



# “Far from the Space of Tolerance”: Hungary and the Biopolitical Geotemporality of Postsocialist Homophobia

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## Abstract

Sexuality has long been central to ethnographic constructions of exotic difference, an index critically demarcating the borders of European Modernity and its negative and positive Others, and underpinning both extra-European colonial domination and modern biopolitical regimes of subjectivity, citizenship, and society. Representations of Eastern European sexuality, however, were also crucial to both Western and Eastern imaginings of modern “European” selves, politics, and societies, and their boundaries of belonging. Yet while recent scholarship has drawn attention to reemerging European orientalisms and sexuality’s salience in postsocialist politics, particularly in relation to recent postsocialist homophobias, little scholarly attention has been paid to the significance of these histories of European sexual difference for the biopolitical character of current borders of postsocialist difference. In this article I combine postcolonial theories of sexuality, geographies of European belonging, and postsocialist studies of sexual politics to analyze popular, political, and scholarly discourses surrounding sexual politics and homophobia in Hungary. Melding historical debates about Hungarian belonging, discursive analysis, and ethnographic fieldwork, I argue that dominant interpretations of these events constitute postsocialist homophobia as a particularly consequential “problem” reinscribing deeply rooted, and profoundly biopolitical, borders between Europe’s East and West. These readings not only naturalize an imagined West as a space of proper sexual citizenship and tolerance, masking its persistent heteronormativity; they also render Hungary a time–space of complex, ambiguous sexual-political resistance, essentializing its inhabitants as inevitable sexual others of Western Modernity: for some failures of proper sexual citizenship; for others avatars of alternative, sexually-traditional Europeaness.

**Keywords** Homophobia · Biopolitics · Eastern Europe · Hungary · Homonationalism · Heteronationalism

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To our west we can find earlier and much wider acceptance of the diversity of sexuality. [...] Unfortunately we still stand far from the space of tolerance.

László Bitó 2008, *Népszabadság*.<sup>1</sup>

I am the most Christian, and thus the most European, of Europeans. Europe's DNA is me. I am its guardian.

Viktor Orbán, quoted in Lévy, 2019

## Introduction

Over the last decade, Hungary has become increasingly notorious as a site of both authoritarian nationalism and homophobic, gender-normative politics. Soon after gaining power in 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's *Fidesz*-dominated government rewrote Hungary's Constitution, redefining marriage as an explicitly heterosexual institution ("the conjugal union of a man and a woman") and the family—grounded specifically in such marriage—as the sole "basis for survival of the nation." In May of 2020 the government further modified the Constitution to clarify that "marriage" meant "The mother is a woman, the father is a man," at the same time making it illegal for transgender and intersex people to change their assigned birth gender. In December 2020, the Hungarian Parliament passed legislation banning adoption by same-sex couples and severely curtailing single parent adoption (previously a way same-sex couples could adopt and parent). The following June Parliament passed, 157 to 1, a law entitled "On stricter action against pedophile offenders and amending certain laws to protect children," banning representation in advertising, educational materials or any media content accessible to people under eighteen of any information considered by the government to promote "deviation from gender identity, gender reassignment and homosexuality."<sup>2</sup>

This national-sexual politics has been represented by Orbán, *Fidesz*, and Hungary's right-wing, as well as a rising chorus of Western right-wing voices, as a necessary defense of the natural gendered and sexual traditions of the Nation from the modern West's perverse abnormality, and by Western and Hungarian liberals (and most queer people) as proof of Orbán and *Fidesz*'s (and Hungary's) fundamentally "non-European," non-modern nature. Such starkly geotemporal readings build upon similar discourses surrounding Hungarian sexual politics since 1989, especially the global notice attained by Hungarian homophobia following violent attacks on Budapest's Pride march in 2007 and 2008. Together they make the "problem of post-socialist homophobia" in Hungary a salient site for interpreting—and constructing—postsocialism *tout court*. While there is no question that Hungary's entrenched homophobias are harmful on multiple levels, such interpretations reinforce

<sup>1</sup> Bitó, L. 2008. July 3. "'Homofóbia' vagy gyűlöletfűggőség?" [Homophobia or Hate-addiction?]. *Népszabadság* Online <http://nol.hu/cikk/497660/>. Accessed 7/4/2008.

<sup>2</sup> In a sign of the national geopolitics at stake in these moves, this law is almost certainly directly modeled on Russia's notorious 2013 "anti-gay propaganda" law.

problematic, and consequential, imaginings of the fundamental relationship between “East” and “West.” Through such readings, recent scholarship has argued, post-socialist sexual politics acts as a key marker of European difference: like other homonationalisms (Puar, 2007), it renders Hungary a particular kind of sexual-political site, symbolic of both postsocialism’s foundational flaws of society and citizenship, and the West the necessary source, model, and enforcer of their solution, thus legitimizing Western Europe’s moral and political domination over Europe’s East (Chetaille, 2013; Kulpa, 2013; Kulpa & Mizielinska, 2011; Renkin, 2009).

Unquestionably adding to our understandings of postsocialist sexuality’s transnational meanings, such analyses have, however, tended to see sexual politics and their effects in terms of formal politics: as matters of legal or political inclusions or exclusions, rights and protections; in relation to their implications for structural or everyday violences; as legitimizing the overt political superiority of West over East. They have also largely understood them as recent developments: elements of postsocialism’s present-day tensions.<sup>3</sup> Such sexual geotemporal connections, however, are hardly novel. Postsocialist scholars have traced current European neo-orientalisms to historical distinctions between East and West (Gal, 1991; Tlostanova, 2012, 2018; Todorova, 1997; Wolff, 1994); postcolonial scholars of sexuality have shown us that Western European mappings of sexuality’s spatial and temporal differences have deep historical roots (Agnani, 2007; Bleys 1995; Stoler, 1995). Critically, both groups of scholars see such histories of bordering as powerfully constitutive of lasting distinctions between categories of rulers and ruled, and places and people, capable or incapable of “proper” politics (Sabsay, 2012; Trouillot, 1995).

In this article, I draw on this work, as well as long-standing debates about Hungary’s spatiotemporal belonging, public-political and scholarly discourses, and ethnographic fieldwork undertaken from 1999 to the present with queer activists and communities, in order to consider the significance of the discourses of postsocialist homophobia surrounding Hungary’s queer movement and Pride March from the mid-1990s to the present.<sup>4</sup> I argue that the deep rooting of these specific, recent discourses in the long-standing sexual geotemporalities of European identity enables them to reinscribe powerful borders between Europe’s West and East, legitimating the relations of power and inequality these support. More than formally political in their techniques and effects, however, such discourses produce far more than traditional, formally political legitimation. Since Foucault we have known that the history of modern sexuality has created forms of power beyond overt domination, incorporating naturalized bodily differences that sustain deeply intimate processes

<sup>3</sup> They have also typically seen public controversies about sexual minorities primarily as pretexts for other tensions, rather than meaningful phenomenon in their own right. See Renkin (2009).

<sup>4</sup> The Hungarian word most closely corresponding to the English “gay” is *meleg* (lit. “warm”), to “lesbian” *leszbikus*. Most of the people I have met during my research identify by these terms. Since 2012, the Budapest Pride March and Festival, have officially used the term “LGBTQ.” “Queer” remains a marginal sexual-political term: neither it, nor its rough Hungarian equivalent, “*buzi*,” are commonly used terms of identification. I employ the term “queer” in this article as an analytical and heuristic tool to emphasize the multiplicity of sexual subjectivities, socialities, and politics at play in these past and present meanings and relationships.

of biopolitical subjectification (1978); postcolonial scholarship has demonstrated modern biopolitics' critical dependence on sexual geotemporalities for its hierarchical distinctions of valued life, capacities for proper personhood, and proper citizenship (Bleys, 1995; Butler, 2008; Sabsay, 2012; Stoler, 1995). Following Chari and Verdery's call to make use of postcolonial scholarship to "bring arguments about biopower into postsocialist politics" (2009: 27), I draw upon these perspectives as well to contend that—precisely because they revolve around categories of gender and sexuality—both recent discourses of postsocialist homophobia and the deep histories of sexual-geotemporal difference on which they build have potent consequences for the relations of present-day Hungarians, queer and anti-queer, to core criteria of modern European belonging such as subjectivity, citizenship, and tolerance—and thus for a range of struggles personal and political. Their deeply rooted biopolitical character, I argue, means that the boundaries between East and West these discourses produce are more than merely moral, or symbolic, or "political," in the usual sense—or even stable in their value. Inherently ambiguous, they frame postsocialist Hungary as a profoundly split time-space: on one hand a locus of inherent intolerance and failed sexual citizenship, on the other the site of a national sexual order defined by deeply embodied resistance to sexual "colonization."

## Biopolitical Geotemporalities

It is now widely accepted that representations of non-European "exotic Others" were central to European modernity's categorization and colonization of the world, and to the constitution of "European" identity itself, a process which depended on symbolic oppositions between categories such as civilized and savage, primitive and advanced (Ainsa, 1988; Said, 1978; Todorov, 1999; Trouillot, 1995). Critically, in this process Western Europeans aligned scales of geographic difference with scales of social, cultural, political, and physical evolution, constructing an imaginary temporal-spatial structure which organized different human groups with respect to not only pasts and futures, utopias and dystopias, but capacities for civility and civilization (Fabian, 1983; Isin, 2002; Sabsay, 2012).

Sexuality was crucial to creating the profoundly bodily character of these boundaries between the West and its "constitutive Others" (Mosse, 1985). Its new meanings, distinctions, and relations of power came to be "incorporated" in people: central to how they understood their own and Others' bodies, and saw them as foundational to society and politics: new systems of sexual knowledge became new belief in innate differences between types of people—whether "heterosexuals" and "homosexuals," or people of different races and nations—and their social and political potentialities (Foucault, 1978). Such imaginings of sexual Otherness, however, depended critically on regimes of knowledges, institutions, boundaries, and bodily practice beyond the "European." Modern Europe's explorers, travelers, and missionaries made sexualized bodies central to evaluating human difference: open nakedness, sexual possessiveness (or its lack), polygamy, gender-crossing, and same-sex sexual practices were indices mapping distinctions between Europeans and non-Europeans (Bleys, 1995). While these comparisons most often figured Western European sexual and

gender practices as both morally superior and more modern, political critiques at times also contrasted images of natural and innocent, sexually-free “Noble Savages” to modernity’s shameful degeneration. Even here, however, non-European sexual difference served merely as a tool for reconstituting proper, superior, Europeanness (Agnani, 2007; Bleys, 1995). Emerging Western disciplines like anthropology further legitimized such mappings. While preserving the notion of the Noble Savage as a heterotopic space (and thus also preserving its ambiguous political potential; Foucault, 1986), the vast majority of early, influential anthropologists located the “primitive promiscuity” of North American Indians and Australian “aborigines” at the bottom, and the monogamous, heterosexual marriage and family ideal of modern bourgeois European society at the pinnacle, of evolutionary schemas (e.g., Morgan, 1877, McLellan, 1865, Tylor, 1871; see Weston, 1998). Colonial classifications and management of native and European sexualities, too, grounded both new, scientific distinctions between the “sodomite” and the “homosexual,” and shifting understandings of race, class, and gender, in profoundly sexualized categorical entanglements (Bleys, 1995; Mazzolini, 2007; Somerville, 1997; Stoler, 1995, 2002). Both these empirically-grounded sexual-scientific schemas and the material frictions of colonial encounter had enormous biopolitical impact, shaping key modern theorizations such as Durkheim and Mauss’s (1903) interpretation of the heterosexual family as the basis for modern human capacities of logic and cognition, Engels’ (1884) view of monogamous marriage as the origin of private property (and thus all subsequent social and economic (r)evolution), and not only Freud’s belief that repressed sexual desire made possible both mature personhood and sociality, and so civilization itself (1930), but the modern theories of psychosexually dynamic, controlled and uncontrolled, desires shaping the concept of the modern homosexual’s own, antipathic Other, “homophobia” (Bauer, 2011; Bauer, 2010; Renkin, 2016). Sexuality was thus foundational to European modernity’s conception of proper (or improper) place, personhood, citizenship, society, and politics—and the intertwined evolution of all of these. Aligning new types of people and new geotemporal distinctions with cartographies of social-political capability, the scientifically legitimating foil of the exotic Other not only made sexuality a primary modality of modern subjectivity and citizenship, it rendered it a critical marker of the boundaries between the modern citizen-subject’s properly self-disciplining agency and its failed Other: unable, or unwilling, to discipline its fears and desires. It thus powerfully naturalized relations of modern European power both within and beyond Europe’s borders.

## **Sexual Near-Orientalisms: Inventing Eastern European Sexuality**

Sexuality has also been a key technology of the internal relations that József Böröcz (2006) has called “European difference.” Larry Wolff (1994) and Maria Todorova (1997) have described how, at the same time as European travelers and scholars were ordering non-European others, Enlightenment *philosophes* were inventing an idea of a primitive “Eastern Europe” that located “Western Europe” as its opposing space of civilized modernity. Depicting places like Russia, Poland, and Hungary, and the Balkans, as trackless, primordial wildernesses peopled by primitive,

bestial, barely human inhabitants, Voltaire, Diderot, and other Enlightenment figures drew stark contrasts to life in Western Europe in order to map potent boundaries between civilized and uncivilized, modern and non-modern European spaces and selves (Wolff, 1994).

Here too, sexuality was a vital hinge around which other distinctions revolved. Western travelers reported with horror the "primitive promiscuity" of the Eastern European "state of nature," describing the "sexual impropriety in [its] primitive sleeping arrangements, mixing 'men, women, and children promiscuously, without discrimination of sex or condition'" (Wolff, 1994: 32), condemning it as a realm of "lusts of the flesh and fornication" as well as "'the vile depravity we call sodomy'" (Wolff, 1994: 11). Wolff relates how Casanova, visiting Russia in 1764, bought a "virgin peasant girl" to serve as his sexual slave. Coming with time (and some rather Pygmalion-like education) to feel a certain tenderness for the woman, Casanova considered taking her with him upon his return to France, yet ultimately decided to leave her in Russia because her too-violent passion for him revealed her insufficiently civilized nature (Wolff, 1994: 51–56). A marker of the East's and West's shared nature, sexuality was thus also proof of fundamental difference, and the West's superior, rationally controlled embodiment. As with other Orientalisms, such understandings of Western and Eastern European sexual difference had crucial implications, mapping hierarchies of rulers and ruled, naturalizing Western Europe's emerging identity as the pinnacle of personal, social, and political rationality, and justifying the attempts of *philosophes* from Voltaire to Diderot to Rousseau to solve the "problem" of Eastern Europe's insufficient modernity and civilization.

Critically, as elsewhere (see Bhabha, 1984), these Western discourses of Europe's Eastern Other were appropriated by Eastern Europeans themselves, in the form of discourses and debates about their identities and region, and their relationships to imagined Wests and Easts (see, e.g., Gal, 1991; Turda, 2003; Verdery, 1995). A shared, if differentiated, discourse of essential Selfhood and Otherness was thus created, reinforcing the biopolitical boundaries between East and West, but also producing more complex and ambiguous relations of difference, allowing both lasting struggles within the East over relative modernness and Europeanness (Bakić-Hayden, 1995), and potential counter-discursive inversions through which an essentialized Easternness could challenge the West's biopolitical hegemony.

Similarly, "arguments about the relationship between Europe and Hungary, as Susan Gal has suggested, "have constituted Hungarian identity and pervaded Hungarian political and economic life for at least 200 years" (1991: 440). Yet the contours of these discourses (and their mirroring of Western discursive structures) were already visible from the early eighteenth century—as was their biopolitical character. Hungarian scientist Mátyás Bél (1684–1749), for example, strove in his *Notitia Hungaricae novae historico geographica* (1735–42) to identify a pure, distinct Hungarian physical type, arguing that such reproductively isolated Hungarians were dangerously backward compared to both Western peoples and Hungary's ethnic minorities. Other Enlightenment figures such as Samuel Tessedik and Gergely Berzeviczy similarly condemned Hungarian peasants for their irrational, immature, uncivilized character—and physique. Viewing the peasants as inherently innocent, Bél, Tessedik, and Berzeviczy saw their moral, intellectual, and physical backwardness as

the fault of Hungary's decadent and degenerate upper classes, and believed only modern, Western ideas and practices (including science) could restore Hungarianness to the West's moral and physical normalcy (Sozan, 1977: 28–37; Kósa, 2001: 17–18).

By the late eighteenth century, under the influence of Romanticism and the beginnings of Hungarian national awakening, a counter-discourse had emerged—equally biopolitical. Following Herder, “language cultivators” and linguists saw Hungary's folk traditions and language as vital parts of a positive, essentially Eastern nature, spirit, and destiny. Rather than indices of innate backwardness and failure, they were key tools in “the struggle for Hungarian survival and freedom” (Sozan, 1977: 44–45), naturalizing, like “Nobel Savage” discourses elsewhere, “authentic” alternatives to the perceived moral and social flaws of the West, and arguments for Hungary's independence from Habsburg rule.

Mid-nineteenth century debates over Hungary's belonging continued to be shaped by biopolitical concerns, as Hungary's ambiguous position between the Habsburg monarchy and its own internal ethnic minorities pressured Hungarian elites to articulate competing visions of geotemporal order and their place in it. Noble liberal reformers who “equated the country's backwardness with the east” believed “a western, indeed a specifically English, model of economic development” was necessary to overcome it; lesser gentry sought a non-Western modernization “in a specifically Hungarian way” (Gal, 1991: 444). Neurologist Moritz Benedikt (1881) claimed that craniometric data proved Eastern European brains were more animal-like and criminal in form than Western brains; physical anthropologist Aurél Török spent years, and countless craniometric measurements, seeking Hungary's original “pure” race (1882)—before eventually arguing it was impossible to scientifically distinguish between races and their inherent worth, West or East (Török, 1983). Ethnographic and linguistic data too were utilized to demonstrate Hungarian cultural and physical superiority to Western peoples. In the effort to inspire and legitimize national resistance to Habsburg domination, supporters of the “Turanian” hypothesis sought to prove scientifically Hungarians' uncorrupted Asiatic origins and character, tracing the roots of Hungarian to Turkic languages, and combining cultural and anatomical analysis, to suggest Hungarians' ancient kinship to Eastern peoples (Kósa, 2001; Lafferton, 2007; Turda, 2003).

By the twentieth century Hungary and Hungarians increasingly asserted distinct senses of identity and power against both the Austrian regime and their internal minorities. As “race thinking” and eugenics grew to dominate both Euro-American culture and international politics, these borders between national and cultural groups hardened, coming to be understood in terms of essential, biopolitical categories of difference—with sex and sexuality firmly at their center. Some scholars, such as psychoanalytical folk ethnographer Géza Róheim, continued to construct Hungarian and Eastern European peasants along with non-European peoples as the sexually immature, civilizationally primitive others of modern Europeans (Renkin, 2016), or like the Liberal circle of the cultural journal *Nyugat* [West] declared the need for a new Hungarian revolution informed by the superior, modern knowledge of the West (Kulcsár-Szabó, 2009; MacDonald, 2011), thus maintaining the West's preeminence in the region's biopolitical geometries. Gradually, however, “race protectors”

(*fajvédők*) like Gusztáv Beksics (1896), arguing that Hungarian national specificity and superiority was biological, grew to dominate national thinking and politics, producing an explicit and widespread "racial nationalism" (Turda, 2003: 17). For Beksics and others, it was because they were "physically and anthropologically above other races" that "in spite of numerous crossings (miscegenation), the Magyar race has kept the providential grants that assure her the superiority on [*sic*] the competing races" (Turda, 2003: 21). Sexual relations and reproduction thus determined Hungarians' ability to both resist powerful races such as Germans, and to dominate and assimilate inferior Slavs or Jews, and thus also determined Hungary's natural place—their "superiority"—in the hierarchy of nations East and West.

Similarly, in the Interwar period, after the treaty of Trianon stripped away two-thirds of the country's territory and population, struggles over Hungary's position on the "East/West slope" were fought out on the biopolitical terrain of demographic theory, and deep anxieties about reproductive competition between Hungary's "Magyar" population and both its national minorities and surrounding, ethnically different nations (Melegh, 2006), with "race protectors" like Lajos Bartusz now insisting that the biologically superior Magyars must restore the pure Hungarian nation by out-reproducing the existentially threatening Others surrounding them (1938, 1940, Kund, 2016; Szegedi, 2015). These efforts to secure Hungary's moral and physical strength rendered heterosexuality central to national citizenship: while displaying a certain tolerance for elites' private, "respectable" homosexual practices, the state's efforts to increase the national population meant promoting and policing monogamous, reproductive heterosexuality (Kurimay, 2020).

Hungary's Socialist discourses, formal and informal, further reinforced biopolitical borders between East and West. If the Socialist State strove consistently to present itself and its social system as an "alternative modernity," embodied in a socialist citizen superior to Western systems and citizens (Horváth, 2005; Medyesy, 1975), everyday experiences often denied this. Notions of "normal" and "abnormal" consumption, for example, were central to both Hungarians' and the Hungarian State's negotiations of "belonging in an imagined international order" (Fehérváry, 2002: 394, 2013). State efforts to compete with Western consumption, and thus legitimize socialism as a superior alternative, however, ironically made the West's standards of embodied living emblematic of not only respectability and dignity, but "normal" human life itself. Ultimately rendering Hungary's socialist modernity profoundly "abnormal," they created new boundaries between properly and improperly "modern" citizens (Fehérváry, 2013). Here too such normative borders were specifically sexualized: *contre* oft-repeated stereotypes of Socialist sex's silence and invisibility, the Hungarian Socialist State both spectacularly demonstrated sexual norms and boundaries between East and West by, and deeply embedded them in people's everyday lives. State political theater like the 1950 General Electric trial (one of Stalinist Hungary's first "economic" show trials) linked accusations of alleged spies' uncontrolled sexual passions to the deviant sexual practices (and Western orientation) of Hungary's pre-Socialist bourgeoisie, producing powerfully embodied connections between Hungary's decadent, elitist past and and the capitalist West's perverse economic and sexual present to "prove" the spies' betrayal of the more economically, politically—and sexually—modern Socialism (Renkin, 2007; Rév, 1991).



And although the Socialist State officially discouraged homosexuality even after decriminalization in 1961, and queer people could express themselves only in hidden or coded ways (Borgos, 2011; Takács, 2015; Kurimay & Takács, 2017), medical-psychological discourses persistently rendered homosexuality visible, if only in contrast to “proper,” heteronormative sexuality through association with the West (Borgos, 2019; Murai & Tóth, 2012; Lišková & Szegedi, 2021)—and the Socialist system’s international labor and recreational exchanges allowed Hungarian and German women to build lasting connections (Borgos, 2011; Renkin, 2018), Hungarian men to explore homosexual encounters in Croatia, Romania, and Bulgaria, and spaces for both sex and community building in both Budapest’s thermal baths and along its notorious *Dunakorzó* (Renkin, 2007; Hanzli, 2015). Sexuality was thus a key site through which both Hungarian State and citizens negotiated and policed the boundaries between capitalist West and diverse socialist Easts, and their competing modernities.

These deep-seated genealogies of European sexual-geotemporal difference have, over time, incorporated Hungary and Hungarians into their own Foucauldian “specification” as embodied subject/objects of uncertain and inadequate European sexual modernity. Grounding the post-1989 (re)emergence of what József Böröcz has called a “*topos* of West European moral superiority,” in which a neo-Orientalist “discourse of European goodness” (2006, p112) frames Europe as both a profoundly divided time-space and a familiar, unilinear developmental path with the West as its *telos*, they normatively interpellate both societies and selves. As we have seen, however, such discursive mappings also open space for resistant counter-interpellations. They thus instantiate a powerful and complex set of embodied meanings undergirding Hungary’s recent sexual politics of Pride.

## The Geotemporal Biopolitics of Pride

Mass homophobic violence in Hungary began with attacks by nationalists and neo-Nazis on Budapest’s Pride March in 2007. These attacks were repeated in 2008, when Pride marchers were subject to constant verbal and physical threats, including bombardment by eggs, bottles, rocks, and smoke-bombs. Pitched battles occurred between police and attackers; queer people were brutally assaulted (Renkin, 2009). Since then, while the march has faced violence or threats of violence, and mass counterdemonstrations, every year, increased police measures have largely prevented further violence from reaching marchers themselves. The attacks also occasioned a proliferation of discourse, within and outside Hungary, about their victims and perpetrators.

Prior to these attacks, opposition to Budapest Pride and other queer events was consistently small-scale and peaceful. Nonetheless, heteronormativity, homophobia, and heteronationalism have been central to Hungary’s postsocialist politics. Hungary’s *rendszerváltás*, or “system change,” of 1989 brought a resurgence of nationalist sentiment and politics, frequently framed as the restoration of “traditional,” “natural” gender and sexual relations. These framings were central to efforts to differentiate the postsocialist present from the Socialist past (and both its claimed gender

equality and perceived sexlessness), the intense anxieties about demographic vulnerability that have characterized Hungary's contentious debates over abortion rights (Gal, 1994; Gal & Kligman, 2000), and nationalist claims that feminist and queer politics are foreign impositions (Huseby-Darvas, 1996; Renkin, 2007). Sexuality, then, like gender has been a salient site for postsocialist struggles over the geotemporal boundaries of Hungarian belonging.

Both Hungary's queer movement and Budapest's Pride March were deeply embedded in these contests. And while both march and movement have consistently expressed more complex fusions of national and transnational identifications and affiliations (Renkin, 2009, 2015), the cultural and political discourses surrounding them have consistently reproduced the simpler geotemporal *topoi* of sexual citizenship described above. The first queer march in Budapest, in 1997, only 200 strong, in many ways announced a transnational queer normality, displaying global symbols like pink triangles, banners proclaiming both Gay Pride Day [*Meleg Büszkeség Nap*], and demands for queer "Dignity" [*Méltóság*]. Queer participants spoke of their joy at "finally feeling like normal people in a normal country"; liberal journalists referred to it as "shifting sand" [*futóhomok*], a play on words simultaneously referencing an old pejorative term for queers [*homokos*], the speed of the nervous marchers, and the seismic character of Hungary's return to "European normality." As the Pride March became an annual event (growing to roughly 2000 participants in subsequent years), journalists and commentators described it as a "litmus test" for Hungary's progress on the path of democratic transition, rendering it a factual, scientific indicator of normal, European modernity; Hungarian liberal figures like the late Gáspár Miklós Tamás wished for the day when Hungary's realization of a "normally tolerant" society—its return to European sexual and political modernity—would mean marching for queer rights was no longer necessary (Renkin, 2007).

Similar assumptions underlay contrasting interpretations, both local and foreign, of Hungary's queer movement as a "failure." The fact that throughout the 1990s and 2000s Budapest Pride never grew beyond roughly 2000 people, or attracted broader public support, raised for some the question "why haven't 'Western-style' Queer communities and rights movements emerged here?"—a stance succinctly expressed by a visiting American lesbian activist's sympathetic lament at a Pride festival in the early 2000s that "It's too bad that Hungarian sexual identities haven't evolved yet," or the many times Hungarian queer people have told me, "Here in Hungary we are 20 (or 30, or 40) years behind the US" (see Renkin, 2007; Takács, 2004, Tóth, 1994).

Early right-wing opposition to the March invoked the same geotemporal topographies. The isolated handfuls of anti-queer demonstrators along the Pride march's route in the ten years before the attacks consistently represented its queer participants as alien to the nation, belonging elsewhere. A banner confronting the 1999 march commanded "Take your difference elsewhere" (an otherness left revealingly open); a protest sign encouraged 2002 marchers, with more specificity, "Don't stop till you reach the border!" (Renkin, 2007). Right-wing media depicted the Pride march as an embodied, natural threat to the borders of both time and space, as in one 2004 editorial warning that "Gays flood the streets of the city!" and another lamenting the shame felt by statues of historical Hungarian heroes lining its route

at the sight of “a difference foreign to our national feelings” (Renkin, 2007, 2009). Such voices figured Hungary as a (hetero)sexually pure time–space in which (unlike “elsewhere”) queerness simply did not belong.

The attacks on Budapest Pride in 2007 and 2008 intensified these discourses on all sides. On one hand attacks and attackers were represented as proof of Hungarians’ and Hungary’s failure of proper sexual citizenship; on the other queerness itself served as incontrovertible evidence of such failure.

Western discourses criticizing the attacks often reinscribed evolutionary readings of Eastern European sexual political backwardness. At a workshop on homophobia held after the 2009 attacks at Budapest’s Central European University, for example, philosopher and human rights scholar Howard Robinson commented that “this kind of thing just shows that these countries are not ready for prime time.” Similarly, Sarah, a British queer activist coming to support 2010’s Budapest Pride after the attacks, recounting her experiences at other Eastern European Pride Marches at *Művészt*, the art cinema where the March’s film and cultural festival was held that year, first cast “gay people” as a universal population, proclaiming “Everywhere I’ve been, it’s completely obvious that we’re all One Big Family,” yet then immediately drew a biologized distinction between Hungarians and (some) Western Europeans by insisting that the kind of homophobic attacks Budapest Pride marchers had faced “could just never happen in the UK! We just have a gene for Democracy; it’s in our DNA.” Suturing a universal, unilineal evolution of sexual (and other) politics to boundaries of embodied distinction between regional populations and their essentially opposed (sexual) politics, these discourses reconstitute a sexual-geotemporal map according to which only some places’ and people’s time—and selfhood, citizenship, and politics—is “prime.” Like their historical predecessors, these hierarchical biopolitical assumptions undergird the sense of sexually civilizing mission underlying many Western responses to “postsocialist homophobia.” The sentiments of then-British Prime Minister David Cameron, expressed not long after the attacks on Budapest Pride, in which he stated with mingled compassion and pride that “in central and eastern Europe, there are parties that have still got some way to go on the journey of recognizing full rights for gay people. We are helping them make that journey,”<sup>5</sup> reveal precisely same logic that, as Wolff notes, informed the enlightened, fatherly moral and political guidance Voltaire and Rousseau offered to Eastern Europe. While less formally political, the same civilizing gaze—and accompanying disciplinary hand—appeared in a public video message sent to Budapest Pride in 2009 by the US-American actress Whoopi Goldberg. Tellingly, Goldberg directed her remarks to “Hungary.” Noting that the country “has always had a special place in my heart,” and stressing her awareness of the difficulties faced by queer people there, Goldberg offered her support to Budapest Pride. Through this march, she said, Hungarian queer people expressed their yearning for rights and freedom, “just like they do in so many other cities in the European Union.” Goldberg

<sup>5</sup> “Conservative party to send gay MP to quell EU extremists.” Guardian.co.uk, 4/21/2010. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/apr/21/conservative-party-gay-eu-poland>. Accessed 4/22/2010.

closed her message with a paternalistic warning: "I'm gonna be watching. Happy Gay Pride, Hungary! Keep doing it the *right* way!"—ending with an admonitory two-handed slap on the table at which she was sitting.<sup>6</sup>

Hungarian popular and political discourses in response to the Pride attacks echoed the same geotemporalities, reproducing deeply rooted imaginings of Hungarian belonging in their readings of Hungary's current sexual-political difference. Mainstream and left-wing Hungarian discourses condemning the attacks as a negative measure of Hungary's European belonging, a clear sign of Hungary's, and Hungarians', failure to achieve properly modern European tolerance. Following the 2007 attacks, Budapest's then-Head Mayor Gábor Demszky, of the liberal SzDSz (Free Democrats) party, warned of the potential dramatic—and geographic—consequences of homophobic, right-wing violence for all of Hungary, declaring that "for them to beat up gays because they dare to be gay is unacceptable [...] for this they could expel us from Europe."<sup>7</sup> Other characterizations invoked long-standing temporal hierarchies to figure the March's attackers as modernity's primitive Others. Center-left MSzP (Hungarian Socialist Party) MP Tímea Müller called the attacks "reminiscent of the darkest periods of human history."<sup>8</sup> Mayor Demszky further condemned the 2007 attackers by asserting that "the sorts of things that they are doing [...] stand in opposition to everything the democratic countries of the world hold as normal.... [they are] at once intolerant, primitive, and cowardly";<sup>9</sup> the left-wing daily *Népszabadság* labeled them "primitive extremists."<sup>10</sup> Some commentators framed the attacks as distinctly bodily proofs of Hungarians' combined psychological and civilizational failure, committed by those "For whom the freedom of expression is no more than the demolishing of civilized obstacles – in the end they used the city as a public toilet, too – in the face of a snarling anger and an unbound outpouring of hatred."<sup>11</sup> The same sense of embodied geotemporal non-belonging infused an editorial in *Népszabadság*, cited above as one of the epigraphs to this article, which in the wake of the 2008 attacks lamented that, "To our west we can find earlier and much wider acceptance of the diversity of sexuality. [...] Unfortunately we still stand far from the space of tolerance."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See <http://2009.budapestpride.hu/whoopi-goldberg-magyarorszaghoz-szol> (English with Hungarian subtitles).

<sup>7</sup> "Melegfelvonulás: fegyelmi indul egy rendőr ellen" [Gay Festival: Disciplinary Action Initiated Against a Policeman]. Index.hu 2007.07.12 <http://index.hu/politika/belfold/toth36282/>. Accessed 7/14/07.

<sup>8</sup> "Nem lesz ötpárti nyilatkozat a melegfesztiválról" [No Five-party Declaration about Festival]. Hírszerző.hu 7/9/07. ([http://www.hirszerzo.hu/cikk.nem\\_lesz\\_otparti\\_nyilatkozat\\_a\\_melegfesztivalrol.39679.html](http://www.hirszerzo.hu/cikk.nem_lesz_otparti_nyilatkozat_a_melegfesztivalrol.39679.html)). Accessed 7/9/07.

<sup>9</sup> "Demszky: ha kell, zsidó, cigány, meleg vagyok" [Demszky: If necessary, I am Jewish, Gypsy, and Gay]. Hvg.hu 7/9/07. [http://hvg.hu/itthon/20070709\\_demszky\\_budapest\\_melegfelvonulas](http://hvg.hu/itthon/20070709_demszky_budapest_melegfelvonulas). Accessed 7/10/07.

<sup>10</sup> "Hajtóvadászat" [The Hunt]. Népszabadság Online. 7/9/07. <http://www.nol.hu/cikk/453134/>. Accessed 7/9/07.

<sup>11</sup> Gyémánt Mariann: A fröcsögő gyűlölet szabadsága [The Freedom of Spitting Hate] (*Népszava*, 2007. július 11.). Accessed 7/11/07.

<sup>12</sup> "'Homofóbia' vagy gyűlöletfüggőség?" [Homophobia or Hate-addiction]. Népszabadság Online, 7/3/07. <http://nol.hu/cikk/497660/>. Accessed 7/4/2008.

Conversations on queer internet fora and in activist meetings about both the attacks and the Hungarian State's responses to them reflected similar geotemporal regimes. One participant in a discussion about the 2007 attacks on the gay website *Pride.hu* proclaimed that "what happened yesterday was not truly European,"<sup>13</sup> others mirrored one 2007 marcher's anguished cry: "It's horrible to be surrounded by such primitive people!" In 2010, when massed counter-demonstrators again threatened the march, and the Budapest police reacted by both drastically cutting the March's traditional route across the city to a mere eight blocks and imposing a cordon of barricades separating the marchers from the city, a long-time queer activist argued that both attacks and police "protection" revealed Hungary's fundamental spatiotemporal displacement: the whole situation, he said disgustedly, was "*Tiszta balkán!*" [lit. "Purely Balkan," i.e., utterly "Balkan" in character—in Hungarian usage meaning not "European"; belonging to a different, backwards and primitive place (see, e.g., West, 2002)]. Critically, these discourses locate not merely the march's homophobic, right-wing attackers, but all Hungary and Hungarians, in a particular, inferior place on the scale of "normal" European temporality, civility, and society: in a pre-modern past of darkness, savage, animal-like retardation, and political failure; as improper, retrograde citizens. As noted journalist Tamás Virág put it, "while in the normal countries in our region they are working to create equal rights, we are so retarded that after 11 years we are still throwing things and beating people."<sup>14</sup> Or, as an editorialist on the popular queer website *Pride.hu*, with mingled alarm and irony fusing Hungary's precarious geotemporal belonging to a notorious image of the East's abnormal personhood, observed:

That, after tolerating the gay marches, gay-bashing can move the broad masses of Hungarians [...] goes against the precisely-sketched progress of history. [...] looking from this perspective it is also possible that the country is not sliding back in time, but rather in space: that we are moving towards the cultural periphery. The borders of the disrupting and banning of gay marches have until now extended to the regions of Russia, Lithuania, Serbia. Now Hungary, too, is a member of the retrograde union. Luckily, the country might be able to profit from this, since Borat's next alter ego after Kazakhstan might be Hungarian....<sup>15</sup>

Right-wing voices defending the attacks utilized the same essentializing geotemporal architectures to portray them as efforts to protect Hungary's traditional sexual normality from the modern West's sexual deviance and abnormality. A member of the National Medical Chamber classified both gayness and Pride marches as not only alien to Hungary and Hungarianness, but specifically Western, explaining that

<sup>13</sup> "*Leszbikusokat és melegeket vertek meg az este*" [Lesbians and Gays Beaten Up at Night]. *Pride.hu* 7/8/07 <http://pride.hu/article.php?sid=2398>. Accessed 7/9/07.

<sup>14</sup> "Mostantól vagy heteró, vagy rejtozködő, vagy Szetey Gábor" [From now on one is either hetero, closeted, or Szetey Gábor]. *Hírszerző.hu* 7/9/07. [http://www.hirszerzo.hu/cikk.mostantol\\_vagy\\_hetero\\_vagy\\_rejtozkodo\\_vagy\\_szetey\\_gabor.39634.html](http://www.hirszerzo.hu/cikk.mostantol_vagy_hetero_vagy_rejtozkodo_vagy_szetey_gabor.39634.html). Accessed 7/9/07.

<sup>15</sup> "*Gorbacsov a melegekkel van*" [Gorbachev is with the Gays]. *Pride.hu* 7/9/07. <http://pride.hu/article.php?sid=2406>. Accessed 7/10/07.

“licentiousness, unrestrained liberalism, and the gay march have their model in Holland, where there are even gay monuments.” In Hungary, he insisted, such things were neither natural nor normal: blurring together space and time, he called gayness a “disease-process” leading to “Hungarian genocide,” and declared that “Because the majority of Budapest’s community is certainly not homosexual [...] it is unnatural that they march along Andrásy Boulevard.”<sup>16</sup> Similarly, attackers chants during the 2007 and 2008 attacks of “*Mocskos buzi*” [dirty faggots] and “*Büdös buzi*” [stinking faggots] explicitly conflated marching queers with Jews and other specifically sexualized historical embodiments of unhealthily, overly-modern non-Hungarianness; neo-nazi skinheads denounced those they beat afterwards as “traitors to the nation” [*hazaárulók*]; and right-wing media accused marchers of provoking the attacks with their deviant, nation-threatening behavior. The nationalist *Jobbik* party defended the attacks by citing similarly national-biological concerns, condemning left-wing support for the March as “nothing more than support for the rights of deviants and the spreading of disease within the Hungarian nation.”<sup>17</sup> As Western and left/liberal discourses do with postsocialist homophobia, then, Hungarian right-wing discourses constitute the Pride March, as well as queer people more generally, as critical sites of not merely sexual-political, but biopolitical friction. Like earlier discourses privileging Hungarian difference over modern Europeanness, however, they do so by contrasting heteronational normality to the West’s sexual abnormality.

## Inverting “Europe”

Since Orbán and *Fidesz* came to power in 2010, Hungary’s rightward journey has accelerated. Nationalism and homophobia have intensified, as have the geotemporalities framing these intimately entangled politics. As Budapest Pride has grown—ironically, largely because of increasing numbers of foreign visitors and straight allies—to more than 10,000 marchers every year since 2013, and as the West’s homonationalism has heightened, *Fidesz* and Orbán have repositioned themselves as the protectors of not merely the Hungarian nation’s dignity and political sovereignty, but of their essential foundations—the respectable, reproductively secure gender and sexual traditions of the Hungarian heteronation—from the decadent West’s perverse demands for sexual tolerance.

The heroic role imagined by Orbán and *Fidesz* for themselves (and Hungary) in this renewed geotemporal struggle has occasioned a dense conjuncture of biopolitical discourse and policy. The promotion of national-reproductive and anti-queer laws described at the beginning of this article has been explicitly grounded in a rhetoric of national resistance to what founding *Fidesz* member and then-president of the

<sup>16</sup> “Gyilkos Ágnes”, „fitogtató Szetey” – az orvosi kamara honlapján [Agnes the Murder and Szetey the Showoff—On the Website of the Medical Chamber] *Népszabadság Online* 7/11/07. <http://nol.hu/cikk/453487/>. Accessed 7/14/07.

<sup>17</sup> “A *Jobbik* az SZDSZ ellen demonstrált” [The *Jobbik* demonstrates against the SZDSZ] *Népszabadság Online* 7/14/2007. <http://nol.hu/cikk/453920/>. Accessed 7/20/07.

Hungarian Parliament László Kövér has called the West's "gender madness." Weaving together imagined dangers of gender and sexual diversity, this madness, Kövér declared, threatened "to turn Hungary into a futureless society of man-hating women and woman-fearing, feminine men who only see children and families as an obstacle to self-fulfillment." That this threat was perceived to be aimed directly at Hungary's very existence as a nation was made abundantly clear in the preamble of *Fidesz's* new, 2012 national Constitution, which declared: "We hold that the family and the nation constitute the principal framework of our coexistence." And when, in 2018, acting upon the same sense of biopolitical danger, the Orbán government removed Gender Studies from the State's list of accredited academic fields, the same geotemporal logic informed the denunciation by Lőrinc Nacsa, head of the Association of Young Christian Democrats (the youth wing of *Fidesz's* post-2010 coalition partners), of the discipline as utterly foreign. Such alien actors, Nacsa warned, present in Hungary only due to the "pressure" of a global "gender and gay lobby," "do not help the rise of our nation, they even destroy the value-centered thinking still present in Central European countries." Indeed, Nacsa argued, in "deal[ing] with a subject that has no benefit to Hungarian society," but that instead promotes "studying sexual minorities and deepening feminist philosophy," they put at risk "the future of Hungary" itself.<sup>18</sup> As Orbán put it at *Fidesz's* 2016 party congress, a year after Kövér's warning of Western "gender madness," "We must decide whether there will still be nations or if we want a united Europe? Do we want families and children, or can we not even determine who is a man and who is a woman?" Critically, in positioning themselves as the defenders of this national future, Orbán, *Fidesz*, and their allies have in their discourses of time, space, sexuality, and politics merely inverted dominant Western sexual-geotemporal narratives—in time-honored fashion. And, like the narratives they challenge, these powerfully reconstitute stark, long-standing lines of embodied European difference.

That these lines of difference and division are not merely present in the abstracted biopolitical structures and practices of national marriage and family laws and policies, but are profoundly embedded in the everyday belongings and non-belongings of Hungary's national space, was made tangibly clear when, in response to Budapest Pride's 2017 defiant rejection of the "protective" but containing police cordon imposed after the 2007–2008 attacks, and the Pride organizers' decision to march openly and freely whatever the consequences, black-clad nationalists blockaded the queer march's attempt to cross Budapest's Chain Bridge with a wall of their own, brutally muscular bodies, bearing a black banner that announced simply, "We Are the Cordon" (see Renkin, forthcoming).

If these are the internal scales on which such biopolitical differences map their bodily borders of belonging, their import for broader cartographies and larger scale boundaries of embodiment are also evident in the ways in which Orbán and *Fidesz* have increasingly used homophobic heteronationalism to proclaim themselves the true protectors from sexually decadent, too-tolerant Western Others of not just

<sup>18</sup> Open letter to Rector of Eötvös University (<https://444.hu/2017/02/17/hozza-tud-melto-modon-jarul-ni-a-jovohoz-az-elte-vagy-kiszolgajja-a-gender-es-meleglobbi-nyomulasat>) Accessed 2/20/17.

Hungary, but an alternative, natural and national, Europe. As the second epigraph to this article demonstrates, Orbán has argued that his role as the defender of Hungarian heteronationalism against the West—and his essential, genetic embodiment of ancient national, and natural, gender/sexual traditions—make him the rightful savior of Europe's natural coherence as well. Amplifying his claims to this bodily authenticity to a continental, indeed global, scale in a 2015 statement in the pro-government newspaper Hungarian Times [*Magyar Idök*], Orbán wove together individuals, populations, and regions to (re)claim a powerful, biopolitical geotemporal topography, observing, in a clear reference to Churchill's famous 1946 Fulton, Ohio speech first declaring the existence of the "Iron Curtain," that,

There is a dividing line that starts from the Baltics and runs all the way along the western borders of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. To the west of this line are those countries that have already abandoned the protection of the family; everywhere to the east of the line, on the other hand, family-friendly policies have prevailed; nowhere is same-sex marriage accepted.

### Conclusion: Europe's Biopolitical Curtain

From their beginnings, sexual geotemporalisms have constituted powerful means of biopolitical legitimation between and within West and East. Hungary's image as a place "far from the space [and time] of tolerance," where homophobia is natural and inevitable, has served to undergird the West's surveillance and discipline, a regulatory system functioning through laws, rebukes, delays to entry, and threats (imagined as well as real) of expulsion, but also condescension towards local queer activists, movements, and politics, making "(Western) Europe" the space—and time—of sexual tolerance and goodness, of a properly modern sexual civilization and its adjudicators (Kulpa, 2013). Such symbolic exclusions inform and incite policing on multiple levels: pressuring right-wing homophobes and governments, but also pushing queer activists towards forms of sexual politics recognizable to the West (Renkin, 2007, 2015). These moral-political imperatives have benefits, such as new connections, affinities, and solidarities. They also create new tensions and hierarchies, between queer people East and West, and between queer Hungarians themselves (Renkin, 2015, forthcoming).

Moreover, their geometries inform and incite the anti-queer politics of governments like Viktor Orbán's, and its counter-discursive argument that true goodness, and indeed true Europeaness, lies in the normal sexuality of the heteronation. Given the complex histories of such sexual geotemporalities, it is perhaps not surprising that, just as Hungarian queers and liberals have aligned themselves with long-standing discourses defining Orbán and *Fidesz's* heteronationalism and homophobia as markers of failed modern, European sexual belonging, the Hungarian Right's instrumentalization of heteronational homophobia to produce an equally precedented inversion of these borders has drawn enthusiastic support from Western voices seeking to revive Enlightenment fantasies of noble, misunderstood sexual Others to promote their own political projects at home and abroad. Here, it is telling that the heteronational right-wing is creating their own, ironically equally



transnational, vision of proper sexual-political belonging. In 2017 Budapest was the site, and Orbán and *Fidesz* the welcoming hosts, of the U.S.-based World Congress of Families annual summit, an event at which global, Christian, anti-queer and feminist conservatives gathered to promote a “pro-family alliance of countries dedicated to defending marriage, the family and the sanctity of human life.”<sup>19</sup> Delegates praised Hungary as a leader in protecting the “natural” (i.e., hetero, reproductive) family, and promoted the idea of a (trans)national “demographic winter” caused by “unnatural deviations” such as abortion and homosexuality; the summit culminated in a pro-“natural family” parade in downtown Budapest, resplendent with balloons and traditional Hungarian folk costumes.<sup>20</sup> In 2022 Orbán was guest of honor at the U.S. Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Texas. Basking in the admiration of this distinctly Western source of global right-wing power for his promotion of traditional, heterosexual marriage and families, and his resistance to queer rights and “gender ideology,” Orbán declared to rapturous applause that “the West is at war with itself,” and that heteronational conservatives were in a “battle for Western civilization.”<sup>21</sup> Moreover, recently major U.S. right-wing figures such as Tucker Carlson (late of Fox News) and writer Rod Dreher have made highly-publicized pilgrimages to Hungary, and suggested that Orbán’s heteronational politics represents an alternative utopic future for the West. As Dreher put it in a 2021 interview with the *New Yorker*, in a disorienting and revealing inversion of dominant sexual-geotemporal narratives: “America is about ten years away from being where they are, I think.”<sup>22</sup> Critically, however, Western and Hungarian right-wings have deployed the historical discursive structures in very different ways: with figures like Dreher reviving the sexual politics of the noble savage to challenge the inward face of homonationalism at home, and Orbán and *Fidesz* invoking imaginings of noble (if sometimes, for the protection of the Nation, savage), sexual-culturally resistant Others to oppose homonationalism’s condescending outward face with the sternly superior visage of heteronationalism.

These framings of the fraught sexual-political relationship between East and West reveal that such boundaries are not merely shaped according to the formal structures of “geopolitics” per se. Rather, they reinforce perceptions of a hierarchized, biopolitical, and mutually-constitutive divide between West and East, and map alternatives: equally imperative paths to profoundly essentialized forms of “goodness”; the “right kind of” sexual identities, politics, and tolerance. Like the evolutionist theories of self and society in which they are rooted, they naturalize and normativize certain ways of tolerating—or *not* tolerating—queer people, particular ways of being proud—queer or nationalist—and competing visions of utopias that are the proper places, and times, of some people and not others: on one hand the West’s homonational “homo-utopia” (Cohen, 2009); on the other *Fidesz* Hungary’s heteronational,

<sup>19</sup> <https://profam.org/wcfxi/wcf-xi-description/> Accessed 3/2/23.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/08/04/viktor-orban-cpac-00049935>. Accessed 8/5/22.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.newyorker.com/news/annals-of-inquiry/what-rod-dreher-sees-in-viktor-orban>. Accessed 3/10/23.

homophobic homeland. Locating everyone as part of a common temporal, geographic, and biopolitical framework—the global gay family, the world of “civilized” societies; the national family of moral “tradition,” the “true” Europe of sexually sovereign nations—these representations create ontological divisions between both places and people, in which democracy and tolerance, or true Hungarianness, are simply in some people’s DNA and not others’.

Understanding the deep history of the politics of postsocialist homophobia can help us grasp why the post-1989 reinscription of borders between Europe’s East and West has been so rapid and profound on both “sides,” East and West, Left and Right. It can reshape in fundamental ways our understandings of postsocialist transformations, and the borders they claim to erase but in fact reinscribe, helping us to see them as profoundly biopolitical, as well as geotemporal, projects, in which sexuality is a central, and not marginal, element. And, crucially, it can help us to see more clearly how strongly, and deeply, contested these boundary-making projects are. Such a reading can reveal how and why these forms of sexual-civilizational policing by voices both Western and Hungarian inevitably awaken counter-discourses of resistance far more powerful than superficially proximate or “opportunistic” political reactions to the “homonationalist” moves of a colonial or imperial West. Equally deeply, and bodily, embedded in the *longue durée* history of Europe’s sexualized encounter between East and West, they are just as biopolitical, and transnational, in nature. Thus, whether in the globally dominant narratives of Western homonationalism, or in the locally resistant discourses of Hungarian heteronationalism—and whether in the eyes of queer people, their allies, or the anti-queer (trans)nationalist right-wing—the “problem of postsocialist homophobia” secures and sustains powerful borders of essential difference between “Europe” and its internal Other.

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**Ethical Approval** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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