

seemingly reflecting confusion with Russian or other languages. For example, *tsiomny* (poorly educated, unenlightened) and *sviadomy* (enlightened, possessing national awareness) are rendered as *tsemni* and *svidomi* respectively (25 and 61).

To sum up, *The Rise and Fall of Belarusian Nationalism* definitely deserves the attention of the historians of Eastern Europe. Per Anders Rudling has written a solid historical study that vividly depicts the complex and entangled development of Belarusian nationalism during the first third of the twentieth century. Rudling's intention to place "Belarusian nationalism in the context of political rivalry in a regional contested borderland" (8) has certainly been realized, and, hopefully, it will serve as a stimulating example for other historians of Belarus to move across political and territorial borders.

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Irina Solomatina and Tatsiana Shchurko (eds.), *Kvir-seksual'nost': politiki i praktiki*. Minsk: Haliiafy, 2014. 194 pp.

This book is the result of the conference "Queer-Sexuality: Policies and Practices" that was held in Minsk in October 2012. The aim pursued by the conference organizers and book editors, Irina Solomatina and Tatsiana Shchurko, was to encourage a critical discussion about sexualities and gender normativity in the post-Soviet context. The conference participants and book contributors are researchers, artists, and activists from Belarus, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia. They presented a variety of approaches, drawing upon sociology, psychology, philosophy, and gender and cultural studies. Literary fiction and art projects are included in the book as well, based on the editors' position that art projects should be considered as a particular kind of intellectual statement about sexualities in the local context.

The book does not aspire to reopen the horizons of theory. It is rather aimed at creating an opportunity for communication and

discussion. As a result, it forms an archive of context-specific reflections about queer sexualities and identities in the post-Soviet space. Such an approach is valuable in the given time and spatial context. Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia all currently have neo-traditionalist and neo-conservative gender regimes; gender theory and queer studies are rarely a part of academic curricula. The academic milieu itself often reproduces patriarchal stereotypes and presuppositions. In this context, interdisciplinary and international projects dedicated to topics that are marginalized in the academic mainstream have additional value in terms of support for and emancipation of the researchers themselves.

The book is divided into five chapters: Queer as Theory; (Non)Normative Sexuality and Problems of Homophobia in Education; LGBT-Communities in the Post-Soviet Space; LGBT Families; and Queer Art Practice. In the preface, editor Tatsiana Shchurko discusses the conservative backlash in the post-Soviet space and the increase in different phobias linked to various forms of sexuality and gender identity. In this context queer theory and practice is seen as a form of “personal-as-political” resistance and emancipation: “the term queer can be used by any individual (heterosexual as well) to designate their own critical attitude towards the normative prescriptions and hierarchies of society” (Tatsiana Shchurko, Preface). Indeed, several contributions to the book are informed by the deeply personal experiences of the book’s authors. Thus, for example, the book includes photos from the wedding ceremony of American and Belarusian human rights defenders Shawn Gaylord and Viacheslav Bortnik, together with comments by the latter. Ukrainian activist Anna Sharyhina in her essay “Lesbian Family = Queer-Relationship?” uses her own experience as a lesbian woman from a big Ukrainian city and her long-term observations of the Kharkiv lesbian community in order to present some conclusions about the dynamics of personal relations, financial responsibility, and child care in lesbian couples. In other studies, the same topic (LGBT families and their attitudes towards family life) is studied using qualitative sociological methods (Tamara Martsenyuk) and various psychological methods (Svetlana Murtazina).

Personal experiences and reflections about sexuality and gender from the queer perspective are characteristic of the art projects included in the book. Russian artist Hagra presents active women engaged in sport activities. Alina Krushinskaia offers a photo-story, supplemented by her brief comments about her own appearance that does not conform to the conservative standards of femininity. Viktoriia Biran's photo-series "Ears of Free Theater" and "Army of Nose" represent the variability of the human body. Other art projects are more directed towards critical dialogue with society: a series of queer-feminist stencils by FROG (feminist radical occupy group); "This is Not Love" posters by Umnaia Masha about different forms of affinity between women in homophobic society; and the Queer-Communism Manifesto by the School of Theory and Activism in Bishkek. The book also contains several pieces of literary fiction. Belarusian author Nasta Mantsevich presents short stories about lesbian love. "The Small Queer-Joy," a play by the FROG group (in collaboration with anonymous friends) is a satirical story about homophobia and activism in the post-Soviet space.

The theoretical chapter of the book, *Queer as Theory*, does not present elaborated studies of new directions in academic queer theory. It contains more general reflections by Aleksandr Kondakov about Judith Butler's ideas and the possibilities for using her theoretical approach in scholarly research and political activities in the post-Soviet space. This line of thinking is continued by the activist Ol'gerta Kharitonova in her essay "Queer as Negation" about the intermediary nature of the queer position and its potential to deconstruct the existing system of repressive norms in order to create a more desirable egalitarian world.

The book contains several detailed case studies. Problems of education are discussed in "Heteronormativity and Heterosexism in Belarusian Textbooks" by Ol'ga Burko and Tatsiana Shchurko, and in "The Gender Norm and Sexuality in the View of Belarusian Students and Teachers" by Marina Kuznetsova and Tatsiana Shchurko. The interrelation between LGBT activism, public opinion, and political parties in Belarus is studied by Aleksei Bratochkin and Uladzislau Ivanou. Conservative backlash, moral panics, and homophobic initiatives in Ukraine are discussed by Tetyana

Bureychak and Lesya Pagulich. Guzel' Dzhuraeva comments on the same issue in the Russian context. Maria Sabunaeva describes her experience and common problems encountered in providing online psychological consultations to LGBT clients in the context of a homophobic society.

Queer-Sexuality: Policies and Practices presents a diverse mix of topics, attitudes, and authors' backgrounds and positions. This diversity is both a key strength and a key weakness of the collection. This is typical for the post-Soviet context, where gender theory and LGBT activism only appeared very recently, in 1990. Hence the stages of development characteristic for Western intellectual debate on these issues have followed a different sequence here. Researchers from the post-Soviet space can often present very different understanding of core concepts of gender and queer theory, and this characteristic local feature is much in evidence in this book. The relative newness of the topic in the region also explains certain gaps when it comes to the book's coverage. We might point here for example to the lack of discussion in this book about transgender and transsexual experiences, non-normative heterosexual identities and practices, or non-monogamous love-life scenarios.

The strongest aspect of the book is its concentration on the localization of queer theory and discussion of issues particular to the local context. The editors' strategy to include art projects in the book works well for this goal. In sum, the book presents a compilation of original voices from the region. It forms a good ground for further development of queer and feminist discussion in various forms of knowledge production (from art to different academic disciplines) in the post-Soviet space. It can also be used as a valuable source of information for researchers interested in the social development of the region.

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