Regulska 1996, 43). Her article aims to uncover the gendered aspects of this "inner" European orientalization and is probably one of the first attempts to combine postcolonial, feminist and post-communist approaches.

Postcolonial theory inspired criticism was also one of the inspirations for Kulpa and Mizieliñska, the editors of the book *De-centring Western Sexualities,* who argue against the conventional understanding of Eastern Europe as lagging behind Western Europe in sexual

[23] Already before Puar's book, in 2003 Lisa Duggan has coined the term homonormativity, to point out the mainstreaming of gay activism.

politics (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2011). In the Chapter 4 I will focus on these applications of postcolonial insights by the feminist/LGBT/queer authors in the context of the Eastern Europe. But before taking a more critical look later in the thesis, I want to first of all outline more broadly how postcolonial theory has been applied in the context of post-communism in other spheres, not specifically of the primary interest for feminist or queer scholars. The insights in these works can help to understand better how the scholarship of sexuality is embedded in certain social imaginary of "the East vs. the West".

Said's *Orientalism* first and foremost inspired scholars to deconstruct Western-centred imaginary, which rendered "others" backward in comparison to the West. In this mode it was employed by some theorists in the postcommunist region, especially Balkans. Postcolonial framework of orientalism in the hands of theorists Milica Bakić-Hayden (1992, 1995), Larry Wolff (1994) and Maria Todorova (1997) became an independent analysis of specific Western-centrism and orientalizing picture of the countries of Eastern Europe. These works were written in the first decade after the fall of the Iron Curtain, in the environment of the pressing desire of the former Communist European countries to "return to Europe". With insight and sophistication they reflect on the historically naturalized notion of Eastern European "backwardness", which is as much pervasive in the West as it is in the East.

One of the most recent works on the orientalising imagination of Eastern Europe in a contemporary historical scholarly discourse is an article *The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality, and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism* by Bulgarian historian and philosopher Maria Todorova (2005). In this article Todorova explores the widely held presumptions in Eastern European scholarship about the regions' "lagging behind" Western Europe, with a focus on the phenomenon of nationalism. Nationalism in Eastern European scholarly discourses is seen as being somehow belated in comparison to

that of the West, just like all the other ideas and phenomenon, which are presumed to be more natural and organic for Western Europe than they are for Eastern Europe:

> Practically all of the authors considered in this article share the widely spread conventional assumption that ideas like Enlightenment, national self-determination, individual liberties, and so on were and are organic to the west, whereas in the east they are transplanted on alien soil. These botanical metaphors tend to overlook the gradual and uneven process by which these ideas took hold in the west (Todorova 2005, 154)

As it is clear from the quote, Todorova is sceptical about the unquestioned presumption of Eastern European backwardness, as it is based on the idea which presumes the unity of the West as well as unity of temporality in thinking historical societal development. Such presumption leads to seeing some countries and regions as unquestionable places of origin, while others are seen as only mimicking, copying the supposed originality. It encourages the Cold War imaginary of an imagined split of the continent into two clearly separate parts.

By way of alternative Todorova suggests considering the multiple levels of time in every context, for example, paying attention to class inequalities and different regions inside nation-states. Todorova encourages countering the simplistic binary division of Europe in distinct spaces and argues for understanding of historical processes in a *longue-durée* model. Such an understanding deconstructs the unitary model of West and allows seeing diversity in the amount and speed of changes across the continent (Todorova 2005, 155). Although her analysis is focused on the way nationalism is theorised in the scholarship in and about Eastern Europe, many of her insights are valuable in trying to understand also how the scholars who write about sexuality are employing similar "conventional assumptions" (Todorova 2005, 154).

Another author I want to discuss is Milica Bakić-Hayden, who is well known for employing Edward Said's critique of orientalism for the study of Balkans and carving the concept of "nesting orientalisms" (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 917; Bakić-Hayden and Hayden 1992). This concept basically denotes the tendency of each former Yugoslav country to imagine itself as more European than the one further East. Such a "nesting orientalism", which goes together with Euro-centrism, seems to be a particular feature of Eastern European nationalist discourses – on the one hand it acknowledges its "subordinate" position towards the West, on the other – it aims to establish a "superior" position towards the East. There is however, another side of Bakić-Hayden argument, which has been employed by scholars less frequently than the concept of "nesting orientalisms".

Drawing on Partha Chatterjee's work on the *derivative* nature of South Asian nationalisms, Bakić-Hayden claims the importance to see how the orientalist discourse, which takes for granted binary division between "East" and "West", has been extremely influential among the orientalised nations themselves. The subordinate nations internalize the Western gaze and aim to positively "orientalize" themselves:

> It may be worthwhile to note that recent south Asian scholarship indicates that "orientalist" discourse has predominated over other discourses, including nationalist ones, even among south Asians themselves. Thus Indian national and political leaders such as Gandhi and Nehru are now seen to have created a derivative type of discourse: even their nationalist ideas are said to have developed within the same epistemology which assumes uncritically the essential and unchanging distinction between "East" and "West". And even when nationalist discourse defensively reverses the hierarchy favouring the west, it nonetheless remains within the same conceptual framework designated as "Orientalism" (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 920).

Bakić-Hayden explains that this kind of analysis of internal reversed orientalism, developed in the context of South Asia, is extremely important also in order to understand better post-communist countries. Especially it can be helpful in the former Soviet Union countries, she says, where the local nationalistic discourses are actually intertwined with what we could call orientalist discourses (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 920). In this part of an argument, differently from her thesis of 'nesting orientalisms', Bakić-Hayden stresses the "reversal" of Orientalist discourse. That is, she argues for paying attention not only to the employment of Orientalist discourse as in a way of orientalizing the more-Eastern-others as backward, but to the way it is employed in an inside-out form. In this reversal of orientalized fantasy by national imagery, the imagined "weaknesses" are established as "strengths", she says. Following her argument it is important to take into account the ways orientalising discourse has been taken up in Eastern Europe and employed towards oneself in often victimizing way. As I argue later in this thesis, the scholarship of sexuality can also be accused of being implicated in this "nationalist" way of imagining reality.[24]

In the same line, Aniko Imre argues for seeing Eastern European feminist and gay rights movements as imbedded in, rather than necessarily opposed to, nationalist ideas. In her innovative exploration of connections between sexual movements and nationalisms in Eastern Europe, an article *Lesbian Nationalism* (2008) Imre argues that even those Eastern European feminists who are generally critical of nationalist discourse and its problematic conservative presumptions about gender and sexuality, still remain in an ambiguous relationship with the Nation. The "identification with nationalism" and the "affective force" that it provides, cannot be ignored when trying to understanding Eastern European feminists and queers (Imre 2008, 262). This phenomenon does not have to be approached as necessarily a problematic issue, says Imre, as nation states sometimes provide grounds for identity and a certain filter for the

[24] The position of a victim can be a desirable one, especially in the feminist context, as Hemmings has persuasively shown in her discussion on the loss and return narratives (2011).

stream of information in the globalized reality. On the one hand, I agree with Imre and see, for example, how the sentimental attachment to one's homeland is important as it plays a huge part in actually inspiring activism or scholarly work in Eastern Europe just as much as elsewhere.[25] On the other hand, I would like to focus more on the problematic aspects of feminist and queer activism and scholarly discourses, when they are embedded in nationalist frames but not really aware or critical of it. This immersion means, for example, that some of the presumptions, characteristic to nationalism become transmitted to the feminist discourse as a common sense, just like the reversal of orientalising discourse.

As Imre notices, in the spheres of culture and societal imaginary Eastern European societies think of themselves as belated in comparison to the West and perform according to "the logic of "almost but not quite"" (Imre 2008, 277). Because of an internalized inferiority complex post-communist societies "submit themselves to a voluntary colonization" she says (Ibid.). Following Imre I argue that the concept of *voluntary colonization* is crucial in trying to understand the ambiguity of the connection between the discourses of sexualities and imaginaries of the post-communist 'return to Europe', as it appears in the feminist scholarship of sexuality. Imre, just like Todorova, demonstrates that the "trap of backwardness" is one of the defining characteristics of the imaginations about the East in Eastern Europe. This adds a new perspective for the postcolonial analysis of Eastern Europe, which I apply in the sphere of sexuality, but which have wider implications as well. Besides from the focus on how the "sexually backward other" is produced in Western discourses, as it is characteristic for the most of the analysis of homonationalism, we must also understand, how the "sexually backward other" produces itself as such, as different from the "West". How does such self-orientalization happen and what is the role of the narratives of Western modernity and sexual

[25] See for example Grewal and Kaplan (2001) on the role of nationalist sentiment in U.S. feminist movement.

progress in this process? How do feminist scholarly texts reproduce and negotiate the societal common sense imaginary?

Postcolonial Theory (II): The Questions of Epistemology

In the first part of this theoretical postcolonial framework I have discussed the relation of sexuality and temporal geo-political narratives in general, outlining, how it has been theorized in the postcolonial theory inspired scholarship, especially by feminist and queer authors. I also showed how the scholars in post-communist sphere took up the framework of the critique of orientalism and how it can be productively used in relation to the issues of sexuality and Western progress. Now I would like to focus more on the specific kind of discourse which is the object of my analysis – the scholarly texts about sexuality. To explain my approach to academic discourse I will review postcolonial feminist attitudes towards the questions of epistemology and knowledge creation in the Western-centred scholarly economy.

According to feminist anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod, since the publication of Said's *Orientalism* feminist scholars cannot *not* reflect on the situatedness of their knowledge production. That is, they have to take into account the inevitable immersion of feminist academy in the "production of knowledge in and for West" (Abu-Lughod 2001, 105). Indeed, Said, as well as Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak and other authors later, has prompted a greater concern with the position of the scholar in writing about the "other" cultures – either that would be gender and sexuality or other aspects of life at the critical focus. "As long as we are writing for the West about "the other", we are implicated in projects that establish Western authority and cultural difference", notices Abu-Lughod (Ibid.). Such statement should not disarm feminist analysis, but simply remind about the complexity of the ground it is operating on. It is not that we cannot anymore write about the non-Western cultures, because we are going to be digested by the global economy of Western oriented knowledge production. On the contrary, we do have to continue doing this, taking into account the epistemological

violence that such writing necessarily implies (Spivak 1988a). Such awareness is extremely important, in my view, also in thinking how we should write about the *ambiguously* Western context of Eastern Europe.

Said's *Orientalism* demonstrates an admirable attention to the worldliness of academic work and the position of the speaking subject in relation to the global political structures. As the most important assumption in his work, basis for the analysis of the orientalist discourses, Said described the belief that

> fields of learning, as much as the works of even the most eccentric artist, are constrained and acted upon by society, by cultural traditions, by *worldly circumstance*, and by stabilizing influences like schools, libraries and governments; moreover, that both learned and imaginative writing are never free, but are limited in their imagery, assumptions, and intentions (Said 1978, 202, emphasis mine).

In this quote Said's shows his commitment to the poststructuralist Foucauldian-Nietzschean view that every truth is a historically naturalized product of human relations (Foucault 1977, 142). Therefore the specificities of human relations and historical, economic, etc., circumstances have to be analysed in order to understand the emergence of certain truths and knowledges. When thinking about contemporary scholarship, even the most critical branches of it such as feminist or queer theory, one must evaluate certain historical and political dynamics that circumscribe it. Such accountability for ones *worldliness*, the embodied and situated position in the production of knowledge is a challenging but extremely important imperative for critical analysis.[26]

In *Orientalism* Said confines himself to the precise dissection of orientalist imaginary of Western scholars and artists, pointing out the worldly circumstance of colonialism, which

[26] Obviously, the concern with the accountability of feminist theory to the context of its production is not only the result of an intervention by postcolonial theory, but is raised by many different branches of theorizing. For example, feminist science studies (Haraway 1989), women of color critique (Anzaldúa and Moraga, 1981), lesbian critique (Rich 1987), etc. stress the need for feminist awareness of its embodied and embedded situation.

affected their discourse. He says that this imaginary is false and problematic. However, he does not aim to provide an account about how the "reality" of Orient might be represented. According to Said, the reality of people in Middle East is much more complicated than any discourse can ever depict. Therefore, while he is very lucid in analyzing the body of Western texts, the academic tradition and institutions of Orientalism, he prefers leaving aside the question of its relation with the "reality" of Orient. What Said demonstrates is the consistency, the long-lasting stable structure of orientalism and its connection with the unequal power relation, that is, with the European-American domination over the Orient. "One ought never to assume that the structure of Orientalism is nothing more than a structure of lies or of myths which, were the truth about them to be told, would simply blow away" (Said 1978, 6), he argues and therefore does not really theorize about this "truth". Hence Said's analysis is a very coherent representation of the narrative structure of orientalism, without asking how the diversity of life in the geographical space of Orient could be represented in other, not "orientalising" way.

Thereby he gets criticised by feminist scholars. For example, his *Orientalism*, as well as poststructuralist postcolonial criticism in general, is often accused of influencing feminist research in ways which lead to the abandoning of the critique of local patriarchal institutions, and focusing only on representations. According to some feminist authors, Said "reduced" sexuality, for example, to a mere metaphor of colonialist domination (for example McClintock 1996; Yeğenoğlu 1998). Because of Said's original interest in the discursive subordination of the "Orient" and the affirmation of Western domination, the framework of "orientalism" indeed seems to subject the analysis of structures of gender and sexuality to the analysis of geographic imaginaries and cultural stereotypes. This kind of analysis in their own way is then inevitably forced to be Western centred and not engaging with the complexity of situation in the non-Western contexts. Here the danger also becomes a too easy division of the

reality into “the ones who are orientalising” vs. “the ones who are orientalised” (Said himself warns against this simplification) instead of seeing the complex implication of different Western-centrisms and orientalizations happening in the production of realities in various sites of the globe.

The issues of representation, especially *how* to represent are at the core of the work by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, quite differently from Said. Her famous article *Can the Subaltern Speak?* is dedicated to the critique of poststructuralist authors tendency to dismiss the concept of representation, and with it also lose sight of the global economic structures, which positions them as intellectuals in a specific epistemologically ‘privileged’ position of speaking. For her argument she takes up a detailed critique of the conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze. Both Deleuze and Foucault are questioning the strict distinction between the work of scholar and any other work, as that between the theory and practice (which is an important point, according to Spivak), and thus, unfortunately, they also seems to dismiss the concept of representation. What is forgotten, she asks, when Deleuze claims, for example, that “representation no longer exists; there’s only action-theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and from networks” (Foucault and Deleuze 1972, 2). Unacknowledged in this kind of thinking, according to Spivak, is the international division of labour, the economic power inequalities around the globe and, most importantly, the inevitable participation of Deleuze and Foucault themselves, as Western intellectuals, in this unequal power play. The repudiation of representation creates an illusion that “the oppressed can know and speak for themselves” (Spivak 1988a, 74). In such a wishful attitude, one might start representing the non-Western others through the discourse, which actually does not give any justice to the complexity of the non-Western reality that one refers to.

Criticizing this illusion, Spivak goes on to deconstruct, in Derridean sense, the practice of *sati*[27], which itself has born out of misinterpretation of religious texts and has been subject to reductionist representations in Western discourses. Through her analysis Spivak shows that the Third-world woman, who is oppressed by both global postcolonial economic oppression *and* the local patriarchal traditional structures, is the paradigmatic subaltern. Subalternity for Spivak is the position from which one doesn't have a voice to represent herself/himself in the structures of power. Therefore basically Spivak says that only a sophisticated, culturally informed analysis by a scholar, conscious about her interests and privileges can do justice for the subaltern, representing her/him not by means of speaking *instead of*, but speaking *to* subaltern *about* subaltern. Thus one might say that similarly to Said, Spivak stresses the importance of the "critic's institutional responsibility" (Spivak 1988a, 75). Differently from Said, however, Spivak involves in the considerations of what postcolonial intellectual actually *can do* to produce the representation, which would not subsume the oppressed to one more, this time epistemological colonialism.

A quite similar project which critically examines the premises of the production of knowledge in the critical, specifically in *feminist* scholarship, is Chandra Talpade Mohanty's seminal work *Under Western Eyes* (1988). As Mohanty shows, Western feminist analysis is immersed in the logic of Western-centrism and its progress narrative. Certain feminist analysis, Mohanty argues, create the fictitious image of the "average third-world woman" (Mohanty 1988, 65) as sexually constrained and oppressed. This imagination, Mohanty says, in reversal, forms a narcissistic illusion of the Western woman as "liberated and having control over their bodies" (81). Her argument can be extended to account not only for the discursive violence of the Western based scholars, but also to the colonization of subaltern native informants by the Third-World scholars themselves. Mohanty not only criticises

[27] Sati – traditional practice among some Indian communities, in which the recently widowed woman immolates herself at her dead husband's funeral fire.

scholars, but provides also an example of what she considers to be a sophisticated and amenable scholarly work, that is German anthropologist's Maria Mies study of lace-makers in India, Narsapur. Mohanty aims to show that the fact that every feminist scholar is positioned in the necessarily Western-centered scholarly economy should not necessarily imply that she will misrepresent the people she writes about. What matters is the ability of the scholar to be accountable for her worldliness and show the different and sometimes contradictory aspects of the subaltern position without victimizing or idealizing the people she analyzes.

Eastern European scholars are not free from the arguments that Said, Spivak and Mohanty stress. Just like any other academic doing feminist postcolonial analysis they are representing certain realities to certain audiences and in this endeavour that are often dragged from pillar to post. On the one hand, academics often seek to establish authority by speaking for the presumably Western or Westernized audience and in the language which would be understandable as universally as possible. It can be experienced as a constraining Western hegemony of knowledge, but also, as an opening of possibilities for transnational dialogues. In this case there is a danger, however, that the "native" scholar might start using his "native" knowledge as a tool of authority and thus generalize too much on the context she presumes to know very well (Cerwonka 2008, 815). In this case, the critique of Western theories might come together with the certain orientalization of the context one analyzes. On the other hand, post-communist scholars seek to remain epistemologically accountable for the specificity of their context and, as feminists, politically accountable to produce knowledge interesting and useful also for the people they write *about*. This also can be perceived as constraining "peripheral" position, as the knowledge one produces never becomes a universal truth, but, as Donna Haraway has put it, is only a partial and situated knowledge. This can be also empowering, if one realizes that all the knowledges are always situated and the universality of

knowledge is just a tempting illusion (Haraway 1989). The reflection on the position of knowledge production is, however, a necessary part of feminist postcolonial endeavour.

Twofold Analysis

This theoretical framework reflects at least two layers of analysis that I aim to perform in my thesis. First of all, I want to take a look at the connections between the imaginaries of sexualities and geographical, political and temporal narratives. Here postcolonial theory, in its feminist and queer modes as well as its specific post-communist insights, is helpful in unravelling the complex discursive nodes. The most valuable outcome from the combined methodology is that it takes into account sexuality, geopolitical difference, ethnicity, class, etc. together as research objects, not separately, but always interrelated. This helps to see for example, how in post-communist context sexuality and nationalism cannot be approached as opposite and contradictory, not seeing how they are intertwined in hardly predictable ways. Second, as I am interested in the specific discourse – scholarly texts about sexuality, I therefore also outline an approach to the positioning and responsibility of the academic work, derived from postcolonial and feminist texts. Scholarly labour is not outside of the issues of the reality that it aims to criticise, it is, just as any other labour, determined largely by the society and specific professional, national, etc. context that it is produced in. However, it has an epistemological privilege of representing reality (Spivak 1988a). In this case postcolonial feminist theories provide tools which help to resist the dualisms of common sense societal imaginaries and remain aware and careful not to reproduce too general and orientalising statements.

With the help of this theoretical framework in my thesis I present a reading of three books about sexuality in Eastern Europe: *Sexuality and Gender*, *Beyond the Pink Curtain* and *De-Centring Western Sexualities.* Inspired by the project of Hemmings, I take a close look at the narratives that the authors in these books tell us about "the East" and "the West", about

sexuality and progress. To make not only a theoretical but also a political point I connect these stories with the broader social and theoretical context – I present this context, already entangled with the research in an elaborate and critical manner in the Chapter 2. Taking this as a background in the Chapter 3, I ask about the rationale behind praising the West as the heaven of sexual freedom, and what effects an "appeal to Europe/West" creates. This chapter aims to criticise the sexual progress as Europeanization narrative. In the last part of the thesis, Chapter 4, I investigate the Eastern European queer scholarly works which criticize the Western hegemony. Can we refuse "the West" whatsoever and claim the sexual and theoretical *difference* of Eastern Europe? Or is there still another way of thinking beyond the boundaries and binaries of the Cold War?

2. Text and Context: Nationalism, Activism and the "Western gaze"

Ana: It is a part of Europe that eventually will come to us.

Milica: But until then we are a Balkan country, a communist country, and people here think everything bad comes from crazy Europe, from the West. The "gay problem" is one of the ways for fucking up the population.

Marija: Yes, people here think the US and the West hate Serbs. Because of the war etc.

Ana [nods]: Hmm-mmm, we are butchers.

Milica: And Western Europe brings misery. Having homosexuals in Serbia means we will not have an increasing population, because gays don't give birth. It's a conspiracy theory: gay people all over the world are part of that conspiracy.

Ana, Milica and Marija

This is an excerpt from an interview, presented in one of the chapters of the book *Beyond the Pink Curtain*, by a Dutch anthropologist Liselotte van Velzen (van Velzen 2007). In this piece of a conversation, lesbian activists from Belgrade are reflecting ironically and somewhat sadly on the nationalistic conspiracy theories, which imagine those fighting for sexual freedom as the agents of the West, sent to threaten the nations of Eastern Europe. I chose to start the chapter by this lengthy quote, because it shows how the activist discourse in Eastern European contexts is closely related, working always in the circumstances of nationalistic mythologies and the presumed "Western gaze". This excerpt demonstrates that discourse of sexuality, whether it would be activist, scholarly or media discourse, seems to be inseparably interconnected with the fantasies about "the East" and "the West", about the past and the future, about "us" and "them".

In this chapter *first* I will present nationalist discourses about sexuality and the West – what Ana, Milica and Marija refer to as conspiracy theories – and take a look how the activist discourses work in opposition to this nationalistic and hostile environment. I will describe the context of my theoretical intervention by analyzing the empirical examples in one or another way connected with the three books that form the object of my research – either using their contents which explain the context, or exploring the story behind a book. As the connection between nationalist imaginaries and sexual politics in post-communist setting is well discussed by many scholars[28], this part will be more descriptive, simply setting the scene.

In the *second* part of this chapter, I will proceed to explore the instances of the discourse on Eastern Europe and sexuality from the explicitly Western point of view. Does "the West" (Western Europe, U.S., EU) really hate Eastern Europe? Is Europe going to "come" eventually to the former Communist countries, as the quote above implies? "The West" and the presumed "Western gaze" seem to play an important role in the discourses of sexuality in post-communist Europe. I will therefore analyze and criticize how two Western scholars, who collaborated with their Eastern colleagues in producing knowledge about post-communist sexualities, imagine Eastern Europe, how they see it. This part of my analysis will be based on the prefaces of the two of the books. As similar research is still very rare, it will be more critical part of the chapter, as I will approach these prefaces from the postcolonial feminist perspective. In general, however, Chapter 2 should be seen more as a background, a contextualization of the main research which I will present in the Chapters 3 and 4.

Nationalist Mythology and Activist Negotiations

In the post-communist Eastern European countries, issues connected with sexual freedom, especially the rights of LGBT people are often seen as the tool of Western Europe to

[28] Including many articles in the three books that I am analyzing.

ideologically dominate the new member states. Ranging from mythologies of a powerful 'gay lobby' in Brussels to more elaborate theories about the liberal ideology which deprives society from traditional morals and community bonds, the presumption that "the West" is corrupt and immoral is one of the most complicated obstacles that feminist and queer activists face in the region. This right-wing imaginary presumes "the West" and sexual debauchery as inherently connected. Analysis and critique of this pervasive fantasy form a red thread through the chapters of the three books that I am analyzing as well as Eastern European feminist and queer scholarship in general. While nationalists put all the fears and prejudice into the image of "the West", scholars of sexuality seem to counter this imaginary by implicitly putting their hopes of the better future in the support of EU and ensuring human rights around the continent.

My point in this thesis, as I have indicated in the theoretical chapter, is not to analyze societal imageries, but to focus on the scholarly discourse. However I am simply obliged to give readers at least a taste of this political and cultural context which is so crucially connected with issues of politics of sexuality in Eastern Europe. There is, of course, no fixed context, in which the texts would simply appear. The context creates the texts and texts are creating this context, they work in connection to each other, never separated. However, without keeping in mind the pervasive power of this constant encounter, one cannot really understand the worldly circumstances of the writings of scholars who are immersed in this societal context and to a large extent directly working through it. Therefore I will briefly shed a light on this dualistic "the West vs. the East" discourse, which I have referenced already at the introduction. In this section I will mainly present the context as it is described by the scholars themselves, but also looking at the material consequences that this discourse creates for the scholarship of sexuality.

Voichita Nachescu, a gender researcher from Romania, in her article contributed to the book *Sexuality and Gender* describes the fight for decriminalization of homosexuality in Romania. As an example of the conservative discourse, which aimed to preserve the infamous homophobic *Article 200,* she quotes a statement by the influential leader of the Orthodox Church. "We want to join Europe, not Sodom" (Nachescu 2005, 71), he said, using a biblical metaphor to simultaneously demonize the movement for sexual rights and EU. Sexual minorities, according to Nachescu, in Romania (and in many other post-communist countries) are often presented by conservative discourses as something that did not existed before 1989 and appeared only with the new capitalist system (Nachescu 2005, 60). The example of Romanian discourses serves as a paradigmatic case of the Eastern nationalistic imaginary, connecting sexuality with the West.

Another example of this discourse might be taken from the context of Poland, described by Gregory E. Czarnecki in an article which compares pre-war anti-semitism and contemporary homophobia. Czarnecki explains the imaginary of the "international homosexual lobby" in popular societal discourse which is, according to Czamecki, a mirror reflection of the fantasies of "Jewish conspiracy". According to this conspiracy theory, extremely popular in the pre-war Poland, Jews were supposedly threatening national morals and traditional families as well as the normal Polish social order (Czernecky 2007, 333). Czernecki's article does not suggest that anti-semitism is only the thing of the past in Poland. Rather he argues that the extent of hatred, which was once focused on Jews, is now refocused on queers, leaving anti-semitism intact. Homophobic rhetoric works using the same mythological anti-semitic schemas which demonizes the West and produced Jews and now also queers as the 'fifth column' inside the body of the nation. This only shows, we learn from Czernecki's article, how the sexuality, queerness of LGBTQ people in itself is not the reason

for stereotypes and othering, but rather it is the discursive power play that produces queers as Western and the West as queer.

Summarizing such nationalist fantasies Igor Kon, a well-known Russian sexologist, says that in post-communist Russia anyone who wants to question and change societal norms concerning sexuality and gender, whether it will be homosexuals, feminists, or others, is imagined as a part of the "Western ideological plot" (Kon 2005, 117). This imagination is powerful not only in Russia, but also in countries which have been struggling for decades to free themselves from the Soviet-Russian occupation and now can enjoy political sovereignty. The fantasy of the "Western debauchery", according to Kon is connected with the Soviet propaganda traditions, which used to claim the capitalist West as the place of sexual perversity, while the communist societies were imagined as virtually pure and moral. This discourse was inherited by post-communist right-wing movements, thus the feminist and LGBTQ activists are working in constant opposition to this discourse. I argue that the discourse of sexual progress in Eastern Europe must be understood having in mind the nationalistic prejudice, which produces queer as a constant subaltern, an enemy within, without a voice to speak to his community. The nationalist imaginary of the West in Eastern Europe is a powerful aspect of the environment in which the knowledge of post-communist sexualities is being created in order to make subaltern *speak*.

While doing the research about the reception of the book *Sexuality and Gender*, I accidentally came across a very recent example of this unfortunately powerful nationalist discourse in Croatia[29]. It clearly shows the extent to which this imaginary is pervasive in the context in which scholars are producing knowledge about Eastern European sexualities. To put it in a nutshell, at the beginning of 2013 a conservative Croatian association *Parents' Voice for Children* tried to vilify Aleksander Štulhofer, an editor of the book *Sexuality and*

[29] Croatia has become a member of EU at the July 1, which might be in a broader sense connected with this particular scandal.

Gender. They wanted to exclude him from the Government advisory committee, which was responsible for the creation of a new sexual education program in Croatia. The reason of this attempt was an accusation that Štulhofer is allegedly "advocating pedophilia" in Croatia. One of the main arguments employed by the conservative opponents against Štulhofer's was, unsurprisingly, his Western connections. Namely, it was his work together with a Dutch scholar Theo Sandfort[30] on the book *Sexuality and Gender*, as well as his education in U.S., where he went as a visiting Fulbright fellow to study at the Kinsey Institute, that attracted attention of conservative right-wing activists. Štulhofer's Western connections and his attempts to educate society about sexuality made him into a mystified key figure of the phantasmagoric narrative of "Western conspiracy" to demoralize Croatian nation, at least in the eyes of the conservative part of the society.[31]

The fantasy which divides the world into the 'perverse' West and 'pure' East (and delegates scholars of sexuality to the former), embodied in the example of Štulhofer's vilification, is constantly countered by local activists and public intellectuals. The scholars who have contributed to the books that I am analyzing are also among these activists. They are persuading society about the necessity to ensure sexual rights and tolerance for sexual diversity in the face of Europeanization, often using the authority of EU in order to counter local resistance. Despite the pervasive mythologies around the "Western lifestyle", still, the necessity to become the part of EU and to westernize is an unquestioned political conviction for most of the political parties in Eastern Europe. Because of this conviction, the rhetorical and political authority of EU so far has played a big role in the processes of decriminalization

[30] In the Netherlands Sandfort became quite well-known after he published his controversial work on pedophilia entitled *Boys on Their Contact to Men: A Study of Sexually Expressed Friendships* (1987).
[31] Information collected from http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/croatian-court-quashes-kinsey-based-national-sex-ed-curriculum, http://inavukic.com/2013/02/12/croatia-prime-ministers-wifes-conflict-of-interests-and-sex-education-in-schools/, http://www.ffzg.unizg.hr/socio/astulhof/.

of homosexuality,[32] (Nachescu 2005, Blagojević 2005) forcing governments to adopt legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, and to allow public LGBTQ events, such as Gay Prides, which are usually met with societal hostility. Western support has been also crucial for the formation of local NGO's fighting for LGBTQ rights and other issues connected with sexuality, for their discourse and political aims (Woodcock 2011, 65-66, see also Ghodsee 2004). This support also came through a certain implicit orientalization of Eastern Europe as needing help, through victimizing it, as the financial support was attracted only by claiming the post-communist sphere to be extremely homophobic and retard in the sphere of sexual rights and freedoms[33]. In the next section I will elaborate more on this "Western gaze".

Jelisaveta Blagojević, Serbian philosopher and gender researcher points out that the power, which the discourse of 'return to Europe' has in Serbia, like in many other Eastern European countries, is especially important in debating anything unacceptable to the conservative public opinion, because:

> In Serbia, the idea of EU integration has the logic of a normative discourse. The unquestionable nature of this *'we must be part of the European Union'* attitude has its performative effects and serves as an argument which is to be repeated and cited whenever decision-makers in Serbia become unwilling to actually confront the majority and so-called 'traditional values' (Blagojević 2005, 34)

As it becomes clear from Blagojević's article, the argument of sexual rights as a necessary part of Europeanization, as a "European value", indeed helped LGBTQ activists to reach the

[32] It is worth noticing that in some Central European countries, such as Czech Republic or Hungary homosexuality was decriminalized already in 1962, earlier than in United Kingdom, Norway or Germany for example. However, in the countries of the former Soviet Union, such as Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, a satellite country Romania or a rather independent communist Yugoslavia, however, decriminalization was caused mainly by the symbolic and political pressure of the West in the 90'ies. And in the narratives of Eastern European sexual progress towards West this part of the story is usually stressed as a characteristic tendency for the post-communist region as a whole.

[33] See Rutvica Andrijasevic work on the representation of Eastern European women – a great example of victimization out of the best intentions to help (Andrijasevic 2007)

formal improvements in Serbia, such as passing the law against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. The argument of essential Europeanness of Eastern European societies together with the argument of the essential Europeannes of sexual rights can work as a certain strategic essentialism in Spivakian sense (Spivak 1988b). Therefore it was not only rhetorical, but also performative in its effects. The EU "shines like a light in the dark" for post-communist gays and lesbians, noticed Dutch scholar Gert Hekma pointing out the symbolical meaning of EU for those fighting for the sexual freedom (2007, 8). Indeed the pressure for Eastern European countries to Westernize was that factor which led the subaltern post-communist queers to *speak* with authority in their own community or to speak, so to say, at all. The fantasy of the 'return to Europe' was and is still employed by LGBTQ activists claiming that this 'return' is impossible without ensuring sexual rights as 'European values'.

Unfortunately, the formal changes and increased visibility do not necessarily mean a significant change in public opinion, or the change is not necessarily positive. As the normative discourse of 'return to Europe' is put in contraposition with the normative discourses of ethnic nationalism and religious morality, it also increases the dualist thinking in which sexual freedom is associated with "the West" and not with "the East". Significantly, "sexual freedom" is not for everyone something to be praised, especially nationalists see it as the danger for the morals of the society. Hemmings lucidly puts it in this way:

> sexual identity as Western *freedom* or preoccupation can easily slip into sexual identity as Western *decadence* in postcolonial nation-building discourses that seek to control the sexuality of women in particular (Hemmings 2011, 146, emphasis mine)

Similarly in post-communist nation building any sort of fight for sexual rights, for the acceptance of diversity of sexual identities and choices becomes translated as a sign of Western decadency supposedly flooding the countries of the East and poisoning local moralities. The strategic usage of "the West" by those invested in the ideas of societal and

sexual progress is easily subverted by those who want to conserve the *status quo*. The idealization of "the West" easily slips in the demonization of "the West", keeping the orientalist binary "the East" vs. "the West" intact and reproducing the vicious circle of dualist thinking.

The binary nationalist imaginary forms a significant part of the context of my research object. It forms the worldly circumstance of the scholarship about sexuality in Eastern European countries, namely the three books – *Sexuality and Gender, Beyond the Pink Curtain* and *De-Centring Western Sexualities.* Given this circumstance, how do scholars producing the knowledge of sexuality in Eastern Europe relate to the East-West binary, the narrative of the 'return to Europe', the demonization of "the West"? In the Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 I employ postcolonial feminist theory to demonstrate how scholars position themselves in geographical and temporal imaginaries and how "sexuality" is produced through (in the Chapter 3) or in opposition to (in the Chapter 4) the Western-centric narrative of Eastern European backwardness and catching up with the West. Inspired by postcolonial feminist critique, I show how scholars are presuming "the West" as the point of reference, as an unquestionable norm (Spivak 1988a) even when they are trying to de-centralize the Western point of view.

But before analyzing the writings of Eastern European scholars, I still want to present another crucial aspect of the context in which these writings appear – two examples of discourse which orientalizes Eastern Europe from the presumed Western point of view. For that I will scrutinize the forewords of the books *Sexuality and Gender* and *Beyond the Pink Curtain.* These forewords were written by Dutch Gert Hekma and American Vern L. Bullough and therefore give an opportunity to take a glimpse at the instances of a Western point of view. The last book of my analysis, the *De-Centring Western Sexualities*, does not

have this kind of foreword. This is a characteristic detail, which is probably connected also with the editors' approach towards "the West".

For now I should explain that when I say 'the Western view' I do not presume it to be something self-evident, but something that is produced in relationship with "the East" as a manifold of meanings produced in social encounter. The very idea of the West was produced through the ideas about what it is *not* (McClintock 1995, Wolff 1994) as I hope to demonstrate in the following section. In this section I ask how from this specific Western point of view the presumed positions of the scholar and the reader are established and what is taken for granted as the relevant knowledge. "The East", I argue, in the two texts is produced as an "other" of "the West", not completely different, but rather temporarily backward, to quote Puar, "the "perpetual promise" that is realizable, but only with the lag time, not in the present" (Puar 2007, 205).

From the first sight it might seem counterintuitive that there is more critical attention devoted in this chapter to the Western discourse of orientalizing Eastern Europe than to the local nationalist discourse. However, it seems that the nationalism and its fears of sexual emancipation have been deconstructed in many scholarly articles, include those in the books that I am analyzing. There is however, a lack of engagement with the Eurocentric presumptions in the scholarship of sexuality in post-communist region. This is why the next section will present a detailed critical discourse analysis, criticizing some common sense assumptions from the postcolonial feminist point of view. This will provide a background for further analysis in the Chapters 3 and 4.

The "Western Gaze" and Exotic Post-Communism

Both *Sexuality and Gender* and *Beyond the Pink Curtain* are collections of papers mainly by the Eastern European authors, presented in the conferences which took place in, respectively, Dubrovnik in 2001 (Croatia) and Ljubljana in 2005 (Slovenia) or were invited afterwards.

Both of the books seek to collect the authentic knowledge produced by mainly local scholars in order to fill in a certain perceived knowledge gap. In the case of *Sexuality and Gender*, it is the perceived gap about the information about sexuality (understood in a very broad way) in the post-communist Eastern Europe. As editors put it, "the lack of data and scholarly analysis on sexual correlates of the "great transformation" set in motion in 1989 all over Central, Eastern and Southeast Europe" (Štulhofer and Sandfort, xxi, 2005).

In the case of the book *Beyond the Pink Curtain,* it is explicitly the gap in the knowledge about the everyday life of LGBTQ people that has to be filled in:

> While a lot of research findings of our colleagues in the Western world on everyday experiences of LGBT people are well documented, easily accessible, and often interpreted as having "universal" relevance, results of research projects about LGBT people in Eastern Europe are mostly unknown, and as they are coded in the local non-global languages, mostly inaccessible to broader audiences, and thus easily regarded as non-relevant or even non-existent. Therefore our main aim with this book was to bring together a variety of empirical – most often social scientific – research material from Eastern Europe for the first time and present it in "the global language" (Kuhar and Takács 2007, 11)

In the introduction to the *Beyond the Pink Curtain,* as it is clear from this quote, editors are reflecting on the hegemony of knowledge in and about the Western context in the scholarship of sexuality – the kind of reflection that is very much lacking in the book *Sexuality and Gender*. As they rightly notice, Eastern Europe is a certain blind spot in the global feminist knowledge economy and thus largely ignored or reduced to stereotypes. The task to gather lacking knowledge, to re-code it into "global" English and thus enable transnational sharing of experiences and insights seems to have inspired the production of both of these books. However valuable the idea of cultural translation might seem from the first glance, one must

ask, to what extent "global" English is actually global, and if it does not presume a Western audience as a recipient of this translation.

There is a lot to learn about power/knowledge structures at play from looking at the way *how* these books are presented. First of all, *who* is presenting the knowledge about post-communist sexuality and *to whom?* Who has the power to explain, and who – to understand? A closer look at the forewords of these books can already prompt a partial answer to these questions. The foreword, typically, is a part of the book written not by the author or editor, but a relative outsider, who has an authority in the field. The primary task of it is to establish the credibility of the book and convince the readers about the importance and innovation of the work they are holding in their hands. Thus, forewords reflect a lot about the expected *audience* of the academic publication and presumed common sense *knowledge* in the field, as well as what is the new interesting *material* to learn from. Tellingly, both books have prefaces written by explicitly "Western" authority figures. Gert Hekma, a Dutch gay and lesbian studies scholar working at the University of Amsterdam, wrote a preface for the *Beyond the Pink Curtain*, while Vern L. Bullough, an American sexologist, former professor at the universities in California and New York, wrote a preface for *Sexuality and Gender*. Both of them participated in the conferences which prompted the publication of the books - Bullough even opened the conference in Dubrovnik.

When I call both of them "Western authority figures", I do not mean that it is their ethnicity or a place of birth or work that makes Hekma and Bullough into "westerners". It is more the kind of story that they both choose in order to present themselves and introduce the post-communist region to the presumed audience, that presents them as speaking from the position of "the West". Both Hekma and Bullough tell an anecdote about their first visit beyond the (former in the case of Hekma) Iron Curtain. It is precisely through these stories of an encounter with the Eastern European *difference* that the authors of the forewords are

produced as explicitly "Western". The post-communist area is then presented as different-from-West and therefore an interesting material to research and understand.

The fall of the Iron Curtain and breaking down of the impenetrable walls of Soviet Union opened up possibilities for travelling and meeting people which were not possible before. As feminist and postcolonial studies have shown, travelling is never free from power, and exploration of previously unknown spaces can lead to "new forms of otherness and exoticism" (Grewal and Kaplan 2001, 673). The encounters that Hekma and Bullough tell about probably encouraged the production of otherness on many levels, but we, the readers, hear only one side of the story. Hekma jokingly tells a story about how in 1990 he went to the conference on sexual minorities in Tallinn, Estonia and how with other foreign guests they went on a city tour provided by the conference. Unexpectedly they ran into some local gay men. An encounter between two cultures prompted a conversation interesting for both sides: "the unimaginable for them was, we began to understand later, that experts on homosexual issues were openly gay or lesbian. In the former Soviet Union the specialists were mainly straight homophobic doctors" (Hekma 2007, 7). Hekma in this short quote not only represents an encounter, but also explains the specificity of the Soviet times to the implicitly uniformed reader. After telling the anecdote he takes enough time to explain and stress the changes that took place in Eastern Europe since 1990. However, the anecdote at the beginning of the text symbolically comes to stand as a shorthand for the historical background of post-communism.

Bullough, quite similarly, but in a more serious manner tells about his and his wife's Bonnie Bulloughs[34] participation in a conference which took place in the Soviet Union in 1986. In order to explain for the readers of *Sexuality and Gender* about the difficulties which a Western sex researcher has to face in the former Soviet Union, Bullough tells how he and his wife tried to engage with unnamed "Russian intellectuals" in a discussion on the changing

[34] Bonnie Bullough was also a sex researcher and a well-known advocate of nurse practitioners in U.S. Both Vern and Bonnie Bulloughs have passed away.

societal attitudes towards gender and sexuality. Bullough tells how after the conference a Russian sociologist approached them and told that she was "mortified and embarrassed" by the topic of discussion. As Bullough tells us, the presumed Western readers, he was sure that this woman "was expressing the attitudes of most of the other Russians in attendance since we could see their shocked looks as we talked" (Bullough 2005, xix). Bullough then explains to the readers that the topics of sexuality and gender were taboo in the Soviet Union until around 1987, but does not go on to explain the changes in popular attitudes that happened in post-communist reality since the time of his first visit. Thus the picture of "the East" remains static and perceived through the difference from the implicit picture of the West.

By way of these anecdotes a double textual effect is created. *First*, it reproduces the narrative of Eastern Europe as different-from the West and the scholar as Western. The difference between two "blocs", two societal and also scholarly cultures becomes the difference in the attitudes and norms about sexuality. *Second*, the person reading the preface, interested in sexuality and gender in the former Soviet Union, so to say the presumed audience of the book, is also produced as sharing the norms and values of the author of the preface, in short, as a Westerner (or as an "enlightened Eastern European perhaps). To come back to the first effect, we should see how the stories of both Bullough and Hekma create them as Western researchers. What impression do they create about themselves? Doing progressive and controversial research, more or less acknowledged in their societies as a respectful scientific endeavor they are traveling to the rather exotic place behind the (former) Iron Curtain. What are usual, common sense everyday and scholarly attitudes and behaviors for them, these stories seem to stress, are "unimaginable", "shocking" and even "mortifying" for the people *there*, in the former Eastern Blok.

The stories of the "shock" that Bullough and Hekma provoked in post-communist context (still communist in the case of Bullough story) with their research and their attitudes

create an implicit image of "the West" as the place where such reaction is unusual and unexpected. These anecdotes are worth telling, because such "shock" and surprise would never be provoked in the West, a reader has to presume. In this way these anecdotes creates a picture of "the West", where the research about sex and gender is taken much more positively or even taken for granted. What is at play here is the discursive mechanism described so well by Mohanty in the context of feminist scholarship: "universal images of the "third-world woman… are predicated on (and hence obviously bring into sharper focus) assumptions about western women as secular, liberated and having control over their bodies" (Mohanty 1988, 81). The representation of the "other" in orientalizing terms, often hidden under the thin layer of empathy and compassion, does not really mean that the one representing is free of these negative characteristics. On the contrary, the negative characteristics are projected on the "other" in order to create the Western subject as transparent, as the site for positive projections, we learn from Mohanty. In the case of the forewords for *Sexuality and Gender* and *Beyond the Pink Curtain*, the few sentences intended as a representation of the inhibited and oppressed Soviet "reality" produce the picture of the "West" as sexually free and open to progressive research on gender and sexuality.

Making the East – Making the West

In the case of Bullough's anecdote, the East-West difference is problematically framed also in the temporal narrative. On the one hand, it is indeed a factual truth that the studies of sexuality already had a certain tradition in some Western countries, as he notices, when they only started being developed in Eastern Europe. He explains:

> With the withdrawal of Russian troops from Eastern Europe and the breakup of the Soviet Union, the kind of research into sex and gender that had been going on in the West began to be undertaken in the postcommunist countries. Only the smattering of such studies reached the West, however, and the *major purpose* of the conference in

> Croatia was to acquaint each of the participants as well as *eventual Western readers* with what was taking place in various countries and to exchange ideas *between* Western and Eastern researchers (Bullough 2005, emphasis mine)

On the other hand, as we see in the quote, the temporal positioning of "the East" and "the West" seems to slide easily into a hierarchical positioning as it does not and cannot remain neutral. In this hierarchical logic the reader, the consumer of the knowledge about the post-communist region becomes "eventually" the Western audience.

The most important task of the conference, and consequentially the book, interprets Bullough, is to make the post-communist reality into a research material to be read in "the West". The exchange is happening *between* the East and the West and not in any more complicated way, which would allow complexity inside the dual East-West structure. The interaction "inside" the region does not seem to be the priority for Bullough. This is how the *second* textual effect – the production of the reader as Westerner – comes into existence:

> The articles demonstrated, at least to me, that scholars and researchers in postcommunist countries have a lot to offer Western readers as well as give us new insights to all those interested in the study of sex and gender issues wherever they might live (Ibid.)

In Bullough's quote, the "Western reader" through the long sentence slips into "us", to which he adds "wherever they might live". In this way being a sex researcher becomes invisibly equated with being Western reader and vice versa, doesn't matter where one might live. Although this sentence creates an illusion of the subject of knowledge being free from "geopolitical determinations" (Spivak 1988a, 66), actually it inaugurates the Western gaze as universal and neutral. The true researcher of sexuality is not only living in the West, she/he is *per se* Western, the reader is forced to believe. One might argue, indeed that the global pervasiveness of Western produced research on sexuality and gender, just like the global

domination of Western knowledge, is to a certain extent the contemporary condition that cannot be denied. However, this situation requires thus, that instead of performing the position of speaking as transparent, a conscious critic would give even more attention to the location from which she/he is speaking (Spivak 1988a, 75).

While the readers are eventually Western, and the studies about Eastern Europe have to reach "the West" to be consumed there, implies Bulloughs argument, the Western ideas, on the contrary, travel towards the East, actively perpetrating Eastern Europe.

> It is no accident that the conference was held in Croatia, because Croatians and other groups in the former Republic of Yugoslavia had been a kind of *gateway for Western ideas to the East.* (Bullough, Ibid. emphasis mine)

It seems that the West is presumed to be the originator of the ideas and thus sharing of ideas actually works, it is implied, only as a certain transmission of them towards the East. This narrative fits perfectly into the schema of thinking about Eastern Europe as lagging behind Western Europe. Todorova, applying the critique of orientalism to the context of post-communism, shows how the ideas and phenomena such as modernization, nationalism, Enlightenment etc., are understood to be "organic" for Western Europe but "exported, transplanted and modified in an ostensibly "alien" soil" (Todorova 2005, 147) in Eastern Europe. Similarly, it is implied in Bullough arguments that the ideas that are supposedly "organic" to "the West" have to be conveyed to the less advanced East. According to this narrative, the Western ideas and knowledge about sexuality in Eastern Europe are employed only by means of what Todorova ironically calls "mimicry without "organic" roots" (Todorova 2005, 148).

I would like to juxtapose the problematic discourse of the foreword of *Sexuality and Gender* with that of *Beyond the Pink Curtain.* Hekma, unlike Bullough, seems to reflect on

the stereotypes, which are usually associated with "the East" and "the West".[35] Starting from this reflection, he also aims to subvert the usual hierarchy of "the progressive West" and the "lagging behind East".

> There is an interesting rule of history that progress made in the past may become the stagnation in the present, and vice versa. It could well be that the stagnation of the LGBT movements in Western Europe, still kept alive by the gracious grants of governments, may make them fade away in the near future with no one combating social heteronormativity … So it might be very worthwhile for the LGBT movements of the West to look with curiosity to their sisters in the East, instead of only lecturing them about LGBT organizing. (Hekma 2007, 9)

Hekma consciously aims to reverse the hierarchy in which the West is essentially more advanced as the East – his reversal works through questioning the very frame of thinking progress as linear and causal.

However, his empathy with the Eastern European activists at the same time also works as discursive "othering" of these activists, keeping dualism intact and as an authoritative encouragement of the "sisters in the East". In the frame of the East-West dualism he positions himself as a "Westerner" and makes it explicit. This kind of positioning, with the realized privilege and authority seems to be less troubling than the slippery usage of "us" by Bullough. Bullough seemingly produces the reader as not necessarily Western and, precisely in this way, actually hides the Western nature of the gaze established in the foreword. The way Hekma positions himself, on the contrary, does not preclude an Eastern European reader to take a critical distance from the seemingly neutral position of "the Western knowledge".

[35] Hekma has been working together with Eastern European scholars, visited a few conferences on sexualities after 1989, including the one in Tallinn, also he has lectured about Western LGBT politics in Romania, Croatia and Hungary.

Eastern European Researcher

In any case, reading one or another kind of preface makes the position of an Eastern European reader and researcher unstable. Where is she positioning herself in the dualist picture of "the East" vs. "the West"? Can she read these forewords and the books *as an* Eastern European? Or is the geopolitical and temporal dualism dragging her on the side of "the West", forming her gaze as the gaze of the pseudo-universal Western point of view? In this chapter I presented the discourse by Bullough and Hekma, an example of a Western gaze towards Eastern Europe. In no way it should be understood as a full representation of this gaze, but rather an invitation to be more critical to some presumed temporal and hierarchical narratives that are so common sense in the scholarly works on sexuality, as well and even more so in the media and popular discourse.

But can it be that their "Western" view is not that different from the view of an "Eastern European researcher"? In this situation, where Hekma and Bullough were invited to write forewords for the books on post-communist sexualities, their individual opinions and impressions were not as crucial (although still very important for the formation of readers opinion) as the institutionalized positions of "the Western authority" that they were put into. This specific position, in which they were supposed to introduce and explain "the East" for the presumed audience of "the West", was probably the main factor in producing their rather othering discourse.

Both researchers were invited to participate in creating the books *Beyond the Pink Curtain* and *Sexuality and Gender* by the editors, who are mainly Eastern European. *Beyond the Pink Curtain* was edited by Roman Kuhar, a Slovenian gay and lesbian scholar and Judit Takács, a Hungarian gender researcher. The whole project was enabled by the Slovenian Peace Institute, and publishing was made possible by the support of Open Society

Foundation.[36] *Sexuality and Gender* was published as a part of the Haworth Press *Human Sexuality* series. It was edited by Aleksandar Štulhofer, a Croatian scholar of sexuality, together with Theo Sandfort, a Dutch sexuality researcher. However, in the introduction the merits of an idea of the book go explicitly to Štulhofer (Štulhofer and Sandfort 2005, xxi). Therefore it seems reasonable for me to say that the books were mainly an Eastern European initiative, enabled however, with the support of Western colleagues and finances. The part of this Eastern European initiative was also an invitation of the "Western authority" to grant more credibility to the knowledge produced about post-communist sexuality by post-communist scholars.

What influenced Eastern European researchers to give the floor to the Western authority in presenting the books about post-communist reality to their readers? How do Eastern European researchers position themselves and how do they picture "the East" and "the West"? How is it connected with the nationalist discourse, pervading Eastern European societies, which I have discussed earlier in this chapter? The next chapter shows that the orientalizing discourse towards post-communist region is characteristic not only for those who identify as Westerners. Can it be that the narrative of the Eastern European backwardness and the post-communist desire to 'return to Europe' forms a sustaining background for everyone who wants to reflect on the East-West differences, also the Eastern Europeans themselves? Is it probably an example of "voluntary colonization" as Aniko Imre calls it? (Imre 2007, 277)

In the following two chapters I will present two narratives about "the East" and "the West", that scholars of post-communism tell when producing knowledge about the Eastern European sexualities, In the Chapter 3, at the center of critical attention will be the narrative,

[36] OSF is a philanthropic organization founded by George Soros, an American millionaire of Hungarian decent. Soros has been supporting dissident movements in Eastern Europe in 80'ies and he put enormous amount of money into the restoration of CEE democracies after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In 1991 he established the Central European University in Budapest and in 1993 he founded the Open Society Institute. He is respected person at the same time as an object of vague conspiracy theories.

which orientalizes Eastern Europe as *backward* and has a lot in common with the activist discourses and the "Western gaze", which I have just discussed. It seems to be directly opposed the nationalist discourses and privileging "the West" over "the East". To present this narrative I will take examples from the articles from the books *Sexuality and Gender* and *Beyond the Pink Curtain*. In the Chapter 4 I will focus on the narrative which claims post-communism to be simply *different* from "the West" and encourages resisting the Western sexual colonialism, sometimes surprisingly very much *in line* with the Eastern European nationalist discourse. In this last chapter I will take examples from the *De-Centring Western Sexualities*. I will relate these texts with the context they are operating and criticize them through the lens of postcolonial feminist perspective.

3. Research (I): The Narrative of the Eastern European Backwardness

In this chapter I present examples of the most prominent narrative in the scholarship of sexuality in Eastern Europe – the narrative of the Western-oriented sexual progress. My analysis of these articles, taken from the books *Sexuality and Gender* and *Beyond the Pink Curtain,* shows how scholars of sexuality from Eastern Europe tend to reproduce the problematic imaginaries of "the East" and "the West". Imaginary geography from the first sight seems to be only taken for granted, neutral background, upon which the knowledge about sexuality is produced. However, as I show, geographies and temporalities are also produced and reinforced through the making of knowledge about sexuality. The images of the backward East and the progressive West are created in talking about sexuality, while sexuality itself becomes a tool, a scale for making comparisons between the supposed progressiveness of different countries or regions.

Civilizational and Sexual Incompetence

Slovenian scholars Ivan Bernik and Valentina Hlebec in the chapter "How Did It Happen the First Time? Sexual Initiation of Secondary School Students in Seven Postsocialist Countries" of *Sexuality and Gender,* presents a sociological analysis of the data from surveys conducted in 1997 in seven Eastern European societies. Comparing this data with the research done on Western European countries, the authors want to see if there is any distinguishable pattern of 'post-socialist sexuality'. Bernik and Hlebec start from the presumption that the sexual behaviour of Eastern European youngsters must be less rational, more impulsive, more intensely gendered and thus less safe and pleasurable in comparison to their Western peers. This startling hypothesis is based on the premise that Eastern Europe is a place of "delayed" or "fake modernity" (Bernik and Hlebec 2005, 299) as opposed to the West, which is then obviously presumed to be, on the contrary, a place of 'real' and 'up-to-date', modernity.

The supposed 'cultural lag' of post-communist societies, as Bernik and Hlebec hypothesize, should have a significant effect on the sexual behaviour and values of young people in these societies:

> Drawing on the delayed modernity thesis, it can be argued that the specific difference of postsocialist adolescent sexual behaviour – when compared to the patterns of sexual behaviour in Western societies – is a high share of sexually active adolescents, both female and male, and pronounced differences between male and female sexual roles. (Bernik and Hlebec, 2005; 299)

Young people in Eastern European countries are expected to be less reflexive about their sexual activities and gender identities in sexual behaviour than their Western counterparts, according to Bernik and Hlebec. Reflexivity, drawing on Anthony Giddens, is understood here as an ability of an individual to be accountable and thus to monitor his/her thoughts and actions. In the field of sexual behaviour this reflexivity is manifest, as the authors explain, as rationality and predictability of the sexual act, basically as a friendly and safe atmosphere (Bernik and Hlebec 2005, 312). The delayed modernity thesis, applied in this way, is a classical orientalist trope, portraying the post-communist society as less rational, more sexually impulsive and with pronounced gender differences (see e.g. McClintock, 1995). Eastern European youth is expected to have more sex at the younger age than their Western peers, it is initiated by male partner more often, while female is expected to be more passive, and they are supposed to reflect on their sexual behaviour less, hypothesise Bernik and Hlebec (Bernik and Hlebec 2005, 300).[37]

Where does the presumption of "delayed modernity" in the sphere of sexuality come from? Bernik and Hlebec build their theoretical frame first of all on the hypothesis of

[37] I cannot not mention one more striking feature of Bernik and Hlebec analysis (as well as their Western colleagues in this research) – the pervasive heteronormativity. The first sexual intercourse is conceptualized as exclusively heterosexual without explaining why a large amount of sexual experiences are completely eliminated because they do not fit into the heteronormative schema. Attention to this aspect would have probably troubled also the easy schema of gender.

"civilizational incompetence" coined by Piotr Sztompka, a prominent Polish sociologist and an expert of postsocialist transformation. From the article of Bernik and Hlebec it is basically impossible to tell if they keep any critical distance from their hypothesis. Whether they do or not, their research hypothesis is obviously largely build on Sztompka's views. In order to present Sztompka's approach in a greater detail and to give a picture of the wider discursive frame in which the narrative of Eastern Europe backwardness by Bernik and Hlebec is operating in, I will make a short detour from the main analysis.

One of Sztompka's articles, written in 1993 and quoted by Bernik and Hlebec, is called *Civilizational Incompetence: The Trap of Postcommunist Societies*. In this article Sztompka talks about the necessity for the Eastern Europeans to overcome their backwardness and acquire necessary societal competences, in order to re-enter the "European home" (Sztompka, 1993; 86). In this example we see how the concept of Eastern European backwardness is intermingled with the narrative of the 'return to Europe'. Sztompka distinguishes between the return to the European "house", which marks more formal, institutional changes, and the return to the European "home", which is about the change in values, moral, intellectual habits – the change of the *homo sovieticus*[38] mentality (Sztompka 1993, 86). The notions of "house" and "home" Sztompka borrowed from a 1989 talk by Zbigniew Brzezinski[39], a Polish-American scientist and statesmen[40]. In his speech, given in Moscow, at the time when the outcomes of *perestroika* were still quite unclear, Brzezinski claimed the importance to realize, that Europe is not merely a geographical entity, but also a "philosophical and cultural" sphere of countries which share the common European values.

[38] This pseudo Latin term, which gained a huge popularity, was coined by a controversial Russian writer and dissident Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Zinovyev.

[39] Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish-American political scientist and expert of geopolitics gave this speech in front of the Diplomatic Academy of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow. Brzezinsky wrote as an academic on Soviet totalitarianism and was one of the people who argued already in 80's about the signs of the fall of the Soviet Union. From http://www.unz.org/Pub/ProblemsCommunism-1989nov-00001?View=PDFPages

[40] Brzezinski himself was most likely referring to Gorbachev's strategic foreign policy slogan "Common European Home", which was later much bended in the direction, originally not intended by Gorbachev (Malcolm 1989)

The binary schema of "Christian European civilization" opposed to the "oriental despotism" (Brzezinski 1989, 3) was a simple and thus strong enough imaginary schema appealing to people fighting against Soviet totalitarianism and building newly independent countries.[41] Sztompka, an authority in theorizing post-communist transformations, employed this extremely popular orientalist schema in his theory of "civilizational incompetence".

But what are those "civilizational competences" that Eastern Europeans seem to lack? According to Sztompka they include: "enterprise culture", explained as rationality and individualism; civic culture of political participation, ability to participate in public debate and a tolerance for different opinions; even "everyday culture", which he explained as "neatness, cleanliness, orderliness, punctuality, body care, fitness, facility to handle mechanical devices and the like" (Sztompka 1993, 89). Sztompka claims that while Western Europe managed to develop these competences through the centuries, Eastern Europe never really had a chance to "evolve" and, moreover, was frozen in the Soviet regime of "fake modernity" (Ibid.). The pessimistic attitude towards his own society, an overt orientalization of Polish *homo sovieticus* and uncritical idealization of the Western Europe makes a striking combination in this Sztompka's article, which is quoted without any criticism by Bernik and Hlebec.

Sztompka's work in particular, as well as Eastern European internal orientalism in general, has been persuasively criticised by an anthropologist Michał Buchowski as teleological, idealistic, culturally deterministic and simply too black and white. In a famous article *The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother* he called it an example of "spontaneous occidental orientalism and naïve social Darwinism" (Buchowski, 2006; 476). While Buchowski chooses to call it naive and spontaneous, I would rather call it inherited and structural – Sztompka is following the orientalist attitude towards

[41] The echoes of it one can hear also in the famous work by Samuel P. Huntington *The Clash of Civilizations, w*hich aimed to describe the new world order after the end of the Cold War.

Eastern Europe, characteristic for European discourses since Enlightenment (see Wolff 1993, Todorova 1997). Buchowski argued that this kind of orientalism is still pervasive in all spheres of life and at the all levels of society in Eastern Europe, including academia. Scholarship of sexuality seems not to be an exception.

Bernik and Hlebec apply the problematic Sztompka's theory of Eastern European fake modernity, taken from the article on "civilizational incompetence", to the field of sexuality. They merge it with another example of the same logics, the concept of "delayed modernity" by presenting a comparative research about the adolescent sexual behaviour and attitudes in Eastern and Western Germany, conducted in 1993 by a German sexologist Gunter Schmidt. According to Bernik and Hlebec, this research showed that:

> The patterns of sexual life among East German respondents were characterized by "delayed modernity" (Schmidt. 1993b, p. 7), i.e., they resembled more the patterns of their Western counterparts in the late 1960s than those in the late 1980s when the study was conducted. In contrast to East Germany, in West Germany adolescents' attitudes towards sexuality were influenced in the 1970s and 1980s by social movements for women's rights and equality ... On a more general level, the results of the German study suggest that in postsocialist countries the permissive sexual climate has not been "upgraded" by reflexive attitudes toward sexual activities" (Bernik and Hlebec, 2005; 299)

Here basically the same presumption as the one of Sztompka's – that of the civilizational backwardness – is rephrased in terms, which are suitable to explain differences in sexual behaviour between "the East" and "the West".

Delayed modernity, according to the referenced sexologist Schmidt, pervades even the most intimate parts of human life in post-communism. Following him, Bernik and Hlebec expect, that, unlike their Western peers, Eastern European adolescents are not "upgraded" by

a more reflexive, rational attitudes towards sexual behaviour. The narrative of the Western sexual progress, a temporal historical imaginary in connection with the imaginaries of sexuality here is illustrated and reinforced by the usage of the decades. Employing images associated with a certain *decade* works as a certain explanation, a way of reasoning to claim Western advancement - I will come back to this in the later sections. The Western advancement is something taken for granted, and actually produced by the portrayal of the East as backward.

Bernik and Hlebec start their research by combining the presumption of the civilizational incompetence with the delayed modernity hypothesis and ask if the features of backwardness of post-communist societies can be noticed in the field of sexuality. They presume, that the specific object of their analysis, that is the sexual experiences of the "first time" will be also a "valuable source of information about the prevailing social norms guiding sexual behaviour and about change in patterns of sexual life in the whole population" (Bernik and Hlebec 2005, 298). However, after conducting a research in contexts diverse as Bulgaria, Croatia, Poland, Slovakia, Yugoslavia, Czech Republic and Slovenia, Bernik and Hlebec come to a conclusion that actually they did not manage to detect any 'postsoviet patterns of adolescent sexuality' that would be in any way unitary among themselves and/or different from the Western countries. The only "small but not insignificant" structural difference that the research showed, they say, was that "the pattern of gender difference at first intercourse seems more homogenous across postsocialist countries than across Western ones" (Bernik and Hlebec 2005, 311). Such research outcomes complicate the easy dualistic vision of "East vs. West" and ask, as they suggest, for a more thorough analysis of differences *within* Eastern Europe. Bernik and Hlebec also note that the outcomes of the research seriously challenge the "delayed modernity" hypothesis, at least as much as it concerns sexual behaviour.

I find it problematic that the authors conclude these findings by claiming that perhaps, following the research outcomes, we should presume that sexuality must be understood as an autonomous phenomenon, "uncoupled from other social spheres" (Bernik and Hlebec 2005, 312). Thus they do not aim to question the 'delayed modernity' hypothesis in general. Instead of drawing wider conclusions about society, as intended at the beginning of the chapter, Bernik and Hlebec conclude that sexuality has a "relative autonomy" from the other spheres of life (Ibid.). In this way they do not question the framework of binary and hierarchical "the East" vs. "the West" difference. Every outcome of the research, which fits neatly into this schema, such as similarity of "the pattern of gender difference" (Bernik and Hlebec 2005, 311) during the first sexual experience of teenagers in post-Communist countries, becomes just a one more proof of the frame of though which was obvious since the very beginning. The outcomes that are not compatible with the narrative of the Eastern European backwardness, on the contrary, are discarded as less relevant and as something that has to be "uncoupled" from the main frame.

This kind of textual effect, following Said, can be called *dialectic reinforcement*. Through this process certain texts form a discourse "whose material presence and weight, not the originality of a given author, [becomes] really responsible for the texts produced out of it" (Said 1979, 94). Why do Bernik and Hlebec employ the "delayed modernity" hypothesis at all and, more crucially, why do they fail to question the premises of their research, even after not being able to find a 'postsocialist pattern of adolescent sexuality'? Acknowledging the hegemony, the material presence of the discourse of "Eastern European lagging behind", so taken for granted in the scholarship in and about Eastern Europe (see Todorova 1997, 2005) can help to find an answer.

The discourse of "civilizational incompetence" put forward by Sztompka as well as many other scholars, is an example of discourse, which does not simply *represent* the reality

of post-communism – it *produces* this reality, but creating the only possible way to understand it. This discourse sets the frame for the knowledge production, for allegedly relevant understandings of reality, including that of sexuality. The presumed backwardness of Eastern Europe becomes a certain discursive lens of intelligibility, the only possible scientific way to approach post-communist reality in scholarly texts. Also it becomes a background for material institutions and social interactions such as Western support for local NGO's for example. The production of the relevant knowledge about sexuality in Bernik and Hlebec's account is produced only through reinforcing the uniform temporal and geographical frame of the supposedly backward Eastern Europe.

The Role of Temporality

There is one important aspect of the last quote from the chapter written by Bernik and Hlebec, where they are describing the research by Schmidt that needs a closer examination. It is the role of the different decades and temporal framing in general, which helps to make sense of Eastern as well as Western reality. It seems that the reference to the "60's", or "70's", or even later periods becomes a marker to make sense of the contemporary Eastern European reality in many scholarly texts of the books *Sexuality and Gender*, *Beyond the Pink Curtain* as well as *De-Centring Western Sexualities*. As I will show in the rest of the chapter, it becomes a euphemism to express what West *has become*, what it has gone through, and Eastern European societies *are going through now*, what cultural, political and mental transformations they are experiencing and are awaiting in the future. The expectations about Western and non-Western feminism are managed not only in spatial, but also in temporal way, framing history of sexual politics in the neat decades, notice Hemmings (2011). But what is it precisely that the "60's" or "70's" are standing for in Eastern European scholarship of sexuality? What are precisely the changes and processes that are supposedly pointed at, at once this rhetoric reference to this particular decade is being made?

Another example of such a taken for granted framing in the book *Sexuality and Gender* is a chapter by Igor S. Kon – a prominent Russian sociologist, who was writing about sexuality both during the times of Soviet Union as well as after. Kon was definitely not one of those "homophobic doctors" that Hekma refers too at the foreword to *Beyond the Pink Curtain*, but an exception. Actually Kon's writings, which were different from the mainstream conservative opinion of Soviet scientists, and challenged societal taboos, had become also an inspiration for many post-communist gay activists.[42] At the opening of his article, Kon claims that some medically dangerous trends in Russian sexual life, especially the spread of STD and HIV/AIDS, are consequences of the "recent changes in adolescent sexual behaviour similar to the Western sexual revolution of the 1960's" (Kon 2005; 111). It seems that the naming of the decade for Kon serves here as a shorthand phrase to describe Russian reality in universally understandable terms. The meaning of the 1960's, as a reader learns, is that of an increasing sexual liberalization and increasing sexual activity among adolescents.

A reference to this decade is used in another chapter of the *Sexuality and Gender*, written by Elina Haavio-Mannila, Anna Rotkirch and Osmo Kontula, which presents findings about sexual behaviour in the contexts of Finland, Estonia and St Petersburg (Russia). The "60's", as a temporal embodiment of "sexual revolution" in this chapter explains the difference of a Nordic Finish context from the Communist Estonian and Russian contexts. Finland is different from communist/post-communist context because of its "sexual culture that treats women with respect and equality" (Haavio-Mannila, Rotkirch, Kontula, 2005; 360). The emergence of such culture resulted from the sexual revolution, theorize scholars. Here 60's again, like in the case of Kon's article, are used to point out something that apparently is of the Western past. If for Kon it was increasing sexual freedom, for Haavio-

[42] From a conversation with Vladimiras Simonko, the leader of gay rights organization LGL. Vilnius, 2010 April.

Mannila, Rotkirch and Kontula it is the achievement of gender equality or at least a certain respect for women.

From these examples we learn that the sexual revolution of the 60's in the cultural imaginary of the Eastern European scholars is just as important as for the Western scholars and society. However, it signifies differently in post-communist imaginary than in that of the capitalist West. Talking about Western imaginary, Claire Hemmings accurately notices that temporal securing of political movement (such as movements for gender equality, antiracism or gay rights) in particular decades, produces the image of feminist struggle as being surpassed. Simultaneously it produces the image of the Western society as sexually liberated and advanced. This imaginary, Hemmings argues, fuels Western post-feminist popular discourses just as much as it creates a background for feminist historiography. The shared history of the supposedly now-over struggle for sexual liberation creates an illusion of a contemporary free Western feminist subject and simultaneously an image of the non-Western not-yet-free women (Mohanty 1988).

The empathy that a Western feminist subject can feel towards the "other" subjects comes from the spatial and temporal distinction. Thus the empathy and solidarity of a Western feminist with feminists in "other places" comes from the Western imagination which "links two different times and places – the Western feminist subject's past and the other woman's present" (Hemmings 2011, 213). Given the close connection between the movements for gender equality and movements for sexual freedom, no wonder that the progressive subject of Western movement for sexual freedom has an imagination extremely similar to that of the feminist subject, described by Hemmings. I have already shown how this spatial and temporal othering through empathy works in Western discourse in my discussion of the forewords by Hekma and Bullough.

The imaginary historiography of Western sexual progress has a crucial impact on the Eastern European knowledge production as well. For the contemporary "Western" sexuality researcher, the imaginary of a surpassed sexual revolution of "the 60's" is a certain discursive 'trophy' which describes the achievements of his/hers' society and places him/her at the imaginary "now" of sexual progress, while temporarily orientalising "others". I have shown this in Chapter 2. In the narrative of an "Eastern European" researcher of sexuality writing about Eastern Europe, "the 60's", which *did not* take place on the east side of the Iron Curtain, plays a role of *the lack*. As such it becomes a marker of the sexual inferiority and backwardness of Eastern Europe.

Although the focus of the "Western" and "Eastern European" researcher might be different, the former emphasizing the achievement (in the West), while the latter – the lack (in the East), actually the images of "the East" and "the West" are extremely similar. In both cases the narrative of the Western sexual progress is a structuring norm, while Eastern Europe is seen as a deviation from this norm. This is why I prefer to write "Western" and "Eastern" in inverted commas, as discursively both researchers occupy the same point of view – the pseudo-universal Western point of view. From this point of view, Eastern Europe is marked by the perception of its *lack* and *lag* – it is seen as always already anachronistic, only repeating, mimicking the phenomenon which are organic to "the West" (Todorova 2005, 145). In this case post-communism is produced as if it is trying to fill in the gap of the sexual revolution, which in the supposedly natural development of "the West" has already happened in the 60'ies.

The chapter by Latvian sociologist and anthropologist Aivita Putnina "Sexuality, Masculinity and Homophobia: The Latvian Case" from the book *Beyond the Pink Curtain* gives us an opportunity to take a glance at the importance of the 60'ies in the narrative of Eastern European sexual progress. Putnina is interested in the homophobic and aggressive

reaction of Latvian society towards the attempts of LGBTQ community to increase its visibility. She describes how the first gay Pride in Riga in 2005 was met with a huge opposition from the conservative part of Latvian society defending 'traditional morals'. Putnina's article is interesting for my research, because in order to explain Latvian homophobia it specifically addresses the perceived differences between "the "old" and the "new" Europe"[43] (Putnina, 2007; 315). The 1960's in this explanation come on the stage as the 'missed opportunity' for Latvians, the reason for their sexual backwardness, a reminder that they still have to catch up with the West.

Putnina explains the Latvian case of homophobia from the social constructivist perspective, building her theoretical frame on Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic domination and social change, taken from the book *Masculine Domination* (2001). Instead of applying Bourdieu's concepts straightforwardly to analyse Latvian reality, Putnina first cautiously aims to reflect on the differences between the context in which Bourdieu was writing and the context that she is writing about. However, this reflection turns into an oversimplified binary comparison. Differences between the "old" (or the West) and the "new" (or the East) Europe are seen as inaugurated by different histories of these spaces, which result in different way of how "homosexuality was perceived, lived and institutionalized" (Putnina, 2007; 315). As her research interest is, specifically, the case of Latvia, Putnina goes into more detail *only* explaining the historical implications of state socialism. The Western societies are left not discussed in particular, only as an antipode of "the East". The West thus in this article becomes simply that, what the East *is not.*

Putnina's puts it in this way:

> Moreover, the Latvian case provides yet a further ground for analysis [started by Bourdieu]. Despite the similarities of the patriarchal order, other factors like the

[43] "Old Europe" is an often used synonym for Western Europe, while the "new Europe" is used for the Eastern Europe. Especially these terms are popular in the context of EU enlargement.

> history and perceptions of sexuality, traditions of public and private divisions, the skills of public discussion as well as the expression of agency in the Soviet period and afterwards are *different in the "old" and the "new" Europe*. I argue that the main difference between both "Europes" lies in the relationship of the dominant discourse towards the dominated. *State socialism with its hegemonic tradition of truth established a different relationship between the dominant and dominated discourses*. So, not only the categories of division but also their interrelation determined the outcome of how homosexuality was perceived, lived and institutionalized (Putnina, 2007; 315, emphasis mine)

The word "different", a couple of times used in this quote, does not stand for a comparison between the East and the West. "Differences" only mark the position of post-Communist reality vis-a-vis Western reality, with the focus on how the "new" Europe is different *from* the "old" one, and not the other way around. The Eastern Europe is presented here as that dialectical difference-from the Western Europe, which only confirms "the West" as the dominant position.[44] As only the disadvantages of the East are discussed, it is implied, that the post-Communist context in general is disadvantaged *in comparison* to the West. At the same time, there is no account of "Western reality" – it seems be taken for granted.

The difference of Eastern Europe from the West is repeatedly explained later again in the same manner. This time Eastern Europe is metonymically embodied by Latvia:

> Another difference between "old" Europe and Latvia lies in the position of "truth." The Soviet legacy has contributed to the hegemonic perception of truth. (Putnina 2007, 323)

[44] It is not difficult to notice a parallel here with the mechanism which many feminist, starting with Luce Irigaray has called the phallogocentrism. This mechanism criticized by feminists and presumed to be largely structuring our reality, means that the feminine difference is perceived only as a difference-from man and not as difference as such. The same can be said about Eastern European difference – it is only seen as the difference-from the West. (Irigaray 1993, Braidotti 2011).

Here again, the implication of the Soviet legacy for contemporary Latvian, "new-European" reality is explained, while that of the "old" Europe is taken for granted, not described or critically analysed in any way. It seems that no historical explanation is needed to understand the rather stable and uniformly positive image of the "West". What is the "West" and how did it become the way it is? The answers are presumed to be rather unproblematic - the western past seems to be taken as a certain normative, even a 'normal' path of historical development. On the contrary, the Soviet oppression is an abnormal deviation, a suspension of the natural flow of time, which requires additional explanation. This is probably connected with what David Chioni Moore in an article "Is the Post- in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet?" has called "reverse-cultural colonization" (Chioni Moore 2001, 121). Chioni Moore pointed at the fact that differently from the standard narrative of the Western colonization, which is always accompanied by the orientalization of occupied peoples, the Soviet occupation of the Eastern European countries, was marked by an orientalising attitude *towards occupiers* Russians as inferior to "the West". This insight by Chioni Moore gives a possible interpretation of why post-communist countries tend to self-orientalise as lagging behind the West. It might be understood as connected with the experience of the Soviet occupation as a certain suspension of a natural Western development.

One might argue that it is undeniably important to account for the impact of totalitarian past for the present reality of the post-Communist societies, as Putnina is indeed trying to do. I agree with this urge to account for the specific legacy of the Soviet times for the contemporary Eastern European societies and there are definitely a lot of brilliant explorations done in this direction[45]. However, in this particular chapter Putnina's account seems to slip too easily into an uncritical reduction of both Western and post-communist

[45] See for example work by Adi Kuntsman and Brian James Baer.

realities.[46] It is worth comparing Putnina's way of conceptualizing "the East" and "the West" with, for example that of Heidi Kurvinen in the same book. Kurvinen is writing about the context of Estonia and giving an account on the representations of homosexuality in Estonian media round 1990'ies. She claims that the topic of homosexuality entered Estonian print media mainly in connection to AIDS, via the writings of medical doctors who saw homosexuality as perversion. After acknowledging, that the medicalization of homosexuality was quite characteristic for the Soviet Union as a whole, Kurvinen notices that "in the Western world where the fear of AIDS was at its peak during the 1980's this was also the case (Miller 1995, 450-451)" (Kurvinen 2007, 292). Obviously, "the Western world" stands as a generalization of what is actually mainly an account of U.S. and British gay and lesbian history in Miller's book in this quote. However, what is significant is that for Kurvinen the East-West axis does not become the marker of over-generalized hierarchical difference.

On the contrary, in Putnina's chapter *Sexuality, Masculinity and Homophobia*, the "old" Europe is often presented, without really presenting it, as the opposite of the post-totalitarian Eastern Europe, as the idealized image of what post-Communist reality *is not*. Such representation is problematic, because a binary and hierarchical account diminishes the specificities of the post-Communist experience and paints it uniformly dark, reflecting the Cold War and earlier Western European fantasies (Wolff 1993). Moreover, the difference between the "old" and "new" is explained, as the very words "old" and "new" quite clearly point at, in a temporal manner. According to Putnina, "the West" is understood as progressing in a linear way, building on the historical achievements, while Eastern Europe, which does not have the same historical baggage, now has to 'catch up' with "the West". Sexuality

[46] In other works Putnina seems to be much more aware of the dangers of essentializing the narrative of the 'return to Europe'. For example, in an article, "Population Genome Project in Latvia: Exploring the Articulation of Agency" Putnina criticises the scientific project of Latvian genome database. One of the aims of the project, besides from strictly medical usage was the possibility to study the ethnogenesis of Latvian people (see http://web.ceu.hu/celab/Genebank/GeneBanC_Lett.pdf). According to Putnina, this was an opportunity for Latvians to show, for nationalist and Euro-centric goals, the "links long forgotten by Danish, Swedes, Germans" while resisting the acknowledgement of assimilation with Russian long time colonizers. See Putnina (2003).

becomes the paradigmatic marker of the *general* Eastern European progress towards bigger freedom, that is, towards "the West".

The movements for the rights of sexual minorities are presented as if they exposed the temporal gap between the "old" and "new" Europe:

> Homosexuality happened to challenge the basic premises of the social order which had been taken for granted and been invisible. *Latvians missed the opportunity to debate sexuality in the 1960s.* Debates around homosexuality emerged in the virtual absence of a critical discursive tradition dealing with sexuality and gender. However, the good thing about the categories is that they are learnt and changing. (Putnina, 324-325)

The "60's" – a textual embodiment of achievements of sexual freedom, is presented as the crucial moment for the formation of the contemporary West. The expectation of change in Eastern Europe, of Westernization of "the East", is based on the presumption that "the West" has experienced a change, a transformation, a sexual revolution, which radically changed Western society and determined its' further development. Because of this change, embodied by the rhetorical figure of "the 60's", Western societies are presumed to be relatively free from prejudices about sexuality as they have already gone through the debates about what is normal and what is not. The West is presumed to live in the happy "now", built on the previous achievements and the established "critical discursive tradition", marked by acceptance of diversity in the sphere of gender and sexuality. Eastern Europe is, on the contrary, a "new" Europe – it still has to achieve the state that the "old" Europe presumably has already achieved.

The idealization of the West is based on the common notion of sexual progress. Judith Butler criticises the notion of sexual progress in U.S. leftist discourses, where "to be progressive is to be in the progress of developing new movements that follow upon prior

ones, with the new ones establishing more radical claims for justice or more copious notions of equality" (Butler 2009, 18). This notion, according to her is based on the image of activism, as if it would be an embodiment of some unitary and linear unfolding of freedom, where previous achievements lead towards more radical achievements. Alternatively Butler suggests thinking temporality of the movement for sexual freedom as a "fractious constellation" – characterised by simultaneous existence of antagonistic trends, not necessarily straightforwardly pinned down to a certain spatial or temporal location and not proceeding in predictable linear ways (Butler 2009, 18-19). Such an alternative imaginary could be useful to disentangle the framing of sexual progress in the binary of "the West" vs. "the East", which seems to be reproduced in the Eastern European scholarship.

The Inevitable Unfolding of Sexual Freedom

The frame of thought which claims the 'return to Europe' to be necessary as well as virtually inevitable, is clearly visible at the introduction of *Sexuality and Gender*, which sets the tone of the whole edited volume. Written by Štulhofer and Sandfort, the editors of the book, and entitled "Introduction: Sexuality and Gender in Times of Transition", this text shows how the presumption of Eastern European "backwardness" goes together with the imperative to "catch up" with the West. In Chapter 2 I described the scandal in Croatia, which recently was prompted by right-wing organisations, which allegedly claimed Štulhofer (and also Sandfort) being involved in a phantasmagoric Western conspiracy to supposedly demoralize Croatian society. It is interesting to see how the authors themselves talk about the East and the West a few years before this scandal, and how they position themselves in the geographical and temporal narratives of sexual progress. It seems that the image of "the West" from their point of view is a reversal of the nationalist discourse of "the West", as a place of debauchery and degradation. According to Štulhofer and Sandfort, "the West" presents the normative *ideal* of sexuality.

Štulhofer and Sandfort present an overview of the situation in the post-Communist societies after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Their analysis is based on the comparison between post-communist Eastern societies and those in the democratic capitalist West, illustrated with the charts of various statistical value surveys. The editors conclude that the differences between East and West are "real and important" with respect to at least five dimensions: societal sexual health (HIV/AIDS), sexual education, sexual behavior, sex work, and the attitudes towards sexual minorities. How to understand the differences between "the East" and "the West", differences, which position Eastern Europe as worse, how to make sense of them and explain theoretically, ask Štulhofer and Sandfort?

Before answering these questions, the editors completely dismiss the potential critical voices from the side of postcolonial and/or transnational feminism:

> Could it be that differences listed <> - from more sexual aggression in adolescent sexual encounters and more intolerance towards sexual minorities to nonexistence of sexual offender treatment programs and lack of sexual health services – are mostly imaginary? Should we write them off as a mere mirage, the shimmering of the *exotic* in the "colonial" gaze?" (Štulhofer and Sandfort, 2005; 10, emphasis in the original)

Writing *exotic* in italics and putting "colonial" in inverted commas, Štulhofer and Sandfort refuse any kind of critical postcolonial feminist approach to the imaginary East-West binary schema. Editors only rhetorically ask if we can say that the statistic differences can be written off as "imaginary" as a "mirage" and decide that the differences are too "real" not to be taken into account. However, the question is not whether the issues in the field of sexuality in Eastern Europe are "imaginary" or "real" – the important question is how we choose which differences are relevant and how we frame and interpret them. In the way Štulhofer and Sandfort present them, the differences are not neutral, obviously, but hierarchical. They mark Eastern European failures to meet the higher Western European standard. Whether it is the

use of contraception or de-stigmatization of sexual minorities, post-communist societies are clearly failing to meet the standards dictated by the situation in Western Europe.

The editors seem to imply that these issues are issues *because* they mark the "difference-from-the-West". Therefore they also have a universal tool for interpretation, as well as a universal solution to the problems – following the road of the West:

> In conclusion, it seems that in many respects *postcommunist Europe is following the sexual trajectory of the West, probably with a delay of some two or three decades.* Should we assume that in time sexual landscapes of the postcommunist East will become the mirror image of the West? If so, will it be the triumph of social and economic development, the outcome of the successful modernization of the East? Aware that the West is no less a dynamic system – undergoing a far-reaching postmodern and global cultural change – the authors in this book are not unanimous on the issues (Štulhofer and Sandfort 2005, 16, emphasis mine)

The first sentence summarizes the general "return to Europe" or a "transitological"[47] approach, applied to the developments in the field of sexuality in postcommunist region. The differences between the East and the West are not only presented in a hierarchical way, where East is doing worse than West, but also temporarily, where the failures of post-communist Europe are understood as signs of *belatedness*. The explanation of the problems in Eastern Europe is thus formulated as the problem of retard development. The possible solution of the issues in the field of sexualities is also already presumed to be, as authors suggest later in the text, "more Western lifestyles" (Štulhofer and Sandfort 2005, 20), or catching up with the West. The only factor, which troubles the Eastern European desire to finally become the "mirror image" of the Western "sexual landscapes", is, this quote implies, the fact that the

[47] See for example an article by Jacque True, who explained the transitological approach as a belief, affirmed by the social sciences, that post-communist transformations are "leading inexorably to the consolidation of liberal democracy and capitalism" (True 2000, 76).

West is also constantly changing. Therefore "the West" seems to be constantly ahead, constantly dictating the future desires and goals for "the East. As Kulpa and Mizieliñska puts it, criticising this temporal framing, "whatever CEE became/is/will be, West had become/has already been/ will have been" (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2011, 18).

On the one hand, I do agree with the authors of *Sexuality and Gender*, that Eastern Europe, just like any other place in the world, has many issues in the fields of sexual education, health care, tolerance towards sexual minorities, etc. Fighting the problems and looking for solutions is extremely important task, taken up by numerous activists in diverse Eastern European countries – I definitely do not want to question the relevance of these endeavors. On the other hand, I would like to question the narrative which frames and explains Eastern European issues only by means of hierarchical and temporal comparison with the Western European standard. This representation of the progress narrative, the "trajectory" of Europeanisation, can be even imagined visually as an arrow, pointing towards the desirable future. The future is to be reached by going through certain phases of development, which are measured out by decades, turning an arrow into a sort of ladder. The "West" is positioned on this imaginary arrow at the forefront of the sexual progress, in the radical, progressive "now" of sexual freedom. Meanwhile, the CEE is lagging behind a few decades in this inevitable trajectory of unfolding Western sexual freedom. Sooner or later, we are told, "the East" is going to reach the level of "the West" – it is just a question of time, this narrative seems to imply.

As Hemmings puts it, the "fantasy of Western gender equality as already achieved is essential for the linked fantasy that a particular model of economic development will give rise to the universal good life, including women's empowerment and opportunity" (Hemmings 2011, 138). This kind of thinking problematically presumes the linear and causal historical development, the unitary model of Western progress. Precisely, the Western example is the

object of global desire (Derrida 1990) and a model that is imagined to ensure the expected change, to secure the hope of achieving sexual freedom. In this way, the discourse of Eastern Europe as being belated in the progress of sexuality supplements the general discourse of the necessity and inevitability for the Eastern Europe to follow the path dictated by the West. This fantasy implies that it is enough to join EU and improve the economic situation in order to eventually reach the presumed Western freedom. It reduces everything what is done or is going to be done by the activists and scholars in Eastern Europe to the inevitable unfolding of predetermined path of Western-oriented development.

This kind of thinking is not only problematic because it orientalises Eastern Europe – the Western-centric point of view can be counterproductive and problematic also in fighting the issues raised by Štulhofer and Sandfort. The perception of the necessary "unfolding of freedom" (Scott 2011, Butler 2009) takes away the possibility to be original and innovative – because everything that will ever happen in the post-communist sphere is going to be just an imitation of what has already happened in the West. Eastern societies in this progress narrative are produced as only mimicking what has been originally invented, organic in "the West" (Todorova 2005). Perceived lack of agency on the one hand creates excuses for those who do not want to fight for their rights – the sexual freedom is going to come somehow naturally. On the other hand, it creates frustration for those who are afraid of changes, especially if they have no possibility to choose or decide about changes. However strategically the 'return to Europe' discourse might be taken by activist and scholars, it seems to work also in the ways contrary to the expected increase of societal tolerance towards sexual diversity.

If we want to understand post-communist reality and sexuality in it, we should at least not start with the presumptions about its backwardness and with the normative hierarchical binary evaluation 'in the West it is better while in the East it is worse'. Such a

presumption, especially when framed in a temporal way, can lead only to a fatalistic belief that the East is necessarily catching up with the West, following the same path of development as "the West", participating in the same, similarly structured, in certain necessary steps (decades) divided historical progress. The unfolding of sexual freedom in this way becomes understood as the inevitable historical destiny, instead of a constant struggle for small rights and freedoms. Also it idealizes "the West", as if it would be a unitary block, which has incorporated the sexual revolution at all societal levels and as if Western society is fundamentally free from sexual prejudice and emancipated. Moreover, it presents the sex researcher as looking to the reality of Eastern Europe from a supposedly neutral position. While actually this position privileges "the West" as the norm of sexual progress and inevitably *others* and orientalises "the East".

So far it seems that in the post-communist context the imaginary about the Western progress and Eastern backwardness affects the understanding of what the future of sexual politics should be. Obviously, the portrayal of the West as utopian heaven of sexual freedom seems to be important in fighting for sexual rights in Eastern European countries. It probably can be even taken as a certain type of strategic essentialism (Spivak 1988b), where the necessity to return to Europe and the essential *Europeanness* of sexual rights are employed by local activists to persuade their societies. Because of these reasons, the East-West binary has to be taken into account as an important variable at the given post-communist society. However, in the critical scholarship this binary should not be taken for granted and repeated without a rigorous reflection.

The narrative of 'return to' or 'catching up with' Europe is not universally accepted in every attempt of producing knowledge about sexuality in connection to post-communism. There are also some cases of reflection on the taken for granted dualisms. As the cover of the book *Beyond the Pink Curtain* says: "the initial urge to look behind "the Iron Curtain" will

ultimately lead us to look beyond – and challenge the existing frameworks" (Kuhar and Takács 2007). Indeed maybe the desire to uncover the truth about the Eastern European sexualities will lead to the realization that actually post-communist Europe shares most of its problems with the rest of the world. In the next chapter I will scrutinize some excerpts from the book *De-Centring Western Sexualities*, which indeed aims to challenge the perceptions of Eastern European backwardness and criticize the presumptions of Western-oriented progress.

4. Research (II): the Narrative of the Eastern European Difference

In the previous chapter I analyzed Eastern European scholarly discourses about sexuality which presume post-communist societies to be belated in comparison to "the West" in the hierarchical and temporal imaginary schema of sexual progress. As I have demonstrated, this approach importantly aims to counter local homophobic nationalism yet problematically resembles the Western orientalizing point of view. In this last chapter I want to scrutinize the attempts to *criticize* the imaginary of the sexual progress "towards the West" as the only solution for Eastern European societies. In this last chapter I will also make a step further in my analysis, taking up the second research question. Instead of critique of post-communist scholarship, its geographical, temporal and sexual imaginaries from postcolonial perspective, I will analyze also, how much a postcolonial perspective is actually helpful and/or limited in theorizing Eastern European sexualities.

One of the most interesting critiques of the discourse of post-communist backwardness in the sphere of sexuality is the latest of the three books that form my object of analysis – *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives* (2011), edited by Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizieliñska.[48] This book deserves a separate

[48] Although Kulpa and Mizieliñska are using the term Central and Eastern Europe to denominate the region the book is talking about, I will stick to the name "Eastern Europe" or "post-communist" region. To use "Central Europe" in order to talk about only certain and not other countries of the former Communist bloc was originally an idea of intellectuals from Poland, Hungary and former Czechoslovakia, "committed to shattering intellectually the oppressive idea of Eastern Europe" (Wolff 1993, 15). However, as Wolff notices, this implicitly

chapter in my analysis, as it aims to develop a very different take on the problems of sexuality, temporality and geography in Eastern Europe than the previous two books analyzed in Chapter 3. Tellingly, it is an "independent" work, without the need for a Western authority to pave the way for its endeavor by means of a foreword. Kulpa, working at Birkbeck College, University of London, and Mizieliñska, working at the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities, are two Polish scholars, who aimed to produce this book as a pointed theoretical intervention. Differently from *Sexuality and Gender* or *Beyond the Pink Curtain*, this book was not inspired by any conference, but written in order to present an alternative to the dominant way of conceptualizing Eastern Europe as lagging behind "the West". As Kulpa explained in our informal correspondence, they were inspired by the post-colonial theory and queer studies turn towards geography, which aims at giving an account of the "'non-Western' queer realities on their own grounds". For Kulpa and Mizieliñska the region of Eastern Europe was an interesting and complicated case study to explore and theorize from the perspective of postcolonial critique and homonationalism debates.

Against the grain of conventional Eastern European LGBTQ activist (and, as I have shown, also scholarly) understandings, "the West" in *De-centring Western Sexualities* is portrayed not only or primarily as a savior from homophobia and teacher of tolerance and sexual rights. According to this book, "the West" is actually also producing Eastern Europe as a homophobic "other", orientalizing it, as well as enforcing a certain hegemonic understanding of sexual politics, which might be not the most suitable one for Eastern European[49] contexts.[50] This is definitely the most significant innovation of this book. Many articles aim to reveal the multiplex and sometimes adverse impact of Europeanization for the

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perpetuated the exclusion of the other, more Eastern countries. In this way it is an example, I think, of an intellectual 'nesting orientalism', to borrow the term from Bakic-Hayden (1992).

[49] The editors of the book prefer to use the term Central and Eastern European (CEE).

[50] There is however, still a lack of research to prove this probably very right observation. Although there are books and articles of the orientalization of Eastern Europe (Wolff 1993, Todorova 1995), there is not so much research about contemporary sexual politics in connection to the East-West binary imaginations.

LGBTQ activism and increasing societal homophobia in different Eastern European countries.

There is also attention paid to the theoretical hegemony of Western-produced queer theory and the difficulties that an Eastern European thinker has to face, while trying to understand and explain post-communist reality in universally understandable terms. However, there is still the tendency to lean towards binaries and problematic over-generalizations, which I want to criticize. As I explain, although taking the critical standpoint towards the West, most of the articles in this book did not resist the temptation of the dualistic picture of "the East vs. the West". First I will discuss the idea of temporal disjunction that Kulpa and Mizieliñska propose and the East-West dualism it reproduces. Then I will go on to show how this dualism works as a privileging of post-communist reality, or as a scholarly "sexual nationalism" as I call it. Finally I will analyze Shannon Woodcock's article and show the connection between the inversion of orientalist discourse and picturing of "the West" as the allegedly neo-colonial power.

'Temporal Disjunction'

At the introductory chapter Kulpa and Mizieliñska claim that

> …post-colonial scholarship is an important field of reference for this book. Indeed we are influenced by this body of work and use some key concepts in our own formulation of ideas and analyses. In a sense, we would like to see this project as an effect of merging post-communist and post-colonial studies (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2011, 19)

Theoretical postcolonial insights inspired Kulpa and Mizieliñska to question the temporal and hierarchical imaginary, which is taken for granted by many of their colleagues. Because of this critical approach they interpret the imaginary which positions "the East" behind "the West", not as any self-evident reality, but as a working of "power and hegemonic strategies of

subordination" (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2011, 17). Postcolonial insights inspired Kulpa and Mizieliñska to shake the seemingly natural East-West hierarchy and to produce a work which stands out in the context of scholarship on sexuality in Eastern Europe. To say, however, that the book is "merging" post-communist and postcolonial studies is a bit too brave – there is no deep engagement with postcolonial theory in the light of post-communist context or theory. Postcolonial theory remains more in the background, providing a perspective and a rather schematic and superficial framework of critique.

The only work which is actually analyzed, critiqued (by Kulpa) and employed (by Woodcock) is Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (2007). This book, which inspired debates about racism in connection to sexual politics, and general attention to the connection of the ideas of sexual freedom and Western superiority, seems to be a big inspiration for *De-Centring Western Sexualities*. Why? As I have demonstrated thus far, Eastern Europe with its desire for sexual freedom and Europeanness (as if it was one and the same thing), presents a great but uneasy example to study from postcolonial perspective. Post-communist European countries, which are not really a part of the privileged Western metropolis, but also not the typical colonial "Other", are an under-theorized place in-between. Kulpa and Mizieliñska with their book therefore really point at a blind spot of queer theory, but as I claim, do not do their research with the necessary carefulness with respect to the complexity of the region they want to cover. I will therefore not only summarize the accurate critique they provide, but also analyze where their critique has actually reproduced the very mechanisms it was supposed to counter. In this way I will ask to which extent postcolonial theory can be successfully applied to understand post-communism.

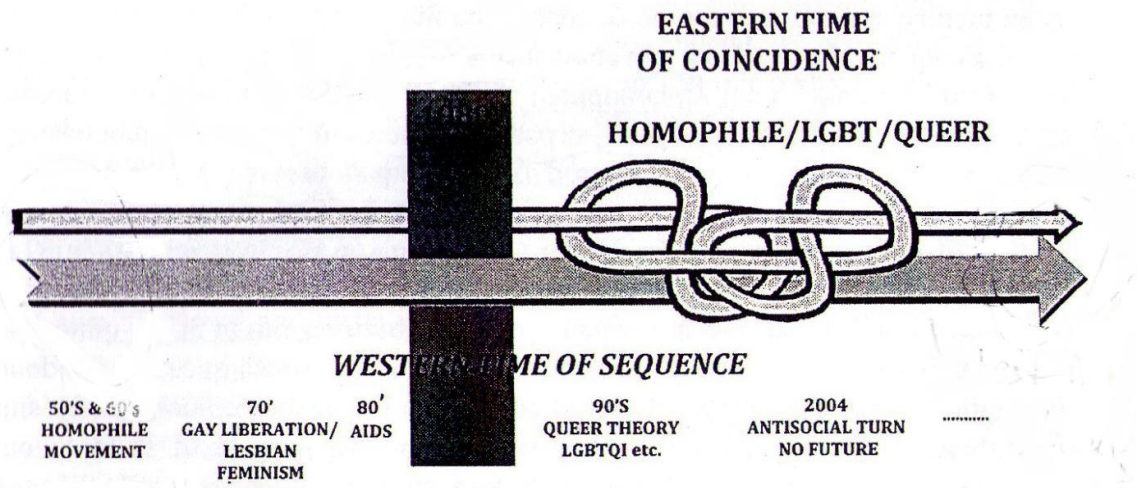
Kulpa and Mizieliñska open their chapter "'Contemporary Peripheries': Queer Studies, Circulation of Knowledge and East/West Divide", which is intended as a theoretical framework for the book *De-centring Western Sexualities*, by introducing the notion of a

'temporal disjunction' between "the West" and "CEE". This notion is employed by the authors in order to counter the widespread conceptualization of Eastern Europe as "lagging behind" the "West" when it comes to sexuality and LGBTQ activism (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2011, 17). The Western authors or discourses that would actually portray the post-communist sphere as such are never quoted and analyzed in the book. The orientalizing "Western gaze" seems to be mainly a taken for granted assumption, or maybe an internalized perception of Kulpa and Mizieliñska. The only examples of orientalization that Kulpa gives, are the Western produced documentaries about Pride parades in Eastern Europe and European Parliament resolutions prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation (Kulpa 2011, 50). The various documentaries, articles and numerous appeals to the authority of the EU to fight homophobia in Eastern Europe, which were produced by the activists of those countries, are never taken into account or mentioned at all. In this way the agency of orientalization is inaccurately put solely in the Western hands – I will come back to this aspect later in this chapter.

Countering the perceived "Western" orientalization of post-communism, Kulpa and Mizieliñska claim that Easter European countries and the "West" have different temporal modalities and that this has to be taken into account in order to understand the sexual politics in the region. Thus one cannot simply take the linear representation of, for example, the history of Western sexual activism as a temporal arrow, and then compare the Western stages of development with the CEE stages of development. In the latter case, Mizieliñska claims, one might be led to the false assumptions, for instance, that actions of contemporary Eastern European gay activists are only a resemblance, a copy of the actions employed by LGBTQ identity movement in the U.S. decades ago (Mizieliñska 2011). In this logic, the Polish or any other post-communist gay movement could be, falsely according to Kulpa and Mizieliñska, interpreted as staying behind the "West", or even "moving backward" (Kulpa and Mizieliñska

2011, 16). On this imaginary arrow, "the West" would be at the radical front, while "CEE" would be lagging behind. While I definitely agree with their argument that we should not imagine some activisms or countries being more backward than others, I do not agree with the solution that they propose – their notion of 'temporal disjunction'. Kulpa and Mizieliñska claim that "West" and "CEE" have different "geo-temporal modalities" (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2011, 15) and *because of that* they cannot be imagined on the same arrow of progress.

The conceptual idea of 'temporal disjunction' in *De-Centring Western Sexualities* is illustrated by a picture, drawn by Kulpa and Mizieliñska, which, I argue, is symptomatic of a lot of problematic aspects of thinking "the East" and "the West" as existing in different geo-temporal modalities. The picture (see below) shows two arrows, lines of "time", in an empty space going from left and pointing towards right. The lines are separated from each other, one slightly thinner than the other. Around the middle they are both cut by a wide black bar, which represents the collapse of the Soviet Union. The bar covers the thinner line and goes under the wider one (supposedly the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 has not influenced the flow of "Western temporality"). After crossing the bar, the arrows continue, but the thinner one loops a few times until it turns again into a straight line, while a thicker one just continues its direct journey. The thicker line/arrow represents "the Western time of sequence", which means that in "the West" sexual activism has been coherently progressing from homophile to LGBT to queer, while the thinner one – the "Eastern time of coincidence", which means that in Eastern Europe everything, all the forms of activism are happening at the same time. This is how the 'temporal disjunction' looks like, say Kulpa and Mizieliñska.



Although the fact that the time of the Eastern European is presented as non-linear is supposed to problematize the very idea of the progressive time, the dualistic nature of the picture does not reach the goal it is supposed to. Next to the dualism of the East and the West, also the linearity of "the West" is not questioned. From the image we can get the idea that the thicker line, the "Western time", is a certain base, a reference. Not only is it thicker and serves as a background, but it is also divided into the decades, which represent trends of activism and thus mirrors conventional academic representations of the development of Western sexual activism.[51] The 50's and the 60's are the decades of the homophile movement, the 70's is an era of gay liberation and lesbian feminism, the 80's are marked by AIDS, the 90's are the years of queer theory, 2004 marks the antisocial turn, and the later trends are still unknown, space for them is marked by the suspension points. The thinner "Eastern" line is free from labels until the black bar, thus representing the emptiness of activism. And only at the point when it starts its "temporal" looping, the line is said to mark "Homophile/LGBT/Queer" in their coincidence.

[51] Mizieliñska herself critically points out later in the book that the linearity of feminist/LGBTQ history is too simplified (Mizieliñska 2011, 92)

It seems that this picture aims to counter the imagination in which "West" would be placed in the same global timeline of the sexual politics as being "more advanced", while Eastern Europe would be placed "behind it". However, this picture is problematic and surprising in many ways. Problematically, first of all, it (re)produces the presumed colonizing gesture from the "West", which it is supposed to counter.[52] The lines are separated, thus marking the schism between the West and the East, as well as homogeneity of these two imagined entities both before and after the 1989.[53] The lines are not simply lines, but arrows, imagined to move from left to right, thus representing the idea of unidirectional historical development, just separated in two lines. While the progression and linearity of the thicker Western line is allegedly absolutely unaffected by events in 1989, it simply surpasses the "fall of the Iron Curtain", while the "Eastern" thinner line starts going back and forth, looping and knotting, until it finally becomes again a straight line, pointing towards the future. It is striking for me, that the authors represent sexual politics in the "West" as a linear development, as if it would not be marked by steps "back and forward", by loops and knots, by many different approaches and strategies all the time working together in this huge and vaguely demarcated imagined space as "the West".[54] Moreover, it seems that there is no interconnection between these lines up until after 1989, as if Communist and Capitalists blocs would have not influenced each other in multiple ways (Chari and Verdery 2009, 23; Cerwonka 2008, 820).

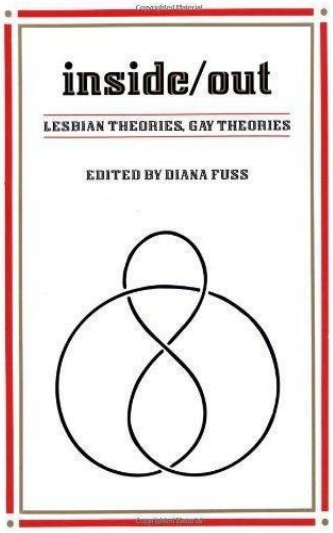
[52] The authors themselves in the footnote acknowledge that "this drawing is a simplification or even a process of strengthening of what we call 'Western time'" (Kulpa and Mizieliñska , 15). Therefore I also feel obliged to acknowledge in a footnote, that their acknowledgement does not withdraw the responsibility from the production of this problematic image and, consequentially, the reproduction of all stereotypical imaginations that it enforces.

[53] In other occasions authors criticize the discursive maintenance of East and West as separate categories after 1989.

[54] See for example Hemmings who writes about the simplification of the history of Western feminism which happens when we try to force complicated and contradictory stories into linear narratives (Hemmings 2011, 12-13)

Judith Butler, who is referenced by Kulpa and Mizieliñska a few times, and even mentioned in the acknowledgments for "timeless inspiration"[55], criticizes the splitting of geographical spaces according to their supposed temporalities. As Butler says, pointing out her indebtedness to Walter Benjamin, we should criticize the evolutionary understanding of sexual progress as a "historical unfolding of freedom" (Butler 2009, 18). This understanding is problematic not only because it is too much based on the optimistic progress narrative, but also on the way we draw borders of the relevant geographical spaces, that is, what counts as "the West". Butler significantly warns that we should see temporality as a complicated issue, not easily pinned down to the questions of space: "the problem is not that there are different modalities of time articulated in different cultural locations" (Butler 2009, 17), she stresses. Kulpa and Mizieliñska, by proposing the imaginary in which different temporalities are connected to different spaces, seem only to reproduce the problematic effects that they want to counter: they victimize post-communist space, reproduce the very linear imaginary of the Western sexual progress and in this way reiterate the dualistic the East vs. the West schema.

There are many problematic aspects of this illustration, for instance, the connotations provoked by the "thinness" of communist/post-communist time. Does this imply that one development is more important, wider in its scale than the other? Regardless of these details, I would like to focus mainly on the figure of the "looping time", which represents Eastern European sexual activism (sexuality? identity?) in the post-Communist era. This figure was intended by Kulpa and Mizieliñska, they say, as a



[55] In this way actually already bridging the dualism that they want to propose, as their critique of Western scholarly hegemony is influenced by the Western authors, such as Butler. This was also pointed out in the review of *De-Centring Western Sexualities* by Downing and Gillett (2012)

resemblance of the "figure-eight knot" from the cover of Diana Fuss edited volume "Inside/Out" (1991, see the cover picture on the left). The figures are, however, very different in many aspects. The most crucial difference is that the "figure-eight knot" by Fuss was intended to *counter* the dualistic way of thinking inside/outside as, respectively, hetero/homo. On the contrary, in the case of Kulpa and Mizieliñska, this figure seems to *reproduce* the dichotomy of identity production. The idea of the "figure-eight knot" was itself taken by Fuss as a variation of the Lacanian "Borromean knot", which Lacan used as an image to illustrate that there is no outside or inside of unconscious (Fuss 1991, 7). For Fuss this figure worked as a visualization of the always already doubled-sided nature of any identity formation, the relational character of any subjectivity. We cannot completely dispose with the dualist imagination of the inside and outside, argues Fuss, but we can work on it to show that "the denotation of any term is always dependent on what is exterior to it" (Fuss 1991, 1).

Although Fuss uses the "figure-eight knot" in order to analyze and counter the homo/hetero binary, we can employ this picture as well to illustrate the binary of "CEE /West"[56], as it is attempted in *De-Centring Western Sexualities*, shifting the focus from sexuality towards geography. However, the way in which Kulpa and Mizieliñska are actually employing the "figure-eight knot" seems to work against the spirit of the Fuss's idea. Instead of countering the dualism, showing that the East and the West are not two different entities, but woven in mutually dependent ways, this new picture reiterates the abstract binary "the East vs. the West". In the interpretation by Kulpa and Mizieliñska, the stylized "figure-eight knot", which is now a representation of *only* the Eastern European time (sexuality, identity), placed next to the "straight line" of the "West" becomes a marker of CEE vs. the West difference. While the Western time is "straight", the Eastern time is "knotted and looped" it is

[56] In an alternative image of this figure, for example, both lines of "West" and "CEE" times could be weaved into a one knot. In this alternative interpretation, which comes to my mind while analyzing the picture of Kulpa and Mizieliñska, the figure of knotting and looping would show that the binary East-West is flawed and two "opposites" are actually essentially interrelated.

essentially "queer". As Kulpa and Mizieliñska explain after the picture, they wanted to "highlight the erotic dimension of time, the oddly erotic experience of identity formation in CEE" (Kulpa and Mizieliñska 2011, 16). The insistence on the queerness and inherent eroticism creates a romanticized picture of post-Soviet reality of Eastern Europe, as opposed to its "other", presumably non-erotic, linear and "straight" Western reality.

Scholarly Sexual Nationalism

Feminist scholarly discourses, just like the discourses of sexual activism (and the two are never completely separated), can never really escape the structuring frame of nation state and even the appeal of the national "we". Aniko Imre, Hungarian feminist and postcolonial scholar has convincingly shown this in her article *Lesbian Nationalism* (2007). Building her argument on the analysis of Hungarian lesbian artistic works, Imre says that "even for feminists who are critical of gendered and sexualized discourses in the national media and in the practices of national governments, the identification with nationalism remains a force that cannot be ignored" (Imre 2007, 262). She shows how sexuality is used as a national allegory, while nation simultaneously becomes a narration of particular culturally localized sexuality.

Similarly, also Kulpa in his chapter in *De-centring Western Sexualities* notices the omnipresence of the "national" framework in even most supposedly subversive acts, such as, for example, drag queen performances. He argues that in the post-communist drag queen performances "not just any gender, but rather a national gender is performed" (Kulpa 2011, 52). Moreover, in Eastern European societies, this "national" is also always 'post-communist', as it is "post-communist nostalgia, dressed up and performed through the embodiment of iconic singers of communism" (Kulpa 2011, 52)[57]. It seems reasonable to extend this framework of post-communist nationalist sentiments and ask if they also manifest

[57] I have written an article on the case of Lithuanian drag queen performance of Alla Pugacheva, which aims to explore precisely the national and post-communist sentiments played out in such a drag in the context of Vilnius gay night-life (see Navickaite 2012).

in the writings of post-communist scholars of sexuality, who are often closely connected with the feminist activist and LGBTQ scene in their home countries. The texts by Kulpa and Mizieliñska seem to be an example of such scholarship, which does not avoid the structuring of the national frame in carving a concept of 'temporal disjunction'.

Milica Bakić-Hayden has pointed out that when the nationalist discourse inverses the hierarchy of "the East" and "the West", privileging the former and not the latter, it still works "within the same epistemology which assumes uncritically the essential and unchanging distinction between "East" and "West"" (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 920). This insight Bakić-Hayden borrows from Partha Chatterjee's work on South Asian nationalisms. Chatterjee in his book *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: a Derivative Discourse* (1986) pays attention to what an Egyptian political scientist Anouar Abdel-Malek has called the two dimensions of Orientalism: its *problematic* and *thematic* aspects. Chatterjee explains this distinction, to put it simply, in the following way: the *problematic* aspect of orientalism is the ideological need to sustain the subordination of the Orient by justifying it as inferior to the West; the *thematic* aspect is the very content of the claims which are used to justify this subordination. When the nationalist discourse aims to inverse the hierarchy of "the East" and "the West", it remains in the problematic dualism and the prescribed thematic characteristics of the two imagined entities, says Chatterjee. Only "the East" in this postcolonial nationalist logic is not passive, submissive and indifferent, but is seen as having subjectivity, which is "active, autonomous and sovereign" (Chatterjee 1993, 38). The non-Western nationalist discourse in this case still works in the same frame as the Western orientalising discourse, says Chatterje. Thus it objectifies "the East" and paradoxically works inside the same structures of power that it aims to counter.

The national post-communist sentiment, which requires the representation of the former Communist bloc in a positive light, might have inspired also Kulpa's and

Mizieliñska's attempt to represent "CEE" as the victim of Western orientalization and at the same time try to redeem its reputation, by privileging it as "more queer" than the "straight" Western reality. The desire to be more complicated, more plural, unpredictable, fluid, etc., as we know from Hemmings' analysis of feminist stories, is a tempting position in feminist theory. The "queer" in feminist progress narratives marks the supposedly newest and most advanced turn, non-essentialist, sophisticated and attentive to differences (Hemmings 2011, 35). Therefore the decision of Kulpa and Mizieliñska to present the Eastern European reality as more "queer", thus more interesting for feminist analysis than the "straight" Western reality can be read as a certain *scholarly sexual nationalism*. The sexuality in this case becomes nothing more than the allegory of Eastern European difference and exoticism, its queerness, even visually embodied by the looping and knotting image of temporality.

Calling Kulpa's and Mizieliñska's image an example of "sexual nationalism" might seem to be a derogatory naming for those who see nationalism in general as negative force, which has to be opposed and dismantled by feminist and queer activists/writers. It is not however necessarily a negative denomination from the perspective, which is proposed in the *De-centring Western Sexualities*. In his critique of Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages*, Kulpa claims that Puar sees nationalism as exclusively "negative, pervasive, militant phenomenon" and criticizes her for this approach. Building his argument on the statements by Polish feminist scholar Agnieszka Graff, Kulpa is asking, doubting and proposing:

> What is so necessarily wrong with the willingness to be recognized as a part of 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? … lesbian and gay communities in CEE and elsewhere may well embrace national ideas (reappropriation of nationalism?) as one of the methods of their struggle … in Poland (and perhaps in other CEE countries for that matter) – where xenophobic nationalist

> ideas seem to be pre-eminent cultural sphere – winning back patriotism (love of country) may well be the best strategy overall (Kulpa 2011, 56)

How paradoxical such a strategy of 'queer patriotism' works, we see in the very chapter written by Kulpa and Mizieliñska. In trying to oppose the perceived orientalization of Eastern Europe by "the West", they completely refocus their critical attention from sexuality as personal and intimate experience, towards sexuality as an allegory of geography and politics. Sexuality in their writings remains only as a metaphor to talk about how post-communist sphere has been misinterpreted by "the West" and how it is actually much more interesting and queer than it might be imagined from the perspective of "the West". In this paradoxical discourse they actually only reproduce the very dualism that they are trying to counter and stay completely inside the *thematic* of orientalism. "The West", just like in the nationalistic discourses that I have criticized in the previous chapter, is made into the enemy, guilty for the problems of Eastern Europe.

Difference from "the West"

The problematic concept of the 'temporal disjunction' is not a unique invention by Kulpa and Mizieliñska but can be also found in other CEE feminist and queer texts. Five years before the DWS was published, in 2006 the same publisher *Ashgate* presented a book devoted to the gender issues in CEE and edited by Jasmina Lukic, Joanna Regulska and Darja Zaviršek. In that book, Kornelia Slavova, in the chapter "Looking at Western Feminism through the Double Lens of Eastern Europe and the Third World", argued that

> emerging East European feminism(s) are *located in a different spatio-temporality* and, as a result of this, produce a disrupting effect on some grand narratives – including that of Feminism (when approached as a unified master discourse), of Eurocentrism (that is the idea that Western Europe is the hegemonic center and the progenitor of theories which are universally applicable) and of Marxism (having

failed to materialize the promise of women's equality). (Slavova 2006, 258; emphasis mine)

I would like also to question if the "disruption", which is supposedly produced by criticizing the West from the standpoint of Eastern Europe, is really an effect of being in a "different spatio-temporality", where difference is understood as 'difference from West'. On the contrary, I would say, together with Allaine Cerwonka, that Eastern European countries form a potentially interesting platform of queer and feminist critique because of their complex immersion *inside* the global power and knowledge plats, and not because of their 'difference-from-West'.

Allaine Cerwonka, an American feminist scholar working at the Central European University (CEU) in Budapest, in her essay "Travelling Feminist Thought: Difference and Transculturation in Central and Eastern European Feminism" (2008) criticizes what she sees as a tendency of the "articulation of CEE gender difference, a solution promoted by many CEE and Western feminists alike" and suggests instead the application of the concept "transculturation" (Cerwonka 2008, 811). She directly criticizes Slavova's article and her presumption of impenetrable difference between Eastern and Western European experiences. First of all, Cerwonka argues against the imagination of the East and the West as two "hermetically sealed" (Cerwonka 2008, 820) blocs, separated by the Berlin Wall and reminds both about the interconnection between the two as well as considerable differences within.[58] Second, she shows that the critique of Western hegemony by feminist authors is most of the time based on the writings of scholars working in U.S. or Western European academic environments. Cerwonka concludes that the power of Eastern European scholarship to challenge certain theoretical presumptions developed in the specific contexts of Western Europe and U.S., is not due to the position of Eastern Europe "outside" West. Instead, she

[58] With respect to the tolerance towards homosexuality, one just has to think about differences between, for example, Czech Republic and Serbia.

seems to imply, that it is the attention to the different phenomena characteristic to the region, but not a simplified unitary 'CEE standpoint', that might open up a more nuanced theory.

However, although Cerwonka argues to go beyond East/West binary and use "transculturation" instead, it seems that her main concern is, curiously, also the countering of the *Western* hegemony in a way, which would not simply reproduce the "uneven power relations" (Cerwonka 2008, 811). I definitely agree with Cerwonka's call for "transculturation" in feminism, and would like to suggest it also for LGBTQ issues. However, it seems not so easy to go beyond thinking the reality in the way of binary "the West vs. the Rest". It is also not easy to stop seeing post-communist or any other differences as a "differences *from* West", instead of difference(s) as such. This might be connected with what Stuart Hall calls a "panoptic eye of Enlightenment", which subordinates all the knowledge to a single Western framework of intelligibility (1996). In the contemporary age of globalization it is not so much the European colonizer who is imposing his/her understanding on the naïve non-Western "native", but the "native" himself/herself starts to represent and understand himself/herself only through the "Western" framework of intelligibility.

Stuart Hall, in his famous article *When Was the Postcolonial? Thinking at the Limit* (1996) argues that Enlightenment and colonialism has brought a significant global change in the epistemology, which is still at work today:

> Under the a universalizing panoptic eye of the Enlightenment, all forms of human life were brought within the universal scope of a single order of being, so that difference had to be re-cast into the constant marking and re-marking of positions within a single discursive system (Hall 1996, 252)

In this overarching argument, Hall claims that the panoptic eye is structuring our perception (whoever 'we' are) so that it makes the global multiplicity to accommodate itself to this framework to become intelligible for the imagined Western gaze. Because of the panoptic

quality of this universal Western gaze, established by Enlightenment and sustained by science, every "non-Western" is voluntarily re-casting its difference into the "single discursive system". When Kulpa and Mizieliñska aim to oppose the hegemonic discursive system in which "the West" equals universal, they got trapped in the global panopticon of the Western gaze, just like the "derivative discourse" (Chatterjee 1986) of post-communist nationalism. Therefore the 'temporal disjunction', however critical of Western hegemony, is discursively inverting instead of subverting the structures of domination.

Kulpa and Mizieliñska obviously realize what a complicated task they are taking on with their notion of 'temporal disjunction'. When they want to present an example of sexual politics in Eastern Europe, they are at the same time conscious that it is almost impossible to make these examples intelligible "universally", without a reference to the narrative of the Western sexual rights movement *and* that this presumably universal lens is not adequate for the perception of a localized post-communist reality:

> …organizing the 'knotted temporality of CEE' into stages and inscribing it into a particular 'familiar' history (of Western history of LGBTQ movements) we already simplify it in order to make sense of it. But do we actually succeed? Does such 'unknotting' make sense, and for whom? (Kulpa and Mizielinka 2011, 17)

Despite their critical determination, Kulpa and Mizieliñska in *De-centring Western Sexualities* are voluntarily making sense of the localized situation of Eastern Europe (mainly Poland) by putting it next to the example of the simplified Western narrative and making them appear separate through the 'temporal disjunction'. The panopticon works in a way that the "Western authority" is not necessary anymore to remind about the global Western gaze, as it is completely internalized. Moreover, as the comparison with "the West" seems inescapable, the imperfect solution becomes to make this comparison in such a way which supposedly overturns the 'progressive vs. backward' binary, but actually only inverts it. That

is, Kulpa and Mizieliñska reproduce binary of the unitary images of both "West" and "CEE", just now in the upside-down way, so that the "West" here is in a somewhat "worse" position, while the orientalist qualities of post-communism are praised.

For example, Mizieliñska describes, among others, the project "Let Them See Us" by the Polish activist group Campaign Against Homophobia (CAH) which consisted of an exhibition of 30 portraits of lesbian and gay couples. In Polish society these moderate and in a way even normative[59] photos induced heated debates and revealed the depths of prejudice. However provocative and pioneering it was in the local reality, from the Western perspective this exhibition might be interpreted as a strategy, characteristic of the U.S. identity movements of the 60's and 70's, says Mizieliñska. Therefore, just as the emancipatory strategies of the 60's and 70's in U.S., this project might be seen as repeating the sins of these old-fashioned movements, such as exclusion of bi- and trans- identities (Mizieliñska 2011, 90). However, Mizieliñska does not agree with such an interpretation of the project "Let Them See Us" - this interpretation, which is basically a straw man which she creates from the perspective of an imagined "Western viewpoint".[60] On the contrary, a closer look might reveal, says Mizieliñska, that because it developed only after 1989, the Polish LGBTQ movement is *a priori* more inclusive, it is aware in advance that homophobia is a problem also for bisexuals and transsexuals. In a manner of speaking, CAH is at the same time "in" 1970 and "in" 2010, (or both 70's and 2010 comes together in this strange temporality of Poland) being aware of both the homophobia of their society and of the dangers of fighting for the gay rights in a one-dimensional way.

It is implied that even if sexual politics in Poland echoes supposedly old-fashioned American gay and lesbian identitarian politics, they must be interpreted in a different light,

[59] All pictures were of "nice" and neat middle class couples, walking in a winter scene holding hands. In 2002 the photos were exhibited in Warsaw, Cracow and other Polish cities and were a part of a bigger project to encourage societal tolerance.

[60] Actually, one must ask, if it is not rather characteristic to the Eastern European scholars themselves to compare Eastern stages of development with US or Western Europe – see the previous chapter.

because they are situated in the Polish context. Thus what seems old-fashioned might be actually very contemporary, that is, queer. *Queer* in this case becomes not only value free descriptive term of a certain activist or theoretical approach, but also a certain temporal and normative marker. This impression is even strengthened when Mizieliñska claims that Polish gay and lesbian movement has "learned from the mistakes" of the Western emancipatory movement, because it "developed only after 1989" (Ibid, 91). However critical Mizieliñska is about the ostensible universality of Western sexual progress narrative, it seems that she is in a way positioning Poland in this narrative, and putting it in a way where Polish sexual politics would be presented in a positive light, that is, as queer, as being 'at the front line' of sexual resistance.

In this way, she reaffirms the pervasive progress narrative of the Western feminist/queer movement. In the feminist progress narratives the year 1990 marks the beginning of a movement from "assumptions about feminist sameness and the reification of difference" towards "deconstructive approaches to the subject and the social world" (Hemmings 2011, 55). This turn is exclusively connected with the publishing of Judith Butlers *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990). As CEE came into the train of this progress "after 1989", it dived straight into the era of poststructuralist attentiveness for difference, Mizieliñska implies. This not only puts CEE in the positive light but also presumes the homogeneity and unity of the experience of "Western" gay and lesbian movement and theory, thus erasing more diverse possible histories and voluntarily "othering" CEE from the West.

On the one hand, this argument of 'temporal disjunction' by Kulpa and Mizieliñska, which I have illustrated by an example taken from Mizieliñska's chapter, is a potentially important argument, which can make the reading of the sexual politics in Eastern European countries more accurate and interesting for those who are trained in a spirit of Anglo-

American queer theory. It is a "cultural translation" (Mizielinka 2011, 95) of post-communist experiences to the language of those who read Western based journals, blogs, etc., about queer theory and activism. It explains Eastern Europe in the light of its relationships with the hegemonic Western world of knowledge, power and sexuality. On the other hand, as I have also shown, this presumption of "different temporalities" is also problematic, as it works in the same *thematic* of orientalist discourse that it seeks to problematize. It does not really reflect critically on the immersion of the critical queer writing itself in this panoptic binary schema of "the West vs. the Rest". It only confirms the progress narrative, characteristic for feminist/queer thought as a whole, and inscribes CEE as not lagging behind, but actually, maybe even more progressive than the "West", thus inverting but not overturning the binary. It is an example, therefore of a certain scholarly sexual nationalism, which fits perfectly well in the post-communist nationalist derivative discourses (Bakić-Hayden 1995, 920), which seek to invert the hierarchy of the East vs. the West, by means of praising the victimized locality of post-communism.

EUropean Neo-Colonialism?

The closeness of the scholarly discourse of *De-centring Western Sexualities* to the nationalistic discourse, pointed against European imperialism/neo-colonialism, is especially clearly expressed in another chapter of the book, written by Shannon Woodcock. In the chapter "A Short History of the Queer Time of 'Post-Socialist' Romania" Woodcock merges critiques of homophobia and LGBTQ politics, neo-liberalism and traditionalism, racism and the pop-culture imperialism. Woodcock is an Australian historian, who works and writes mainly about Albania and Romania and focuses on the discrimination of Ţsigani (Roma) people. One of the main observations she makes in the chapter is the extent to which Europeanization, or, as she calls it, "EUropeanization", has affected the way LGBT categories and the very movement of sexual minorities was perceived by Romanian society:

> Romanians learned that accepting LGBT identity as a human right was one of the 'yardsticks of progress toward the Western model of modernity' vital for EU accession (Munro 2009: 404) … Of all the changes required by the European Union for Romania to join, politicians and clergy touted the changes to racial and gender order as primary threats to the Romanian people, and channeled the realistic anxieties of everyday Romanians into familiar prejudices (Woodcock 2011, 68)

As Woodcock rightly points out, the very notion of LGBT was introduced to the heteronormative society, as well as to the non-heteronormative minority mainly through the discussions about integration to EU and through the conservative protests against what they perceived as the demoralization of Romanian society. This created the problematic situation in which, on the one hand, the claim for human rights by the subaltern post-communist queers was only possible with the authority of Europe, but on the other hand, the very appeal to the external authority undermined the "authenticity" and Romanianness of this voice in the eyes of local society.

Referencing local media debates, Woodcock explains that LGBT activists in Romania claimed their rights mainly arguing that it will help for Romania to "catch up" with the Western temporality, saying that:

> …the West had its Pride parades and gay liberation movements in the 1970s and Romania 30 years later, but that legislative change in line with EUrope now will make Romania equal with the West (Woodcock 2011, 69)

In this quote she accurately notices the temporal discourse of "catching up", employed strategically by LGBTQ activists. She points out also the imaginations around certain decades, which portray the West as the ideal place of the now-over struggle for sexual rights, while Romania is imagined to be lagging behind on the timeline of this struggle for sexual freedom. Woodcock notices that this teleological narrative does not reach the goal of

convincing local authorities of the need to embrace "European values" and rather produces the counter effects, those of homophobic nationalism.

There is however, some reason to doubt one of the Woodcock's conclusions in which she makes in connection to the discussion of homophobia and EU integration. She says that Romanian politicians and society perceived the very Europeanization, and not only the human rights part, as an inevitable burden and an unwanted "neo-colonial process" (Woodcock 2011, 69). To build her argument about the allegedly neo-colonial practices of Western Europe in Romania, Woodcock leans mainly on the articles written to explain the different situations in post-colonial African countries, such as Brenna M. Munro (see also the second quote above), Neville Hoad and Henriette Gunkel. These references makes her argue that Romanian homophobia and racism is only, or mainly, the matter of reaction to the "blatant neo-colonialism of EUrope" (Woodcock 2011, 67). Obviously I am not aiming to "verify" the research of Woodcock and confirm or deny if EU *really* had a neo-colonial agenda in Romania. However, I still tend to doubt if the situation in postcolonial Africa can be equated with that of post-communist Eastern Europe. Countries in the East of Europe, differently from those in Africa, have not been colonized by Western countries, but instead saw Western countries as saviors from the violently imposed Soviet imperialism. Europeanization was and is largely understood as the 'return to Europe', as I have pointed out at the introduction. Countries such as Romania therefore tend to perform according to the logics of "voluntary colonization" (Imre 2007), which is determined by the complex combination of the perceived inferiority to "the West" *and* the unquestionable desire to 'return to Europe', but not because they were literally colonized by "the West".

I must clarify that the difference between the post-colonial African context and the Eastern European context is not so much any essential difference between the regions as being somehow "naturally" more or less European, but a difference of relationship with the

West. The socially constructed differences between the Second and the Third Worlds are explained in Verdery & Chari's article "Thinking Between the Posts: Postcolonialism, Postsocialism and Etnography after the Cold War" (2009). In this article, which is also quoted by Woodcock, postsocialist anthropologist Katherine Verdery and postcolonial scholar Sharad Chari explain, with a reference to the work of Carl Pletch (1981), the logic of division of the globe according to the "Three Worlds" ideology. The agent in this division was, obviously, the "First World" with its structures of knowledge production, which delegated academic disciplines according to the meta-theory of Three-Worlds. In this meta-theory, the First World with its capitalist modernity and scientific rationality was a normal society, "natural" and "free". The Second World was a place where the "free" and "natural" society was controlled by the ideology of communism, repressed by totalitarian regime. The Third World was imagined as "traditional", irrational, overpopulated, religious, and economically "backward" (Chari and Verdery 2009, 18).

In this Cold War imaginary schema we can notice that while the differences of the Second World *from the West* were seen as rather superficial and easily removed by the change of the regime, the differences of the Third World *from the West* was rather seen as an essential one, based on the society itself being "backward". Probably because of this imagination, which puts the Second World as potentially Western, in the post-Cold War era post-communist societies are not imagined as stuck in their timeless backwardness and sexual constrain. Instead, they are seen as *catching up with* the "West" and this perception is highly influential in the way the countries see themselves. Actually this discourse is much older than the Cold War. As Larry Wolff notices, the division of Europe with the Iron Curtain was based on already during the Enlightenment established imaginations of Eastern Europe as the place in between "the West" and the "uncivilized" Orient:

> Eastern Europe was located not at the antipode of civilization, not down in the depths of barbarism, but rather on the developmental scale that measured the distance between civilisation and barbarism (Wolff 1993, 13).

Keeping in mind these delicate differences between how the literally postcolonial countries and post-communist Eastern European countries are seen from the Western standpoint and how they see themselves in relation to the West is crucial in applying the postcolonial insights for the analysis of a country such as Romania. Although postcolonial theory can indeed help to understand the impact of EU on, for example, the way post-communist societies see sexuality in relation to "the West", the specificity of post-communist postcoloniality has to be taken into account with its full complexity. In this way, the connection between the Western impact and the nationalist homophobia becomes problematized instead of logically coherent.

On the one hand the Europeanization was indeed something desirable in the Eastern European societies, something voluntarily aimed at – not merely imposed as a "blatant neocolonialism" (Woodcock 2011, 67). The support by international organizations was also desired and embraced by local LGBTQ organizations and gave them a strong voice in fighting local homophobia. The Western example has been and largely still is embraced by the local scholars of sexuality too, sometimes rather uncritically. On the other hand, quick and abrupt changes in relation to Europeanization, post-communist nation state building, neo-liberalism and the eradication of social welfare meant the rising frustration in the societies, which were channeled by picking and choosing those elements of Europeanization which did not fit into the narrow frames of nationalist moralistic regime.

The impact of "the West" must be seen in a more complicated way than it is done by local anti-European right wing nationalist and homophobic discourses. Nevertheless,

Woodcock's article quite paradoxically at the same time criticizes the homophobia of nationalism and embraces its anti-Western attitude:

> New [anti-discrimination] laws have been implemented in Romania despite strong local [heteronormative] 'values' that are developed and socially policed today, whether the European Union flag flies or not and often primarily in reaction to the blatant neo-colonialism of Europe. Romanians recognize ideological containment; they have seen it before (Woodcock 2011, 67)

As it was rightly noticed in one of the reviews of the book *De-centring Western Sexualities*, there is a striking lack of evidence for their claims of the "allegedly colonial practices" of the West (Downing and Gillett 2012) in the book. Just like in this quote, without any supporting research, Woodcock calls EU pressure to ensure LGBTQ rights in the Eastern European countries an "ideological containment", implicitly equating it with the totalitarian Communist regime. Although she clearly does not support the heteronormative national 'values' (as one can guess from the use of inverted commas) she still accuses EU for countering these values, in this way unwillingly supporting the nationalist anti-European stance. Just like Kulpa and Mizieliñska, in this way Woodcock represents this position which I propose to call a position of certain scholarly sexual nationalism, although obviously Woodcock cannot be called "local" in any conventional sense of the word.

Woodcock defends the *difference* of Romania and the difference of post-communism in general, just like Kulpa and Mizieliñska, by means of comparison with the West. For example in this quote, she stresses that only a small group of people represented the rights of LGBTQ people in the NGO sector, developed after 1989. After pointing out this accurate fact, she continues to theorize about the possible reasons for this situation:

> Western LGBT donors and press took this as another sign of repression in the primitive East. Perhaps all the lesbians were hiding at home? Perhaps they did not

> know themselves as 'lesbians'? I do not know about other women, but I knew the words and I was watching and wondering what good could come of these new neon signs of sexual difference in such a hostile social environment, far from the context in which identity terms were developed (Woodcock 2011, 66)

Here again, like Kulpa and Mizieliñska, without any example of how "Western LGBT donors and press" actually interpreted this phenomenon, Woodcock presumes herself the internalized Western gaze and the imagined interpretations of Eastern European backwardness and primitiveness. The difference of Romania from the place "where the identity terms were developed" (read – from the West) is explained by describing it as a "hostile social environment". Did Western LGBT identity politics develop in a supportive social environment? Are the "neon signs of sexual difference" (Woodcock 2011, 66) violently imposed on the victimized post-communist society? Were Romanian lesbians really not participating in activism because of critical attitude towards identity politics and not because of local homophobia? Do Romanian activists have to wait until strong nationalist heteronormative values will become weaker in order to actually fight local homophobia? These are the questions which are left completely unanswered by Woodcock, presuming that Romania is somehow extremely different from "the West" and stereotyping "the West" as well as "othering" Romania.

Agency and orientalization

Woodcock, as well as Kulpa and Mizieliñska, seem to situate the agency of orientalization of the Eastern Europe solely in the hands of the imaginary Western subject. Instead of seeing the complex interconnection of Western othering discourse and what appears to be a voluntary self-orientalization of post-communism, they claim "the West" to be *guilty* in this supposedly neo-colonial act. The East in this way is produced as an innocent "other" of the West. There is also a lack of critical engagement with postcolonial theory, although its impact is felt

throughout the book. What I want to show in my analysis of the texts by Kulpa, Mizieliñska and Woodcock is that the application of postcolonial theory does not necessarily lead to the "de-centring" of the Western standpoint. I demonstrate that the reversal of the positions of the East and the West might work also as a reinforcement of binary logics, not as a complete eradication of this frame of thought.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the critique of Western hegemony and progress narrative can end up in a problematic echoing of the nationalistic discourse. Kulpa and Mizieliñska, as well as Woodcock, stress the orientalization and colonization of Eastern Europe by the West, without actually scrutinizing this process or referencing relevant research. This, of course, does not mean that there are no problematic aspects about the Western discourses about Eastern Europe - my analysis in the Chapter 2 shows that indeed the scholarly approach from the Western point of view can be orientalizing. However, *De-Centring Western Sexualities* is mainly based on the straightforward transplantation of postcolonial critique to the context of post-communism, instead of careful translation and re-thinking. This is not to say that postcolonial theory cannot be still very helpful in analyzing Eastern Europe, at least in the research of scholarly discourses. As I have demonstrated, it can help to explain the complex node geographical, temporal and sexual imaginaries at work in the production of knowledge.

Conclusion

This thesis presents outcomes of a research with a rather modest object – three books, collections of academic articles about sexuality in the former "Eastern bloc", all published in the last decade: *Sexuality and Gender, Beyond the Pink Curtain* and *De-Centring Western Sexualities.* The modesty of this object is deceptive, as actually these books reflect on so many different contexts and academic approaches, that they synthesize into their 1059 pages an impressive variety of theoretical and empirical worlds. My aim was not to simply describe or review these texts, nor to give an exhaustive report on their content, but to analyze the most significant excerpts from these books employing a critical postcolonial feminist perspective. I aimed to attune postcolonial lens to the post-communist context and pay special attention to the way scholars deal with the imaginaries of "the East" and "the West".

Given that scholarship on sexuality is rather limited in and about Eastern Europe, I think this analysis gives also a more general insight into the production of the knowledge of sexuality in post-communism with respect to the temporal and spatial Euro-centric imaginaries. Therefore, my thesis must be understood as a reflection from the inside of Eastern European scholarship, which would help those writing on this particular context to be more aware of the narratives that are sometimes presumed, and more sensitive to the value induced connotations, which are often added to our "imaginary geographies" (Said 1979). My critique, which sometimes might seem rather harsh, was born out of my conviction that Eastern European scholarship of sexuality has to be treated with all seriousness and respect that it deserves as a theoretical mirror of post-communist and global realities. I believe that this academic endeavor can only gain more rigor and subtlety from elaborated critique. In this conclusion I will first give a summary of what I have said in the different parts of this thesis.

Then I will address more explicitly my research questions, stated in the Chapter 1. Finally I will conclude with the wider political and societal implications of my research.

Overview

Taking inspiration largely from the work of Claire Hemmings, I focused on what is taken for granted or left implicit in presenting scientific research on post-communist sexualities, how they sometimes reproduce the societal binary imaginaries rather than taking a critical distance from them. The most important aspect for me was the temporal and spatial narratives scholars are creating in establishing the textual authority and proving the relevance of the knowledge they produce. Postcolonial theory produced by Western as well as Eastern European scholars, and especially its critique of epistemological imperialism and the privileging of the West, played a crucial role in my analysis of the three books. With the help of this theory I noticed how critical scholarship of sexuality cannot completely let go of the mainstream presumptions about the sexual progress narrative. I demonstrated how scholars to a large extent reproduce the dualist the East vs. the West picture, even when aiming to criticize this binary thinking and the hierarchy that it implies.

In order not to apply postcolonial theory too straightforwardly for my textual analysis performed in the Chapter 3 and 4, I started from a contextualization of my research in Chapter 2. This part is rather unconventional, as what I call a context of the research is inextricably connected with the research itself. I took it for granted that there is no unproblematic environment laying somewhere outside the texts and therefore I presented the context as it is seen from the eyes of the scholars. The nationalistic and moralistic, sexist and homo-trans-bi-phobic discourses of Eastern European societies appeared to be of a crucial importance for the scholars who are writing about sexuality and are often in one or another way active in social struggles. Also the close and complicated connection of Eastern European scholarship with "the Western gaze" is significant in the production of the

scholarship of sexuality. In the circumstances of the Western scholarly hegemony, the Western knowledge and Western point of view seems to be given an automatic priority, as I have shown in the Chapter 2.

The texts analyzed in the Chapter 3 clearly reproduce the presumption of Eastern European temporal and sexual *backwardness*. With the help of postcolonial theory I have shown that because of this binary, the images of the two imaginary geographical entities are described as antipodes – "the West" is idealized, while "the East" is presented as uniformly dark, prejudiced place. The two places are presented not only in a hierarchical, but also in a temporal way, where "the West" is at the progressive *now* of the sexual progress, while "the East" is *lagging behind* on the road of modernity and unfolding of sexual freedom. Probably, as all the authors seem to imply, it is lagging behind a few decades. This discourse, produced by Eastern European authors themselves, "postulates a chronic anachronism" (Todorova 2005, 145) in which the non-western post-communist societies live in another time, always lagging behind "the West" Such approach is an example of self-orientalization and, to paraphrase Aniko Imre (2007), voluntary colonization at the symbolic level.

Following the popular imaginary of post-communist 'return to Europe', this imaginary also implies that what is needed in Eastern Europe is simply the following of the Western road of sexual progress. One might notice that this social imaginary resembles the strategic discourse of activists, which is well documented in many articles of the books I have analyzed. Activists, as it was mentioned, employ EU and Western authority, whenever they need to push local governments and societies, for example for implementation of anti-discrimination laws. The urge to catch up with the West remains one of the main instruments in sexual politics in Eastern Europe, and, as it can be said following my analysis, it is also a popular frame for the production of knowledge about sexuality. The discourse of sexuality in

this way becomes a naturalized field of the mainstream power play, reinforcing the East-West hierarchical dualism.

The texts which I analyzed in Chapter 4, in contrast, stress the *difference* of Eastern Europe in order to counter the imaginary of backwardness. In this way, as I have shown, unfortunately they also reproduce the dualist hierarchy, just in a reversed way. Taking inspiration from postcolonial theory, authors blame "the West" for neocolonialism, for producing "the East" as backward and in this way causing problems more than helping in the sphere of sexual politics. The agency of orientalization is put exceptionally in the hands of "the West", producing Eastern Europe as an innocent victim. The local ways are sometimes idealized as more queer, more interesting and diverse than the "Western" ways of doing activism, in this way reproducing the notion of the unitary and unproblematic entity of "the West". The West remains the point of reference and the norm in this kind of analysis and especially in the proposed imaginary of "temporal disjunction".

Most problematically, the discourse of Kulpa, Mizieliñska and Woodcock sometimes echoes the discourse of local nationalists, who blame EU for ideological imperialism, while praising the particular, non-Western, authentic national ways. Especially the invitation for Eastern European queers to "embrace national ideas" and "win back patriotism" (Kulpa 2011, 56) seem to need a more careful examination. It asks for more reflection from a political perspective in order to avoid the subjugation of scholarship of sexuality under nationalist discourses, as well as LGBTQ/feminist movement under xenophobic agendas. Nevertheless, one has to keep in mind that these authors present the only critique of Western-centrism in the sphere of post-communist sexual politics and in this way probably cannot avoid putting the main problems in a too straightforward and generalized way. The more detailed examination of the EU and general Western impact while keeping in mind the specific post-communist

legacies of different countries would probably lead to a more sophisticated critical analysis of sexual politics and society in general.

Research questions and answers

All in all, did I manage to find the answers to the research questions which were raised at the beginning of this thesis (p.20) among all the diverse research outcomes, described above? My first research question was the following: *How are the imaginaries of sexuality connected with the temporal and geographical imaginaries of "the East" and "the West" in the post-communist scholarly discourse*? First of all, there is not a one single "post-communist scholarly discourse" and what I have presented in this thesis are only examples of two ways of narrating sexuality vis-à-vis the East-West binary imaginary.

The first narrative described in the Chapter 3 *reproduces* the mainstream geo-temporal imaginary. Sexuality in these scholarly texts becomes not only a particular part of reality, but also a metonym for the society as such. The "fictitious unity" of the notion of sex, as Foucault has called it (Foucault 1978, 154) is the way for scholars to talk about perceived societal problems and expected changes, which are then framed in familiar geo-temporal schemas of progress. Especially it can be noticed in the edited volume *Sexuality and Gender*, which takes sexuality in such a broad way that it becomes a fake unity of experiences, concepts and struggles. At the same time, this vagueness of "sexuality" creates a sense of talking about the essence of society, as we can see for example in the introduction by Štulhofer and Sandfort. The knowledge about sexuality which reproduces the imaginary of the temporal lag, also therefore *naturalizes* the mainstream perceptions of post-communist backwardness. In this way it also *produces* the imaginary geographical and temporal entities of "the East" and "the West".

Interestingly, a certain *defence* of Eastern Europe that one can see in *De-Centring Western Sexualities* also uses an imagination of sexuality mainly as an allegorical way to talk

about post-communism as such. Sexuality in the texts discussed in the Chapter 4 is used as a way to show that Eastern Europe is essentially *not* backward. It is again not only the intimate spheres of life or certain political regulations of private life that are discussed as sexuality, but the Eastern Europeanness in general in its difference from "the West". Here again the binary imaginary geography is *produced* by the knowledge of sexuality.

My second research question was: *What are advantages and limitations of postcolonial theory in an epistemological analysis of post-communist scholarship of sexuality?* In addressing this research question, it is important to note that postcolonial theory had a double role in my research. It was an object of my analysis to the extent that it was an inspiration for some of the authors that I have analyzed – specifically, those taken from the book *De-Centring Western Sexualities*. On the other hand, it was also my tool, as I used postcolonial authors for my theoretical approach. Precisely this double role provided a way for me to see both the advantages and limitations of a postcolonial approach. Obviously "traditional" postcolonial scholars provide many examples of critique of orientalizing scholarly discourses and the privileges of "the West". I used their examples in my own analysis and I see it as a great help for building my critique. However, the writings of postcolonial theorists cannot be taken and straightforwardly applied in the context of post-communism, just like any theory cannot be applied in any context with an expectation that it will neatly explain everything. In this particular case, there is also a danger that the *post-communist* aspect might disappear from the analysis whatsoever – a danger which I see in work by Kulpa and Mizieliñska.

This is why in my work it was crucial for me to rely on the work already done by scholars such as Bakić-Hayden, Todorova or Imre. It helped me to see the specificities of the ambivalent Eastern European "postcoloniality" and to keep in mind that the orientalization is not a black-and-white process. The responsibility is always shared between "the East" and

"the West", which are at the same time difficult to distinguish from each other because of their imaginary character. Eastern Europe, as much as it is orientalized, or orientalizing itself as backward, has also a potential to become properly "Western" and as such it has also many privileges which still have to be realized – here postcolonial theory is so far limited and thus has to be applied with caution.

Placing the Research in a Broader Political Context

After a lot of critical remarks, which I have made so far, I must disappoint the reader by acknowledging that I cannot suggest the *right* way to speak about Eastern Europe and sexuality. That was also not intended as a task for this thesis. My aim was to invite scholars to reflect more on the narratives which are told about "the East" and "the West" and about the social imaginaries, which condition the relevant knowledge production about post-communist sexualities. I wanted to question the "common sense" and in this way hopefully open possibilities to think differently not only in our scholarly endeavors, but maybe also in political fights and everyday conversations. The political implications go beyond the main findings of my research and I can only shortly mention here the most important outcomes of the thinking process caused by this thesis.

Not without a reason I started my introduction with a reflection on the Baltic Pride 2013, an event, which brought LGBTQ activists as well as nationalistic right-wing protesters with their contradictory discourses to the streets of Vilnius. All the discourses, visible on the posters, loudly announced from the speakers, uttered by respectable politicians from the stage, are in one or another way connecting geographical imaginaries with the imaginations about sexuality, freedom, morality, progress, etc. The collision of these discourse prompted me to reflect on the scholarly discourse, which, as I observed, often reproduces the same dilemmas, instead of providing the tools to deal with them. Although my thesis is an analysis at the epistemological level, going into intricate and sometimes self-contained scholarly debates, I

believe that my findings have implications not only for academics, but for activists as well. After realizing how pervasive the East-West binary hierarchy is and how "the West" is easily reduced to either positive or negative stereotypes even in scholarly works, I find it crucial that activists would be more careful when using the authority of EU or "the West" in seeking one or another sexual right or freedom.

It is a high time to start thinking with our own minds and seeking the goals which we think are important to us and to our societies and *not* because "this is the way they do it in "the West", no matter what exactly is meant by "the West". Sexual education, same-sex partnerships, legal acknowledgement of trans-people genders are important goals to seek for. One cannot pretend that there are no examples from which to learn from and even sometimes borrow the terms or strategies – international collaboration can only make our strategies more diverse. However, the *reason* to seek one or another goal must be an understanding that there are people who need these developments, and not a desire to "catch up" with more "advanced" societies, or to demonstrate that we are more original than someone else. All in all, there is no heaven of sexual freedom anywhere on the globe neither in "the East" nor in "the West" as well as there is no one right path which would lead to such a queer heaven.

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