Chapter 7

EUrientation Anxieties

Islamic Sexualities and the Construction of Europeanness

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In an interview in 2009, Ismail Kadare who had just received the Prince of Asturias Award, addressing his position as a dissident writer in communist Albania, argued that, “what excited suspicion [by the Albanian communist regime] was, ‘why does the western bourgeoisie hold a writer from a Stalinist country in high esteem?’”. Yet, the communist regime not only allowed the Albanian writer to travel to France (a very rare privilege reserved only for those close to the regime) but engaged in promoting his rise to prominence in European literary circles. For the communist regime, Kadare provided a historical fiction that, as Morgan argues, “represented Albanian identity as something native and authentic over and against Ottoman, Soviet or, later, Maoist, influences”, mirroring the regime’s desire to situate Albania, not only as a constitutive part of Europe, but as its guardian of the frontier between Europe and its eastern Others. As Morley and Robins put it,

This desire for clarity, this need to know precisely where Europe ends, is about the construction of a symbolic geography that will separate the insiders from the outsiders (the Others). Implicit in these words is the suggestion that the next Iron Curtain should divide Europe from, and insulate it against, the Islamic Other.

For the Europeans, Kadare presented an opportunity to gaze inside what was considered one of the most isolated communist regimes, providing semi-fictionalized Orientalist narratives of oppression and violence supposedly endured by Albanians under the Ottoman Empire, which he later argued was a metaphor for the communist regime. Kadare’s stories, then as now, provide the European postcolonial market place with the possibility of both objectifying and commodifying internalized Orientalist cultural productions in the service of European enlargement, particularly as Kadare’s narrative is
one of Albania’s escape from its Islamic and communist pasts into the fold of European belonging.

In Brown Skin, White Masks (2011), extending on the concept of “native informer” in postcolonial studies, Hamid Dabashi calls this phenomenon “comprador intellectuals”, namely, native informers who through the “inversion of facts by fantasy [and] of truth by politics” engage in legitimizing colonial and neocolonial formations. The intersection of gender, sexuality and Islam has been central in the construction of what El-Tayeb calls “escape narratives” by authors such as Hirsi Ali, Salman Rushdie and Azar Nafis, who in escaping from their “backward” societies find freedom and liberation in the West and/or invite the West to control and reform their societies.

This chapter explores the intersections of Islam and sexuality in cultural texts in Albania and Bosnia to gain an insight in how essentialized identity markers of Muslims in the Balkans are framed to either correspond to or contradict the idea of belonging to Europe. Cultural texts, particularly literature and film, have been key in inventing a European identity for Muslims in the Balkans in the face of European enlargement. They are not only Western European Orientalist fantasies of projecting Muslims in the Balkans as objects of reform and Europeanization but also a form of internalized Islamophobic narratives that in effect seek to disconnect Muslims in the Balkans from the Ummah. If in the 20th century, secular and socialist nation and state building projects have constituted themselves against fictitious Islamic sexualities in the Balkans, today these sexualities are employed and renamed in the service of European enlargement.

The construction of Islamic sexualities is best explored by examining the cultural productions of the secular-modern compromise, particularly universalizing neoliberal as well as socialist productions of Islamic sexualities and subjectivities within broader projects of “liberation”. Throughout these cultural productions, the sexualized Muslim subject in the Balkans became the screen onto which European fantasies of civilizing Muslims are projected and heteronormative sexualities are constructed. At times, these Orientalist, homophobic and Islamophobic projections have also been adopted by Muslims in the Balkans as a way of resisting both European and Balkan colonial identification, which is why their interrogation is key in understanding how Muslims in the Balkans continue to be produced as suspect others. Thus, by looking at Albanian and Bosnian representation of sexuality in postcolonial cultural texts, this chapter examines how internalized Orientalist and Islamophobic cultural representations of Islamic sexualities seek to ease European and Balkan anxieties about Islam, while being eager to persuade the European and Balkan gaze of their “Europeanness”. Queer critique and postcolonial scholarship are therefore key in subjecting the European enlargement discourse in the Balkans to critical analyses.
that move beyond the now traditional discourse of post-socialist “return to Europe” and its critique.

Drawing from queer and postcolonial theory, I look at the representation of queer Muslims in contemporary semi-realistic historical fiction and film to explore the construction of heteronormative secular and nationalist narratives. I argue that complex queer subjectivities among Muslims in Albania and Bosnia are essentialized and reduced to Eurocentric binary sexualities to promote European belonging in these two countries. Specifically, I look at how these attempts to incorporate sexual orientations in the service of European orientations change over time to assure Bosnia’s and Albania’s compatibility with dominant European epistemological and ontological categories of gender and sexuality. If in the Albanian historical novel the queer Muslim is employed in the production of the heterosexual European Albanian, in Bosnian film, the queer Muslim is staged as a sexualized victim who can only find salvation by either escaping to Europe or bringing Europe home to Bosnia. Sexual orientations thus are not only articulated and renamed in relation to Europe, but they become the markers of European orientations. In this context, cultural texts trade sexualities in the European postcolonial and post-modern cultural marketplace where the division between history and fiction is neutralized, contributing to the legitimization of larger processes of European enlargement.

There are two considerations that need to be addressed here: how postcolonialism and queer theory, respectively, figure in the Balkan context. The last two decades have seen an upsurge of postcolonial studies of the Balkans. Todorova’s *Imagining the Balkans* became the canonized text that sought to locate the Balkans as the “in-between” space of civilized Europe and the uncivilized other. More recently, there have been attempts to align postcolonial and post-socialist analysis in the Balkans under frameworks that seek to explore the intersectional “post” in colonialism and socialism. Most of these studies suggest that, unlike Orientalism in India where “Gandhi and the Hindu internalized Orientalized stereotypes to resist their colonial identification [. . .] in the Balkans [. . .] people subverted their own identities by Orientalizing one another”

While these analyses are important in understanding the overall Othering of the Balkans, it is important to note that Muslims in the Balkans cannot be grouped in the “in-between” space as, unlike non-Muslims, they were projected as the Others by both Western and Eastern European imperial and colonial formations. Moreover, Muslims were subjected to Orientalist identification before, during and after socialism. The expansion of the Yugoslav Kingdom, for instance, took place at the expense of Muslim majority populated areas of Bosnia, Kosovo, Sandžak and Macedonia where Yugoslav Orientalist accounts of the inter-war period informed socialist policies on the modernization of the Muslim population. Frequently, it
was intellectuals who dominated the discourse on “what is to be done with the Muslims” before and after the Second World War. The two most noted figures, Ivo Andrić and Vasa Ćubrilović, advocated the expulsion or assimilation of Muslims from the Yugoslav Kingdom. In Socialist Yugoslavia, they both went on to become successful public intellectuals, Andrić receiving the Nobel Prize in literature in 1961 and Ćubrilović establishing the Institute for Balkan Studies at the University of Belgrade in 1970. I am not arguing here that the rest of the Balkans were not subjected to textual colonization and Balkanist and Orientalist prejudice but that parts of the Balkans with majority Muslim populations, such as Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, also experienced forms of imperial and colonial rule both by Western and Central European powers and by other Balkan neighbours. If the imperial rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire over Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the case of Albania through the European-backed International Control Commission both took place in the period preceding the Great War, similar colonizing projects were enacted by the Yugoslav Kingdom with the end of that war. In this context, I argue that instead of addressing the “writing-back” to Europe, Balkan postcolonial and post-socialist scholarships should explore the implications of “writing together” with Europe in Orientalizing Muslims in the Balkans. In this intersection, I examine Orientalist depictions of Islamic sexualities in the Balkans in the process of Europeanization through Queer theory, which can provide a possibility for, as Schippert argues, “undoing, or recalibrating, of binary terminology of religion and secularism”, and which may in turn, as Jakobsen and Pellegrini argue, “open new configurations in the political debates structured by them”, hopefully deflecting and deconstructing fixed binary representations of essentialized Muslim subjectivities in the Balkans.

In the context of Queer theory, I am particularly guided by Halberstam’s reading of queer, postcolonial and Black feminism that seeks to examine “the negation of the subject rather than her formation, the disruption of lineage rather than its continuation, the undoing of self rather than its activation”. Building on this remark, I examine what alternatives to Europe are relegated to the background, are un-read or hidden in the process of European orientations. The need to sustain Balkan Muslim orientations towards Europe is tantamount to turning away from other orientations or deviating from the set path of progress, modernity and Europeanization. In this sense, I find Ahmed’s “Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology” inspirational in thinking of this process in terms of sexual orientations. As she points out,

The temporality of orientation reminds us that orientations are effects of what we tend toward, where the “toward” marks a space and time that is almost, but not quite, available in the present. In the case of sexual orientation, it is not then simply that we have it. To become straight means not only that we have to turn toward the objects given to us by heterosexual culture but also that we must turn away from objects that take us off this line.
Ahmed notes how “the queer object, the one out of line, on a slant, the odd and strange one, is hence encountered as slipping away, as threatening to become out of reach”\textsuperscript{17}. Expanding on Ahmed’s work, I explore how the queer Muslim in Albanian and Bosnian cultural texts is not only represented as dangerous on his own but that he also has the potential of corrupting others, particularly those who do not fully conform to the desired European orientation. In this sense, these cultural texts not only produce European orientations through sexual orientations, but also seek to “rescue” queer subjects and set them on a straight path. While Queer theory has interrogated these processes queerly, it is important to note here that Queer theory itself has become complicit with the Europeanization discourse\textsuperscript{18}.

Thus, this chapter examines how post-Ottoman and post-socialist sexual orientations have become the markers of European orientations for the Balkans by deconstructing the representation and convergence of sexuality and Islam with notions of (straight) Europeanness. In the first part, I examine representations of queer Muslims in Albanian literature. I specifically look at how European orientations in contemporary Albanian literature are at times constructed against the queer Muslim as a renegade of the Ottoman past that continues to haunt the Albanian orientation towards Europe and at times, sympathetic narratives towards homosexuality are employed to advance Albania’s European progress and emancipation. In the second part, I look at the Bosnian film \textit{Go West} (2005) where the queer Muslim is employed as a victim of his Balkan Islamic and socialist pasts that can only be saved by escaping the Balkans and going West. In other words, the straightening of the queer Muslim becomes the European orientation for the entire nation.

**QUEER ISLAMIC PASTS AND EUROPEAN FUTURES IN ALBANIAN LITERATURE**

Published in 1986, \textit{The Black Year}\textsuperscript{19} is considered one of the most accomplished novels by Ismail Kadare. Set in 1913 Albania, a year after partition from the Ottoman Empire, the novel traces the arrival of a German prince appointed by European powers to rule Albania with an accompanied International Commission for Control to guarantee his reign. In the background, a Muslim uprising seeks to overthrow the foreign Christian prince in favour of an Ottoman Muslim one. The Muslim uprising is led by one of the main characters of the novel Kuz Baba, depicted as a ruthless, uncontrolled, hyper-sexualized Muslim, who in fighting to preserve Islam in Albania, is actually fighting to preserve his privilege to have access to men. Thus, in the midst of war that will decide the fate and future of Albania, Kuz Baba can’t be bothered with the politics of war but is instead consumed by grief and yearning for his murdered lover and a fresh found desire for the Dutch soldiers of the new
German prince, “So taken he is by thinking about boys that since he has seen
the Dutch he is obsessed with fetching one as a slave”\textsuperscript{20}. Kuz Baba’s violent,
vulgar, irrational and uncontrolled sexuality throughout the novel serves to
construct the character of Shestan, a beautiful, rational, heterosexual, naïve
soldier who along with his friends, decides to fight in favour of the German
Prince and therefore for the European future of Albania. Shestan’s early lack
of determination matures when he reads his first newspaper in Albanian and
comes across a picture of Albania depicted as “girl or a young woman lay-
ing on a hospital bed, surrounded by masked surgeons with knives and seiz-
ers in their hands”\textsuperscript{21}. Against a tableau of chaos and ambivalence, Shestan’s
deep felt sympathy towards the representation of Albania as a fragile woman
under threat by masked surgeons representing both the encroachments of
neighbouring states, as well as European powers to divide Albania, produces
him as the ideal male citizen. Kadare projects and parallels the chaos of an
infantile state with the infantile Shestan who is then structured and matured
through the Oedipus complex against Kuz Baba’s subject. For Shestan’s
sexuality to mature, Kuz Baba’s un-sublimated and un-sacrificial sexuality
cannot be oriented towards the advancement of the nation and as such can-
not represent the future but only a failed past. Shestan’s coming of age here
is employed to imply and register Albania’s coming of age and into hetero-
order, equated here with returning to, or rediscovering Europe.

In order to establish a semblance of order in an ambivalent time and space,
Kadare has to work against multiple sexual subjectivities that don’t always
conform to the homo-hetero binaries that he wants to introduce as a hetero-
ordering device. Kuz Baba is not simply a homosexual but represents an
entire homoerotic culture modelled after the Bejtexhi\textsuperscript{22} tradition that escapes
the homo-hetero binaries as well as the gendered male-female order. In this
case, Kadare’s depiction of the queerness of Bejtexhi homoerotics is not
reductive, albeit, he does mock its sentimentalities. For instance, Kuz Baba
claims that he was told by a certain dervish that “like women, dylbers\textsuperscript{23} must
be covered in hijabs to avoid scenes of jealous outbursts by their lovers should
someone look at them – such is desire – wherever it appears, the knife is not
too far”\textsuperscript{24}. The use of the term “dylber” and Kuz Baba’s style of stories and
songs are derived from Bejtexhi poets who addressed poems to their male
lovers in Ottoman Albanian language. The production of the homo-hetero
binaries through the ridicule of the Bejtexhi tradition in Kadare’s work is
manifold. The Bejtexhi poets, who mainly wrote in Ottoman Albanian using
the Arabic, Persian or Ottoman alphabet, addressed homoerotic themes that
are not compatible with the homo-hetero regime. They adopted cross-gend-
ered metaphors for themselves and their lovers while frequently equating
their love for their dylbers with their love for Islam\textsuperscript{25}. While Kadare exploits
the Bejtexhi tradition to legitimize his historical fiction, he uses irony to
banalize its homoerotic aesthetics. This is not accidental, as it appears at a critical juncture of orientations, both sexual and geopolitical. In *The European Identity of Albanians* for instance, Kadare explicitly states that the Bejtexhi poetry had “a hidden agenda to unman and morally weaken” the Albanian man, as “it needed no more than a few ‘boys’ and ‘fags’ of that sort for not freedom, but the very idea of freedom to disappear forever”\(^{26}\). National anxieties around queer sexualities in Albania, which Kadare frequently locates in various Islamic settings such as a Bektashi Tekke or a dervish, are not specific only to his writings. Contemporary Albanian literary works have frequently constructed the national male character against Islamic sexualities and subjectivities by valorizing his ability to overcome such temptations and re-orient himself towards Europe and hetero/homo binaries.

The contemporary cursory employment of Islamic sexualities in different modalities to locate the ideal Albanian heterosexual in relations to Europe emerges at a time when old anxieties around fractured and unfinished European orientations become subsumed in contemporary EU enlargement debates. These debates, reflected in the literary taste for “belonging to Europe” narratives, expose old and new contradictions of historical narratives in Albanian literature. For example, Ben Blushi one of the most popular authors in Albania in the 2010s, in *Othello, the Moor of Vlora*\(^ {27}\) (2008) employs the queer “foreign” Muslim to reinforce a totalizing narrative of heteronormative European belonging by taking the “before the Ottomans arrived” route. Set between 1300 and 1400, in pre-Ottoman Albania, *Othello, the Moor of Vlora*, recounts the fall of Vlora to the Ottomans through the personal story of Othello. Othello, an African slave, ends up in Albania having been purchased by a Venetian family whose patriarch takes him along on a trip to Vlora to visit his relatives. The family ties between a Venetian family and the ruling family of Vlora, as a re-occurring theme in the book, reinforce Albania’s historical relations with Europe before the Ottoman invasion. In Vlora, coming under suspicion for murder, Othello ends up in prison where he meets Hamit, a sly Muslim queer who seduces Othello and introduces him to homoerotic love. When Othello tries to seduce a new Albanian prisoner, Andrea, he resists engaging in anything more than just touching and pretends to be sleeping while Othello admires his body. Sexuality here is attributed to the racial and religious Other. While both Othello and Hamit are presented as feeble men who fall prey to their uncontrolled desires, Andrea’s heterosexuality is saved through his resolution to join the Albanian army and defend Vlora from the arriving Ottoman armies. In the text, Andrea’s resistance to sexual deviant behaviours and his preservation of heterosexual integrity is equated with his sacrifice for the nation. In the end, the Ottomans defeat the Albanians. Hamit who has now joined the Ottoman forces captures Andrea and out of resentment for Othello’s love towards Andrea, cuts Andrea’s head
off and paints it in oils and perfumes. This corporal disfigurement and subsequent feminization of Andrea’s head servers to remind the reader of failed Albanian heterosexuality in the face of Ottoman conquest. Only through the disintegration of his body however, and its subsequent feminization, could Hamit subdue Andrea’s heterosexual masculinity. The fall of Albania to Ottomans here registered in the disarticulation and feminization of Andrea’s body suggests that Albania’s temporary misalignment from Europe during the Ottoman rule did not and could not convert Albanians into Ottomans, as this could have only been attained through death.

Similarly, in To Live in an Island (2008), the character of Ali Tepelena, a semi-realistic depiction of the Ali Pash Tepelena, is styled as a queer despot who seduces young Christian men for his harem. His homoerotic sexuality is equated with Islam – as a foreign infliction in the body of the nation that cannot be purged but only assimilated. The main character Arianit Komneni reflects on how “Islam has been pushed onto our beds, our homes and our souls” and that “now we can’t kill this foreign beast as we will hurt ourselves [. . .] if we want to live in peace with it, we have to tame the wildness of the beast, feeding it with our Christian body and soul”. The foundational narrative of Albanian identity here emerges as a diluted, damaged and compromised hybrid of wild Islam penetrating the loving Christianity or, to use Bhabha’s concept, the establishment of a “third space of enunciation”. Here, Blushi, while destabilizing the boundaries of “us” and “them”, employs the Christian ethics of victimhood and sacrifice to suggest that, as Christ carries the burden of sin in being reborn free, so the Albanian man in being reborn as European must tame Islam and bring it under control. While Blushi operates through pre-Ottoman Christianity to establish the Europeanness of Albanians, he also acknowledges Islam’s inauspicious infiltration of the Albanian body providing somewhat more complexity, albeit still in the form of an Orientalist and fictionalized history. Kadare, on the other hand, denies the existence of an Islamic dimension of Albanian “Europeanness”, particularly because he believes that this definition of Albania’s European identity was preserved as preserved in northern Albanian Catholicism, which he conceives and utilizes as an orienting device towards the Balkans and Europe.

It is important to note here that the dialectical tensions around Islam, sexuality and belonging to Europe are not framed in opposition to homosexuality per se, but specifically Islamic “queer” sexualities. In Kadare’s Beauty Pageant for Men in the Accursed Mountains (1996), unlike Islamic sexualities, the Catholic Albanian homosexual is ontologized through ancient Greek mythology and rendered a victim-hero rather than a villain. The situation of Catholic homosexuality in the registry of ancient Greek and thereby European Albanian homosexuality serves as an ordering narrative that seeks to save the Albania heterosexual from Islam while introducing homo-hetero binaries as a
protection from the uncategorizable abjection. Situating the narrative in northern Catholic Albania, the hero of the novel, Gaspër Cara, is portrayed as a kind, emancipated citizen from the capital who suffers his homosexuality in silence. Gaspër Cara’s love for Prenk Curri, a confident highlander and suffering-in-silence desired heterosexual, is committed, stable and exclusive. In contrast to Kadare’s licentious queer Muslim characters who have multiple lovers and frequently abuse them, Gaspër’s love for Prenk, while homosexual and tragic, is still depicted as possible. It is also interesting to note that the construction of Gaspër Carra as a modern European homosexual is enacted through his dress “of the latest fashion” and his reading of Oscar Wilde’s *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*. The civilized look and behaviour enable him to engage with the rest of the local Europeanized intelligentsia who not only understand him but sympathize with his condition. The difference in the portrayal of Islamic and northern Albanian Catholic sexualities is therefore relational to European belonging. Carra is not projected as a threat, as his European homosexuality keeps heterosexuality intact and stable. Islamic sexualities, on the other hand, are projected as destabilizing, impossible and failed. Indeed, in an interview after his reception of the Man Booker Prize International, asked what he made of Lord Baryon’s account of “Greek love” among Albanians in the court of Ali Pasha Tepelena, Kadare replied that “what Byron saw had nothing to do with Ancient Greece, [. . .] It came with the Ottoman occupation and was paedophile, little boys”34. The desire to pathologize and discredit Ottoman Albania and by extension Islamic sexualities as failed and perverse serves as a reminder of the continued Albanian anxiety around the desired integrity of their European orientations. The introduction of the Catholic homosexual as a victim on the other hand, at a time when certain homosexual bodies are integrated into European citizenship, suggests that while Islamic sexualities cannot be fully expelled, they can be stabilized and assimilated into the homo-hetero binaries and renamed in the grammar of European sexualities. Indeed, in examining “complex entanglements of culture and politics involved in the processes of renaming” in chapter 3 in this volume, Milevska points out how renaming processes not only rely on “violence by signification” but also “shap[e] national, cultural and personal identities in the Balkans” between post-socialist Balkan societies and Europe. Europe then presents the possibility to redeem and escape past failed sexualities, renaming, straightening and administering their permission as a testament to tolerance and diversity. Going to Europe as a way of escaping the past coincides with European integration discourses built around “returning to Europe” as an escape from violent non-European pasts, particularly Islamic or socialist pasts. The temporality of these cultural productions, as Ćvorć points out in chapter 8 in this volume, reiterates European enlargement geopolitics by creating “a sense of historical inevitability about the ‘accession’ from centralised economies, conflict, and
leftovers of imperial rule (Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian and Soviet) towards deregulated markets, stability and European democracy”. Indeed, in the Bosnian film *Go West*, socialist and Islamic violent pasts merge to produce Europe as not just the desired, but the only possible destination.

**GO WEST**

*Go West* (2005) is the first and one of the most controversial gay-themed films made in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It tells the story of a gay couple during the conflict in 1992. Kenan, a Bosnian Muslim and his Serbian boyfriend Milan, take refuge in Milan’s Serb village where Kenan must cross-dress to pass as Milan’s fiancée. The film is typical of the post-war Balkan cinema where the negative stereotypes circulating in the West about the Balkans are appropriated in films at home. Films like *Before the Rain* (1994, dir. Milcho Manchevski), *Underground* (1995, dir. Emir Kusturica) and *Pretty Village, Pretty Flame* (1996, dir. Srdan Dragojevic) construct ahistorical discourses that deny the socialist past. The Balkans are portrayed as stuck in time with no clear distinction of the past and the present where the familiar narrative is one of perpetual conflict and ethnic and religious hatred. Working in similar linear narratives, representing the Balkans as the “in-between” space that divides Europe from the East yet belongs to neither, in *Go West* the gay couple is removed from this space of in-betweenness and situated outside the Balkans. Unlike the rest of the characters in the film, the gay couple is urban, they smoke marijuana and one of them plays the cello; they have arrived at modernity while their families and surroundings are projected as pre-modern, brutal and insane. The “semiotic modalities” of the film (visual image, sound, action, gestures, layout etc.) are rooted in the representation of the Balkans or Balkanism as “imputed ambiguity”. War, destruction, scenes of wailing, superstition, curses and blessings are present throughout the film to capture the wild Balkans, while the only sane people are the gay couple who are trying to “Go West” and Milan’s father, who has previously lived in the West. Thus early in the film, it becomes clear that those who have not been in touch with the West or do not emulate it are wild and barbaric and responsible for the war. All three characters observe the madness of the war around them in dismay and helplessness. The gay subjects here not only represent the West explicitly but also symbolize the West distantly observing the Yugoslav wars and denying to have anything to do with them. Yet for this narrative to work, any hint of Europeanness, including the socialist past, had to be negated in both the characters and the semiotic modalities of the film, by evoking a pre-socialist Balkans, just out of the Ottoman Empire but not fully in Europe.
To escape the conflict, the couple forges a marriage to obtain papers and move West. In the meantime however, Milan is called to serve in the Serb army. Kenan has to cross-dress daily to maintain his appearance as Milan’s wife among the suspicious locals. Although the post-conflict rhetoric “we all suffered equally” is used as a levelling device throughout the film, the more obvious representation of the character here is based on traditional Orientalist representations of the Muslim man as effeminate, neurotic and prone to emotional outbursts, all the while his Serbian boyfriend practises martial arts, always reasons and bears his sufferings in silence. Kenan lacks any agency and will to the point that when Ranka, a local Serbian woman from the village, discovers his secret, he gives in to her sexual demands. Having discovered their affair on a visit home, Milan returns to the front and dies.

In a study of representations of women in post-war Japanese film, Coats notes that post-war narratives on screen can retrospectively provide a powerful means to re-imagine past conflicts in terms suitable to current national identifications. From this angle, Go West is both a film about a past and present war in that the sympathetic identification with the gay characters is employed against both past and present. The main protagonist, Kenan Distar, notes “there is war in my country. Serbs, who are Christian Orthodox hate the Muslims. Muslims who are Muslim, don’t like the Serbs . . . while the war may finish one day . . . they will all still hate homosexuals, as in the Balkans, it is easier to have a slayer in the family than a faggot”. The representation of homophobia in the Balkans as timeless and innate suggests another war, a civilizational one, where gays come to represent the desire to Go West, whereas the unification with Europe is only possible through the Balkans coming out of the Islamic and socialist closet. By anchoring gay characters to the West, their victimization then functions as a hidden desire of all other Bosnians who want to be European. Yet, while Europe may claim certain gays, it is not ready for the rest of the society.

The projection of the homosexual characters as not of the Balkans but foreign to it poses the question of why gays are frequently rendered more modern than others in the peripheries? The politics of time and “who has arrived in modernity and who has not?”, as Butler argues, are “all raised in the midst of very serious political contestations”.

Is because, as Massad argues, sexuality is “a product of specific Euro-American histories and social formations” and therefore “not universal or necessarily universalizable”, or is it because the West has “nationalized gayness” by perpetuating a homonormative approach to subjectivity and belonging? Indeed, the Serbian film Parada (2011), arranged around former war enemies uniting to protect the gay pride in Belgrade, suggests that gay rights may be a particularly effective point of post-conflict inter-ethnic dialogue and solidarity in moving towards Europe. The invitation to belong in Europe through the gay parade then
centres the queer rights discourse as the terrain where anxieties over Europeanization take place, leaving the Balkans in effect homophobic.

In the last scene, Kenan is being interviewed by the French actress Jeanne Moreau somewhere in Western Europe in 1993. “That’s all” he says. “I no longer have a house, a cello, a country, I lost my family and I lost Milan... I am only left with my music.” Kenan then goes on to play an imaginary cello while on the screen we see Bosnian graves. Back in the studio Moreau says, “I am sorry but I don’t know what to say”. Kenan replies by saying “you should say I should play louder”. The affect and identification of viewers with Kenan is meant to induce a problem-solution imperative with the viewer, where the solution for the Balkan ambiguity is Europe. There are no other imaginable alternatives for the post-socialist, post-conflict and post-traumatic disorder of the Balkans but Europe. The credits roll with the song Go West by the famous Bosnian composer Enes Bure Zlatar: “I am powerless. . . . I’ll go with sunset . . . Go West. I’ll go with sunset, Go West”.

CONCLUSION

The intersection of sexuality and Islam, discussed in this chapter as orientation points in the construction of European identity for the Muslims in the Balkans, is guided by a hegemonic desire to “clean” themselves from their Islamic pasts in favour of histories that support totalizing narratives of Europeanness. El-Tayeb for instances notes how “those perceived as non-European constantly have to prove that their presence is legitimate, for there is no space within Europe that they can claim as their own, in which their status of belonging is undisputed”\(^41\). In this context, the confluence of sexual orientation and European orientation in Albanian and Bosnian literature and film has been complex, contradictory and corrective. By corrective, I mean the desire to write a totalizing history in such a manner that the destabilizing subjectivities and lived experiences that fail to conform to the European oriented politics of local elites are at times rendered invisible or attacked as Oriental renegades of Ottomanism and Islam.

As questions around Muslim integration inside the European Union are framed around coexistence, in Bosnia and Kosovo they have been framed in terms of orientations towards Europe; both concepts suggesting incompatibility, distance, failure and perhaps impossibility. While the idea of coexistence suggests that Muslims are, as Asad argues, “external to the essence of Europe” so that “coexistence’ can be envisaged between ‘us’ and ‘them’”\(^42\), “orientation” towards the European Union raises the question of alternative orientations. Reinforcing the idea of a European orientation suggests that there is an alternative, a possibility, a desire among these populations against which European orientation is enforced. In other words, against which other
futures are the Muslims in the Balkans being directed towards the EUropean future? As European enlargement presents itself as an unmarked category, as the self-evident and only possible orientation for the Balkans, the queer Muslim is employed to stabilize Balkan anxieties about belonging in Europe and discipline its disoriented bodies. Thus, if in the Bosnian film Go West, the queer Muslim can only be liberated by escaping to Europe, which produces Europe as a safe space free of homophobia and the centre of progress, in recent Albanian literature, the queer Muslim is employed in the production of the “European” Albanian heteronormative homosexual or heterosexual. I therefore argue that these fictional accounts of Islamic sexualities are not only traded in the post-colonial and post-modern market place, always in need for new Others that can be co-opted and incorporated, they also allegorize the anxieties of the Islamic self as an unfinished queer self that fails to follow European orientations.

NOTES

6. While the term “Islamic sexualities” is used here to illustrate the specific construction of Orientalist Muslim male sexuality, this is by no means an endorsement of the frequently used, generalized term “Islamic sexualities”. For more on this subject, see Félix Boggio Éwanjé-Épée and Stella Magliani-Belkacem, “The Empire of Sexuality: An Interview with Joseph Massad,” Jadaliyya, March 5, 2013, available at http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/10461/the-empire-of-sexuality_an-interview-with-joseph-m, and Joseph A. Massad, Islam in Liberalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).
7. What I want to complicate here is the understanding that secularism is a universal and neutral norm, and not a by-product of Christian teleology of rights, governance and temporality and its compromise with modernity and secularism.


12. For more on this issue, see: “Preliminary Provisions for Agrarian Reform” (February 25, 1919); “The Decree on the Colonization of the Southern Regions” (September 24, 1920); “The Law on the Colonization of Southern Regions” (June 11, 1931); “The Law on Regulation of Agrarian Relations in the Former Regions of Southern Serbia and Montenegro” (December 1931); and “The Law on Settlement Southern Regions” (December 15, 1921). See, for instance, Vladan Jovanović, *Jugoslovenska država i Južna Srbija, 1918–1929: Makedonija, Sandžak, Kosovo i Metohija u Kraljevini SHS* (Beograd: INIS, 2002).


17. Ibid., 566.


20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 476.


23. In colloquial Albanian, *dylber* refers to an attractive male who uses his beauty to seduce other men. See, for instance, Gjergj Filipaj, “Masculinity Representation in Kosovo Television Media” (Prish蒂na: Qendra Kosovare për Studime Gjinore [Kosovar Center for Gender Studies], 2009), 44.

24. Kadare, *Viti i mbrapsh të*, 436.

25. See, for instance, one of the most noted Albanian Bejtexhi poets, Nazim (Frakulla) Berati, who in the late 18th century, writes to his *dylber*: “I am Ferhad, you
are Shirin, You’re a falcon, I’m a rock dove, I am Muslim, you are Islam, I’m the faithful, you are imam” (Muhamet Kycuku dhe Nezim Frakulla. Erveheja dhe vjersha të tjera, Albanian National Library, inventory Nr.000000486/drs.1.f.3, 1824, 127). For more on Nezim Berati, see Genciana Abazi-Egro, Divani shqip (Tiranë: Botimet Toena), 2009.


27. Ben Blushi, Otello arapi i vlorës (Tiranë: Toena, 2008).


30. Blushi, Të jetosh në ishull, 403.

31. See, for instance, Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994), 37.

32. In Kadare’s works of both literature and literary criticism, the Catholic Albanian North represents a space not fully contaminated by the Ottoman Empire and fanatically engaged in preserving “Albanianess” in the ancient Greek tradition, and therefore proto-European. For more on Kadare’s use of Greek mythology, see Morgan, “Greek Civilization,” 16–23. See also Kadare, European Identity of Albanians.


35. Imamović, Ahmed, and Enver Pusca, Go West, directed by Ahmed Imamović (Charlottesville, VA: Water Bearer Films, 2008), DVD.


37. Todorova, Imagining the Balkans, 17.


40. See, for instance, Éwanjé-Épée and Magliani-Belkacem, “The Empire of Sexuality”.

41. El-tayeb, European Others.


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