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On the Margins: Representations of Sexual Minorities in Lithuanian Press (2000-01)

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojami seksualinių mažumų vaizdiniai Lietuvos spaudoje 2000 sausio - 2001 birželio laikotarpiu. Teigdamas, kad žiniasklaidos vaidmuo vaizduojant seksualines mažumas yra itin svarbus, autorius mėgina atsakyti į klausimą, ar Lietuvos spauda paverčia homoseksualumo ir homoseksualių žmonių problemas rimtos viešos diskusijos ir viešo diskurso dalimi. Pagrindinių dienraščių analizė įrodo, kad seksualinės mažumos išlieka labai sunki ir jautri tema. Dėl to homoseksualumas dažnai pateikiamas kaip skandalas, o homoseksualistai kaip pasaulis, nepažįstamas masinei auditorijai. Naujienos apie homoseksualistus dažniausiai trivializuojamos. Straipsnio gale siekiama surasti būdų, kaip pakeisti spaudoje vyraujančią vaizdavimo režimą ir pateikti visapusiškesnę seksualinių mažumų gyvenimo perspektyvą.

Introduction

The mass media play a critical role in the construction of representations of the sexual minorities. Media texts that deal with the issue of homosexuality help to shape the way the Lithuanian public thinks about homosexual people. Media representation not only reflects but also produces group understandings, status hierarchies, resistances, and conflicts that exist in the culture. Hence, the contribution of the mass media to the daily discourse about homosexuality in Michelle A. Wolf and Alfred P. Kielwasser's words, can either exacerbate or attenuate phobic and heterosexist definitions of human sexuality, reinforcing the necessity for more programmatic research in the area.¹

Research on the portrayals of sexual minorities in mass media, however, is non-existent in Lithuania. The construction and functioning of the representations of homosexuals in the mass media have not been subjected to intensive academic scrutiny. The reasons are two-fold. First of all, the subject of sexual minorities and of sexuality in general is considered trivial and unimportant. Secondly, mass media studies in Lithuania are at their most rudimentary stage. Therefore, this work focusing both on sexual minorities and mass media is one of the first on the topic in Lithuania.

In this article, **I will focus on** the images of sexual minorities displayed by the Lithuanian press

during the period of January, 2000- June, 2001. I will describe how the topic of homosexuality has been presented, what the modes of discourse have been, and on what regimes of representation the Lithuanian press has been drawing when it has represented gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender.

Representation and the Public Sphere: Some Methodological Notes

Before 1989, homosexuality was a completely taboo subject, to be spoken about in only the most reluctant way. The situation changed after Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990. With the advent of a new press and television, the problem of homosexuality, and sexuality in general, came to be discussed publicly. However, independent Lithuania inherited the Soviet prejudice on homosexuality. Despite the existence of constitutional guarantees of equality and privacy, the infamous article of the Penal Code (122 BK) against consensual sex between adult men was repealed only in 1993. Lithuania was the last among the three Baltic countries to abolish penalties for homosexual acts.²

From 1995 onwards coverage of sexual minorities in the mass media increased significantly due to a higher visibility of Lithuanian gay activists. The

first gay organization, the Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) was publicly registered in 1995. It remains the most important and active advocacy group for sexual minorities in Lithuania. The group publishes a newsletter entitled "LGL žinios" [LGL News] and runs a website and telephone hotline. Beside the Lithuanian Gay League, currently, there exist two other gay and lesbian organizations, SAPPHO (Lithuanian Lesbian League) and KASLO (Movement for Sexual Equality of the Kaunas County), in Lithuania.

In this article, I will examine four mainstream Lithuanian dailies *Lietuvos Rytas* (The Morning of Lithuania, the biggest mainstream daily), *Respublika* (The Republic, the second biggest newspaper), *Lietuvos žinios* (Lithuanian News, tabloid) and *Vakaro žinios* (The Evening News, the most popular tabloid). To analyze the discourses and language embedded within media representations of sexual minorities, I will combine the traditional methods of content analysis with the methods of discourse analysis and cultural studies. Thus, I will not only quantify the presence or absence of sexual minorities and access their characterizations in press content but also focus on closer rhetorical and discursive analysis of images associated with sexual minorities.

To analyze discourses about homosexuality does not mean to examine their literal content. It means, above all, to analyze the ways discourses are used. How is discourse involved in the reproduction of representations of minorities? What beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, norms and values underlie the media rhetoric? The works of Stuart Hall, Teun A. van Dijk and Simon Cottle, which emphasize the discursive nature of media representations, are particularly instructive in this regard.³ Media rhetoric and discourses will be analyzed to facilitate hypotheses about how the representations of sexual minorities are constructed and disseminated in the press, what may be learned from them and what behavioral orientations they may implicate.

It is necessary to emphasize the relations between knowledge, discourse, representations and power. The question of power is of crucial importance. A discursive form of power operates through culture, the production of knowledge, imagery and representation. Discussing the mechanics of symbolic power, Stuart Hall has pointed out that

... the circle of dominant ideas does not accumulate the symbolic power to map or classify the world for others; its classifications do acquire not only the constraining power of dominance over other modes of thought but also the inertial authority of habit and instinct. It becomes the horizon of the taken-for-granted: what the world is and how it works for all practical purposes.⁴

The mass media is also implicated, according to Simon Cottle, "in the public representation of unequal social relations and the play of cultural power."⁵

Cultural and sexual images in mass media are intricately linked to the concept of the public sphere that refers to the practice of open discussion about matters of common public concern in civil society.⁶ Regarding the public sphere as a political space that could help challenge and regulate public authorities, Habermas emphasized face-to-face communication, rational discourse, and a single public arena. Contemporary theorists, however, argue that civil society consists of multiple, interconnected and often competing public spheres. Maintained by communications media, these public spheres support many different (but overlapping) communities of discourse.⁷ This conception of civil society privileges the dialogical openness and inclusiveness of the public sphere and its responsiveness to inequality and difference.

Peter Dahlgren argued that the dimension of representation in the public sphere "points to such basic questions as what should be selected for portrayal and how should it be presented."⁸ In other words, what should or should not be portrayed or represented about lesbians and gay men in the mass media? Which and how many representations of sexual minorities should be permitted in the Lithuanian mass media?

The question of visibility has always been crucial for all minority groups since visibility and inclusion can translate their views and concerns into issues of public interest. By gaining publicity in the mass media one can gain access to the sites of public policy formation and agenda-setting.

My analysis of the representations of sexual minorities therefore attempts to determine whether the Lithuanian press provides an inclusive and pluralistic public sphere for the rational communication and debate and whether it makes the issues of homosexuality and homosexual people a part of the public agenda.

Representing Difference: Sexual Minorities and the Lithuanian Press

During the period of January, 2000- June, 2001, I sampled a total of 119 news stories and reports about homosexuality and homosexuals in the Lithuanian dailies. Most of them appeared in *Vakaro žinios* (44) a tabloid immensely popular in Lithuania. *Lietuvos rytas* was not far behind (38 articles), *Respublika* published 21 news report and article, and *Lietuvos žinios*, 16.

Although homosexuality is no longer invisible in the Lithuanian press, it remains a topic that journalists are reluctant to report on. Much of the reporting is recycled and repetitive. The Lithuanian press is particularly fond of Western gay celebrity profiles (of Elton John or Ellen Degeneres, for instance), which appear periodically on the pages of the dailies. Rarely does the Lithuanian press cover the stories of ordinary homosexuals. This demonstrates that lives of homosexual people are commonly presented as entertainment news and not as an ordinary topic requiring attention and diligence.

The Lithuanian newspapers frame stories about sexual minorities in terms of controversy, violence and deviance. "The Retarded Person Becomes a Victim of the Homosexual Retiree;" "Minors and Gays?"⁹, ["A [Former Parliament Member] Alešionka is Sinking in a Sex Scandal" and "The Dep-raver of Kaunas Boys has been Released from Jail"¹⁰ claim the headlines.¹¹ These headlines point to the fact that the problem of sexual minorities is still considered a moral and not a civic issue in Lithuania.

Since homosexuality is held to be an unnatural practice unacceptable to most people, some articles suggest that gays and lesbians seek to recruit children. Unfortunate incidents of pedophilia create an amorphous panic expressed in the press ("Predatory old men perverting boys"; thus, frequently, being gay equals being a pedophile).¹² Associating homosexuals with a perverted interest in children, the Lithuanian press contributes to the mobilization of anti-gay sentiments. Consequently, homosexuals cannot be trusted with children who should be protected from homosexual propaganda. The repeated labeling of male homosexuals as pedophiles and pederasts serves to underline a pathological character of homosexuality and to incite fears and anxieties in the reader.¹³

By focusing on sex and sexuality and amplifying sexual decadence and perversion, the Lithuanian press defines what being gay involves. Inevitably, the issue of sexual minorities has transformed the debates about sexual morality and crimes. Even one of the most heinous murders of a rich Lithuanian priest and art collector Ričardas Mikutavičius in 2000 was linked a "gay ring."¹⁴ Writing about a Vilnius gay dance club, the author quotes an anonymous heterosexual woman who states: "Generally [this club] is a nest of whores.' According to her, it is extremely popular among homosexuals to change partners frequently."¹⁵ The daily *Respublika* reported that on May 23, 2000, the union of Lithuanian national youth "Young Lithuania" demonstrated in front of the Parliament "against sexual depravity and homosexuals." Hence, homosexuals and depravity are inseparable.¹⁶

The issue of family as central to the reproduction of society and social order features in debates about homosexuality and the regulation of gay, lesbian, and transgender practices and representations. Many Lithuanian moralists and conservatives seek to prevent media representations of the kind that explore sexualities of a non-traditional, non-heterosexual, type, as a way of reinforcing a 'family values' morality.¹⁷

Homosexuality is often discussed in the context of the Catholic Church. Newspaper articles present the Church as a defender of morality and family values, contrasting it with "deviant" and "unacceptable" homosexuals. Christian morals are juxtaposed with the bacchanalia and festivity of gays in the same sentence, as in *Lietuvos rytas*:

For one week, the global center of Catholicism will become the capital of sexual minorities. A stream of pilgrims traveling to Rome to pray will encounter the mass parades of gays, transsexuals and lesbians. The posters of pilgrims with the greetings to the Pope will intermingle with the rubber penises, and men kissing passionately will loom amongst black dresses of the clergy ...

To emphasize the contrast, the author describes the official position of the Church on the issue of sexual minorities: "The Pope called the parade of gays, lesbians and transvestites an insult to the Christian values..."; "homosexuality is a bleeding moral wound;" "the biggest sin after murder is ho-

mosexuality...” “... homosexual acts contradict moral norms.”¹⁸ The very rhetoric using contrast and hyperbole points to an attempt to show gay and lesbian lives and lifestyles as an “aberration and immorality.”

“Not Everyone Agrees with the Legalization of Gay Marriage,” claimed Lietuvos rytas in the report on the Movement of Young National Democrats. Representatives of the movement were concerned about the young Lithuanian liberals’ support for the legalization of gay marriage. The newspaper wrote that the Movement of Young National Democrats regarded gay marriage as the “destruction of traditional and healthy family and as a complete obliteration of traditions, which [was] a direct annihilation of the foundations of the nation.”¹⁹ A similar incident was described by the Lithuanian press in June, 2000. Then two organizations, the aforementioned Movement of Young National Democrats and the Organization of Lithuanian National Youth, called “The Young Generation,” appealed to the Lithuanian government demanding to start a national policy to increase the birth rate in the country, to prohibit abortions, “free sex,” corrupt publications, gay organizations and their publications, all striptease bars and clubs. The Lithuanian Gay League protested this appeal and promised to go to court if any of the demands of the ultranationalists were accepted.²⁰

The Lithuanian press often invokes the concepts of the normal and the normative to provide an opposition to what is allegedly abnormal and deviant. It is obvious to a reader that homosexuality represents the latter side of this opposition. News about sexual minorities often revolve around exotic and exaggerated sides of their life such as gay pride parades, Mardi Gras and other gay festivities.²¹ Showing extreme images of lesbian and gay life – cross-dressers and naked shaven-headed gays; men wearing dog-collars and leads, — the Lithuanian press is doing society a disservice by distancing gay people from the rest of society. There have been no news reports or articles about the complexity of people’s experiences being gay, bisexual or transgender.

In treating gay people, the Lithuanian press commonly conflates sexuality and gender roles. It is often assumed that homosexual males are effeminate, and lesbians are tough. In the aforementioned

story about a former member of the Lithuanian parliament, the author quoted his colleague who stated that Mr. Alesionka “stood out amongst others for his tenderness and the exceptional gestures of his hands.”²² In the report on Russian show business, the author argued that “even before [Russian singer] Alegrova’s features were strange. One could notice her masculine behavior and vulgar outfits resembling those of a prostitute.”²³ In the article on two Lithuanian lesbians entitled “A Lesbian Couple Went to Court to Fight for Their Right to Live Peacefully” the author wrote: “... on the street lesbians recognize each other by their masculine attire and appearance and by a peculiar glance. It is easier to recognize gay men from their feminine manners, their gentle voice, more original and colorful clothes...”²⁴ It can be inferred from the above excerpts that gay people can be easily recognized by certain mannerisms, speech and behavior. Both types, the “queen” and the “dyke,” are represented as if their sexuality means that they are in between the two genders of female and male. Thus lesbians are manish, gays effeminate. The effeminate, handbag-waving “pansy” makes frequent appearances in Lithuanian sitcoms.²⁵ Touch lesbian characters are much less visible. Both types, however, are seen as pathetic, ridiculous and comic figures. Thus, by presenting sexual minorities in this way, the Lithuanian mass media supports the system of the rigid gender roles.

The Lithuanian tabloid press, first of all *Vakaro žinios*, has been involved in compulsory public outings of celebrities. “They Are Called Gays” headlined *Vakaro žinios*, the most popular Lithuanian tabloid.²⁶ Exploiting highly visible personalities, this newspaper has outed Lithuanian celebrities arguing that “accusing society of a negative attitude towards them, gays separate themselves from the others and are reluctant to speak publicly about their sexual orientation.”²⁷ All the articles, however, have been used to humiliate Lithuanian celebrities and to create a scandal. The use of homosexuality as a political tool continues to be effective while homophobia remains deeply entrenched in the Lithuanian society and mass media.

Another pervasive trend in the rhetoric about homosexuals and homosexuality is allegations that the very active homosexual lobby in Lithuania is connected to and financed by international gay lob-

by. Some articles made references to the 'powerful homosexual lobby' and 'gay publicity machine' involved in pro-gay propaganda. "The Blue Mafia,"²⁸ "Priests and Seminary Students Acknowledge the Existence of Gay Clans in Seminaries"²⁹ claimed the headlines. It has also been alleged that influential homosexuals are doing favors for each other. The Movement of Young National Democrats insisted that Lithuanian liberals cooperated with the international homosexual lobby. The Liberals' effort to legalize gay marriage was the "result of an influential and latent homosexual lobby."³⁰ Implying the existence of a kind of global gay conspiracy, reactionary radicals denied the idea that homosexuals are an oppressed minority.

There have been far fewer instances of positive coverage. An extensive coverage of the legalization of gay marriage in Holland is one such example.³¹ The 2001 international gay forum in Vilnius has also been described comprehensively.³² Foreign news are usually copied from foreign publications and presented in a sensitive and comprehensive way.³³ *Vakaro žinios* ran a series of articles on homosexuality and homosexuals that described the legal, psychological and societal aspects of being gay.³⁴

Conclusion: Towards a New Politics of Representation

The Lithuanian press does not present a uniform conception of the issue of sexual minorities. Sexual minorities remain a difficult topic and an extremely sensitive issue since it deals with societal values, norms and sexuality. Therefore, homosexuality is frequently described as a scandal, and homosexuals are still portrayed as an underworld unfamiliar to mass population.

As I have demonstrated, homosexuality is still strongly associated with sexual promiscuity and deviance. Although there is little violently abusive terminology in Lithuanian newspapers, the trend is to ridicule and diminish homosexuals (such as in the headline "Lithuanian Gays will Prance to Vienna"³⁵).

As we have seen, the Lithuanian press has been very slow to validate news about gay issues. Serious representations of homosexuals as minorities were infrequent. Gay events and opinions covered in the papers were overwhelmingly triviali-

zed (for instance, "G. Garbo Blackmailed her Lover," "Robin Hood was Supposedly Gay"³⁶).

It is not surprising, then, that a substantial majority of Lithuanians hold very negative views of gays and lesbians. An opinion poll showed that in 1999 78.2% of Lithuanians did not tolerate homosexuality. Only 67.8 of respondents would want to live with homosexual neighbors, while 87.5% would rather live with drug-addicts.³⁷ It is one of the lowest levels of acceptance of homosexuals in Europe. After a virtual chat of the Lithuanian public with the founder of a gay club Men's Factory Aleksei Terentiev, there arose an intense discussion about Lithuanian gays. Responses of most writers revealed that the majority of the population did not tolerate gays. "People suggested that gays should move to the Moon." *Vakaro žinios* concluded that "Most Lithuanian Hate Gays."³⁸

It is symptomatic that when asked whether the Lithuanian mass media adequately, objectively, and comprehensively cover the life of Lithuanian and foreign gays and lesbians, 84% of respondents who identified themselves as gay or bisexual responded negatively.³⁹

It can be argued that representations, though primarily discursive, have real material consequences. In other words, negative representations delimit what people belonging to a minority can be in any given society. According to Marguerite J. Moritz,

When the news media – and I use this term to refer to the quality press – represent a topic with which the mass audience may have limited personal experience, and homosexuality no doubt is in that category, the message is particularly potent because many audience members have no way of independently or critically judging the validity of the news account and the many messages it may carry.⁴⁰

The mass media industries mediating different cultural meanings, values and tastes increasingly help to set the rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed. Hence, the issue of representational practices acquires an immense significance. For sexual minorities a struggle for fair and equitable representations is a question of getting new terms established to describe who they are.

How can a dominant regime of representation in the Lithuania press be challenged, contested or changed? What are the counter-strategies that can begin to subvert the current representational process?

Since the representations of sexual minorities have been both insufficient and considered trivial, sexual minorities should aim at both their quantitative and qualitative representations in the press. To correct the prejudices and misrepresentations offered by the mainstream Lithuanian press, one needs to develop alternative interpretations of homosexuality. However, to move towards non-phobic representations of lesbians and gays, it is necessary to struggle for legitimate, affirming, non-phobic inclusion of lesbians and gay men in the public sphere.

A many-sided discussion in mass media on the issues of sexual minorities should be launched. By challenging many of the media's representational practices, we can come to terms with the dehumanizing language of othering and exclusion and contribute to a gradual change of prevailing cultural models and popular media representations of minority groups. It is only by reexamining and questioning our own prejudices that we can overcome dominant ways of constructing sexual minorities and can reverse the pernicious impact of stereotypical representations on the

knowledge and behavior of Lithuanian society.

To fight the exclusion and symbolic disadvantage of sexual minorities, we need to promote a politics of recognition that allows space for representational diversity and encourages more complex and sophisticated representations of minority communities. There is therefore a strong educational and moral case for including the neglected or distorted experiences of sexual minorities into the media narratives of a multi-cultural citizenship. In Iris Young's words, "no persons, actions or aspects of a person's life should be forced into privacy; and (b) no social institutions or practices should be excluded a priori from being a proper subject for public discussions and expression."⁴¹

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NOTES

¹ Michelle A. Wolf, Alfred P. Kielwasser, "Introduction: The Body Electric – Human Sexuality and Mass Media," in Michelle A. Wolf, Alfred P. Kielwasser, *Gay People, Sex and the Media* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 1991), p. 15-16.

² See Eduardas Platovas, "Advocacy for Gays and Lesbians in Lithuania," in the official website of the Lithuanian Gay League www.gay.lt, 2000.

³ See Simon Cottle, *Ethnic Minorities and the Media* (Philadelphia: Open UP, 2000); Stuart Hall, ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); Teun A. van Dijk, *Racism and the Press* (London: Routledge, 1991) and his *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (London: Sage, 1997).

⁴ Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism amongst the Theorists," in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg, ed., *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 44.

⁵ Simon Cottle, "Introduction: Media Research and Ethnic Minorities: Mapping the Field," in Simon Cottle, op. cit., p. 2.

⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT P, 1996).

⁷ See C. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992). Also see Joan B. Landes, *Feminism, the Public and the Private* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998).

⁸ Peter Dahlgren, *Television and the Public Sphere: Citizenship, Democracy and the Media* (London: Sage Publications,

1995), p. 15.

⁹ Lietuvos žinios, May 23, 2001. It is a story about the 14 and 15 year olds who sexually assaulted an 11-year-old boy.

¹⁰ Jadvyga Karaliūnienė, "Kauno berniukų tvirkintojas - jau laisvėje," Lietuvos rytas, December 7, 2000.

¹¹ Arturas Navickas, "Homoseksualaus pensininko auka – silpnaprotytis" Lietuvos rytas, February 3, 1999; Lina Valantinienė, "L. Alesionka klimpsta į sekso skandalą," Vakarų žinios, May 30, 2001.

¹² The most publicized pedophile scandal shook Latvia in 2000. The Lithuanian press covered it extensively. See Valdis Girgenonsonas, "Latvijos prokuratūra nepanoro įrodinėti savo kaltinimų" [The Public Prosecutor's Office of Latvia was Reluctant to Carry on with its Accusations] Lietuvos rytas, December 4, 2000. Also see the case of a Lithuanian pedophile, Jadvyga Karaliūnienė, "Kauno berniukų tvirkintojas - jau laisvėje" (The Depraver of Kaunas Boys has been Released from Jail) Lietuvos rytas, December 7, 2000.

¹³ The article on the Social democrat and doctor Alesionka focuses on the accusations of his improper behavior with his patient boys. Lina Valantinienė, "L. Alesionka klimpsta į sekso skandalą," Vakarų žinios, May 30, 2001. See also Lietuvos žinios, "A Sex Scandal Erupted in Anykščiai" May 29, 2001.

¹⁴ Arvydas Dargis, "Kunigo lemtis – mirčių ir mistikos grandinėje" [The Fate of the Priest in the Chain of Deaths and Mysticism], Lietuvos rytas, December 23, 2000.

¹⁵ Algis Masys, "Lietuvos gėjų klubus pamėgo heteroseksualai" [Heterosexuals Came to Like Lithuanian gay clubs], Va-

karo žinios, March 16, 2001.

¹⁶ Respublika, May 23, 2000.

¹⁷ The pornography debates, which have been continuing for almost a decade, show that sexuality and its representations still haunt politicians and activists on the right. See Milda Augustinaitė, "Pornografija prieš demokratiją" (Pornography against Democracy), Veidas, nr. 31, August 5, 1999, p. 14.

¹⁸ "Šventąjį miestą drebina dviejų pasaulėžiūrų karas" [The Holy City is Torn by the War Between World-Views], Lietuvos rytas, July 17, 2000.

¹⁹ "Gėjų santuokų įteisinimui pritaria ne visi" [Not Everyone Agrees with the Legalization of Gay Marriage], Lietuvos rytas, November 7, 2000.

²⁰ "Lietuvos gėjai nuo jaunųjų radikalų ginsis teismuose" [Lithuanian Gays will Defend Themselves from the Young Radicals in Courts], Lietuvos rytas, June 7, 2000.

²¹ "Gražuoliai transvestitai" [Beautiful Transvestites], Vakarų žinios, April 2, 2001; "Mardi Gras in Sidney," Lietuvos rytas, March 10, 2001; "Vilniuje vyks tarptautinis gėjų forumas" [An International Gay Forum will take place in Vilnius], Vakarų žinios, May 24, 2001.

²² Lina Valantinienė, "L. Alesionka klimpsta į sekso skandalą," Vakarų žinios, May 30, 2001.

²³ Saulius Petraška, "Rusijos šou verslą užgrobė lesbietės" [Russian Show Business has been Occupied by Lesbians], Vakarų žinios, January 11, 2001.

²⁴ "Lesbiečių pora dėl teisės ramiai gyventi kovėsi teisme," Lietuvos rytas, August 26, 2000.

²⁵ The most notable sitcoms are Kaimynai [The Neighbors], Tegyvuoja karalius [Long Live the King], and Šapranausko šou [Šapranauskas's Show].

²⁶ The series of articles "They are Called Gays" outing the famous Lithuanian men ran in Vakarų žinios from January 4 to January 20, 2000.

²⁷ "Gėjai išeina į dienos šviesą" [Gays are Coming out to the Daylight], Vakarų žinios, January 21, 2000.

²⁸ Tadas Mekas, "žydroji mafija" [The Blue Mafia], Vakarų žinios, January 3, 2000.

²⁹ "Kunigai ir klierikai pripažįsta egzistuojant seminarijose

gėjų klanus" [Priests and Seminary Students Acknowledge the Existence of Gay Clans in Seminaries], Respublika, February 26, 2000.

³⁰ "Gėjų santuokų įteisinimui pritaria ne visi" [Not Everyone Agrees with the Legalization of Gay Marriage], Lietuvos rytas, November 7, 2000.

³¹ "Amsterdamė – homoseksualistų triumfas" [A Triumph of Homosexuals in Amsterdam], Vakarų žinios, April 2, 2001.

³² Sigita Nemeikaitė, "Menininkė dairosi ir į Vilniaus gėjus" [An Artist is also Looking at Vilnius Gays], Lietuvos rytas, June 1, 2001; "Vilniuje vyks tarptautinis gėjų forumas" [An International Gay Forum will take place in Vilnius], Vakarų žinios, May 24, 2001.

³³ "Gėjų ir lesbiečių slėpynės artėja prie pabaigos: netradicinė seksualinė orientacija Vakarų pasaulyje vis mažiau turi įtakos karjerai" [Gays and Lesbians' Being in the Closet is Approaching the End: A Non traditional Sexual Orientation in the Western World has less and less Influence on Careers], Lietuvos rytas, June 23, 2001.

³⁴ Stasys Dimbelis, "Stereotipų amžius" [The Century of Stereotypes] Vakarų žinios, February 14, 2000; and February 15, 2000. Stasys Dimbelis, "Gėjus ne keiksmažodis" ['Gay' is not a Swearword], Vakarų žinios, February 9, 2000.

³⁵ "Lietuvos gėjai dums į Vieną" (about "Europride 2001" in Vienna), Lietuvos žinios, June 13, 2001.

³⁶ "G. Garbo šantažavo meiluzę" Respublika, April 11, 2000.

³⁷ "Teigiama, kad R[obin] Hudas buvo gėjus" Lietuvos rytas, July 12, 1999.

³⁸ "Baltijos tyrimai," January 8, 2001. LGL žinios, 2001, no. 1 (9): 7.

³⁹ "Dauguma lietuvių nekenčia gėjų" [Most Lithuanian Hate Gays] Vakarų žinios, May 26, 2001.

⁴⁰ Information taken from www.gay.lt, 2001.

⁴¹ Marguerite J. Moritz, "How US News Media Represent Sexual Minorities," in Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks, ed., Journalism and Popular Culture (London: Sage Publications, 1992), p. 157.

⁴² Iris Marion Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1990), p. 120.

Summary

This article analyzes the images of sexual minorities in the Lithuanian press during the period of January, 2000- June, 2001. Arguing that the mass media play a critical role in the construction of representations of the sexual minorities, the author attempts to determine whether the Lithuanian press makes the issues of homosexuality and homosexual people a part of the public agenda. The analysis demonstrates that sexual minorities remain a difficult topic and an extremely sensitive issue in Lithuania. Homosexuality is frequently described as

a scandal, and homosexuals are still portrayed as an underworld unfamiliar to mass population.

At the end of the article, the author concludes that to correct the prejudices and misrepresentations offered by the mainstream Lithuanian press, one needs to develop alternative interpretations of homosexuality. However, to move towards non-phobic representations of lesbians and gays, it is necessary to struggle for legitimate, affirming, non-phobic inclusion of lesbians and gay men in the public sphere.

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