



Faculty of Arts and Sciences
International School of Caucasian Studies

Using Art to Negotiate Georgian Sexual Nationalism: An Example of the Film “And Then We Danced” (2019)

CEERES Master’s Thesis

Tanguy Martignolles
65586

Supervisors:

Elene Gavashelishvili, Assistant Professor, Ilia State University
Dr. Alar Kilp, Lecturer in Comparative Politics, University of Tartu

August, 2023
Tbilisi, Georgia

Field of Studies: Political Science

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of:

Master of Caucasus Studies in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: Ilia State University, Georgia

International Master's (IntM) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Glasgow, UK

Master of Arts in Social Sciences (MA) in Central and East European, Russian and Eurasian Studies: University of Tartu, Estonia

Word count of the thesis: 24,950

Authorship Declaration: I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

Tanguy Martignolles, 25 August 2023

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

I, Tanguy Martignolles, (65586/2000) herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to the work created by me “Using Art to Negotiate Georgian Sexual Nationalism: An Example of the Film “And Then We Danced” (2019)”, supervisor Elene Gavashelishvili,

- reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in p. 1;
- I certify that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge and give my warmest thanks to my supervisors Elene Gavashelishvili and Dr. Alar Kilp. I sincerely thank them for all their support, their help and their precious comments which made this thesis possible. I would also like to thank the committee members for letting me defend my work.

I would like to thank my mother, my father, my little brother and my boyfriend, Erikas, for their continuous support and their understanding. Thanks also to my friends Tiffany, Marie, Artin, Rachel, Théo, Laurie, Amira and Elodie for their precious encouragement. Finally, I would like to thank my dear neighbours Marcel and Françoise.

Thank you all for your help and support.

Abstract

This thesis studies the role of art in negotiating Georgian sexual nationalism. Although Georgian nationalism has been studied from linguistic, religious, ethnic and civic perspectives, no study has explicitly focused on its sexual component. Under the aegis of queer theory, this thesis returns to this dimension through an artistic medium: the first Georgian LGBT dance film, “And Then We Danced” (2019), directed by Levan Akin. The paper examines how art is mobilised to negotiate sexual nationalism in Georgia. This study is based on semi-structured interviews conducted with two actors of the film and a sample mix of queer and heterosexual Georgian spectators. Secondary sources concerning Levan Akin were additionally used. This analysis shows that artistic mediums are important tools that can be - and are - mobilised in negotiating Georgian sexual nationalism. It exposes a crystallisation of two different sets of signifiers of Georgia understood as an “imagined sexual community” around Georgian dances: civic and inclusive or traditional and exclusive of queer Georgians. This debate also has geopolitical ramifications regarding Georgia's place between the European Union and Russia. It also shows an inclusion will of varying effects that can be both thanked and criticised by parts of the Georgian LGBT community. This thesis allows a precise questioning of the potential for inclusiveness of queer people as members of the Georgian nation. This dissertation, therefore, contributes to queer, gender, nationalism, and cultural literature in Georgia.

Table of Contents

Introduction	8
Chapter 1. Theoretical framework and conceptualisation	11
1.1. Queer theory	11
1.2. The concept of “sexual nationalism”	12
Chapter 2. Literature review	17
2.1. The treatment of sexual minorities in national Georgian discourses	17
2.2. Georgian films	20
2.3. Georgian dances	23
Chapter 3. Methodology	25
Chapter 4. Research results	28
4.1. Profiles of the participants and their experiences of the film “And Then We Danced”	28
4.1.1. Spectators’ profiles and experiences	28
4.1.2. Experiences of the actors and the director	30
4.2. Traditional Georgian dances as an expression of Georgian national identity	30
4.2.1. Description of Georgian national identity	33
4.2.1.1. A dual identity	33
4.2.1.2. Three aspects of traditional Georgian identity	34
4.2.1.3. Heteronormativity and homophobia	37
4.2.2. Description of traditional Georgian dances	39
4.2.2.1. National symbolic importance of Georgian dances	39
4.2.2.2. Learning the nation through dances	40
4.2.2.3. The Georgian National Ensemble as a national authority	41
4.2.2.4. Dances and sexual nationalism	42
4.3. Protecting the nation: demonstrations and opposition to the film “And Then We Danced”	46
4.3.1. Rare and violent demonstrations	46
4.3.1.1. An unusual artistic situation	46
4.3.1.2. Opposing the film with violence	47

4.3.1.3. Violence foreseen by the national authorities?	48
4.3.2. Profiles of the protesters	49
4.3.2.1. Crowd's profiles	49
4.3.2.2. Profiles of the organisers	51
4.3.3. National protection motivations and rhetorics	52
4.4. Effects of the film "And Then We Danced"	54
4.4.1. Personal impacts	54
4.4.1.1. Actors' expériences	54
4.4.1.2. Spectators' expériences	55
4.4.2. Impacts on Georgian society	56
4.4.2.1. A strong, multifaceted, and contrasted impact	56
4.4.2.2. Opening up a space for dialogue	57
4.4.2.3. Reconciling national and sexual identity	58
4.4.2.4. Assumed impacts	61
4.4.3. Impacts beyond Georgia's borders	62
Chapter 5. Discussion of the results	63
Conclusion	70
Bibliography	72

Introduction

I had the opportunity to watch the film “And Then We Danced” in 2021 and then started to get interested in issues of nationalism and homophobia in Georgia. This led me to stay in Tbilisi between October 2022 and May 2023 to study these questions and conduct research. This stay was marked by several major political events, including the massive demonstrations against the foreign agents’ law project in March 2023. Despite my departure, I continued to follow the country’s political news and noticed that it remained agitated. Recently, on July 8, 2023, the Georgian Queer Pride Festival in Tbilisi was attacked by over 2,000 protestors organised by the far-right group “Alt Info”, forcing the organisers to evacuate and cancel the event (Jones, 2023; Fabbro et al., 2023). The counter-demonstration had been announced the day before. The same day, the Georgian Orthodox Church condemned all violence but declared that Georgian society could not accept queer movements (Nikuradze & Edgar, 2023). Once on the festival grounds, the demonstrators destroyed and stole festival equipment and tore down and burnt LGBT¹ flags under the watchful eye of the police, who failed to prevent their violence adequately. Many demonstrators carried Georgian flags, Orthodox and anti-EU symbols (ibid.).

In the late afternoon of July 8, several demonstrators gathered in front of Parliament around Zurab Makharadze, a co-founder of Alt Info, declaring victory and mentioning a draft law against “LGBT propaganda” (ibid.). Tbilisi Pride and other non-governmental organisations accused the government of complicity in this aggression (Fabbro et al., 2023). This counter-demonstration is not isolated but constitutes the last link in a long series of homophobic events in Georgia, such as the ones of 2013 and 2021. It shows that homophobia is still a central problem in Georgia and questions its motivations. This dissertation examines the 2019 demonstrations against the film “And Then We Danced” to try to answer this question. This dissertation sees an essential parallel between the protests of July 2023 and those against the film “And Then We Danced”.

The choice of this film as a case study is a strategic research choice motivated by several reasons. Firstly, this film was the first Georgian LGBT film and the first Georgian LGBT film about Georgian national dance (Georgia Today, 2020). The film’s plot is as follows: Merab is

¹ The term "LGBT" has been chosen for this thesis. Other terms such as “LGBT+”, “LGBTI” or “LGBTQIA+” also refer to the sexual minorities mentioned in this thesis. These terms have been adapted accordingly.

a young and ambitious Georgian dancer of the Georgian National Dance Ensemble. Despite his efforts, his trainer criticised his dance for being too soft. Merab's ambition is then jostled, and his life is turned upside down when Irakli, a young and talented male dancer, joins the ensemble. At first, Merab feels threatened by Irakli and perceives him as a serious competitor. This rivalry soon vanishes and a romance starts between the two men. This relationship is nevertheless kept hidden due to the homophobic attitude of Georgian society. As Merab's sexual self-acceptance increases, he starts progressively accepting the softness of his dance despite his teacher's orders.

Secondly, it has created an important public debate which seems to reveal a confrontation of two opposing discourses on Georgian identity. Abroad, the reception was very positive. It has been broadcast in more than 40 countries (Murray, 2020), including many in Europe (Caucasus Business Week, 2019), received 50 international awards (Georgia Today, 2020), and premiered at the Cannes Film Festival "where it received a fifteen-minute standing ovation" (Kortava, 2020). However, the film was received differently in Georgia when it premiered on December 8, 2019, in Tbilisi and Batumi (Richards, 2020; Kortava, 2020). Despite having benefited from considerable interest - 6,000 tickets were almost instantly sold out (Burger, 2020) - the film faced demonstrations whose violence was reported in the 2020 World Report of Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 2020). A group of hundreds gathered in front of the cinema to block the film's screening (Bacchi, 2019). As a result of their actions, more than 25 people were arrested (ibid.), several were injured (Powys, 2019), and the film was removed from cinemas after only three days of screenings.

Finally, because of its wide reception, it was assumed that it would be easier to meet people who had seen this film or knew one of the actors rather than another artistic medium with lesser notoriety in Georgia. It was, therefore, also intended to facilitate on-site searches. The research question of this dissertation aims to understand these different reactions through the prism of sexual nationalism. It focuses on the role of artistic mediums as potential tools to redefine contemporary Georgian sexual nationalism through the film "And Then We Danced" case study and its reception in Georgia. It is based on semi-structured interviews with spectators and actors from the film that aim to give us access to their subjectivity and understanding of Georgian reality.

The research is based on the hypothesis that Georgian nationalism is a sexual, sexualised, sexualising, and heteronormative nationalism. The research question of this thesis is how art can participate in negotiating contemporary Georgian nationalism through the case of the film "And Then We Danced". This research question is accompanied by related

questions: What are the symbolic functions of traditional Georgian dances in Georgian nationalism? What role does Georgian cinema play in the country today? What are the profiles and motivations of the demonstrators opposed to this film?

The interests of this research are manifold. It contributes to the literature on nationalism, gender, and queer studies, as well as the growing literature on the role of artistic mediums in attempts to redefine national identities. More specifically, it helps to fill the gap in the literature on sexual nationalism in Georgia and contemporary Georgian art.

Chapter 1: Theoretical framework and conceptualisation

1.1. Queer theory

The present thesis is situated within the queer theory tradition. Queer theory is interested in the cultural and historical dimension of sexualities, how these are the products of specific places and eras (Butler, 1990 as cited in Meyer et al., 2022, p. 569), and analyse structures shaping their understandings (Foucault, 1979/1990 as cited in Meyer et al., 2022, p. 569). It finds its richness in its ability “to challenge, interrogate, destabilise and subvert” (McCann & Monaghan, 2019a, p. 1). It is a theory that transgresses and transcends established distinctions and discursive protocols driven by ideologies (De Lauretis, 1991, v). This idea of transgression can be applied to various objects, such as political, social, and cultural norms or institutions.

Finding a single definition of this theory is nevertheless complex. It is so complex that some academics suggest that this theory must necessarily be understood in the plural (Hall, 2003, p. 5; Berlant & Warner, 1995, p. 344). This richness “takes on varied shapes, risks, ambitions, and ambivalences in various contexts” (Berlant & Warner, 1995, p. 344)

Nevertheless, all its variants share the common claim of questioning through a queer perspective of social institutions to analyse how they oppress the ones labelled as “others” (Filax, 2006, as cited in Meyer et al., 2022, p. 569). It is also a theory that challenges societal heteronormativity (Gamson & Moon, 2004, p. 49). Queer theory focuses on resistance to norms of gender and sexuality, normative tendencies, normativity, and normalisation (McCann & Monaghan, 2019a, pp. 12-13). McCann and Monaghan acknowledge that this theory has many similarities with poststructuralism and postmodernism but declare that it stands out in its nature that is “inflected by histories of activism and resistance to oppressions” (McCann & Monaghan, 2019a, pp. 8-9).

The advantage of queer theory, particularly in the case of this study, is its intersectionality. Queer theory is about sexual identity but goes far beyond (McCann & Monaghan, 2019a, p. 4). McCann and Monaghan see queer theory as related to intersectionality and helping to understand various modes of identity beyond the sexual framework (ibid.). For Love, queer thinking goes beyond questions of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nation and can be applied to various other themes such as education, citizenship, and globalisation, among others (Love, 2011, p. 182).

According to Cohen, it is precisely this intersectionality that allows queer thinking to understand the politics of identity, power, and exclusion better and to understand heteronormativity as inseparable from questions of oppressions such as class exploitation, patriarchal norms, or institutional racism (Cohen, 1997, as cited in McCann & Monaghan, 2019b, p. 184). This intersectionality allows the theory to develop in intersection with multiple other theoretical axes. Thus we have seen the emergence of “queer education”, “queer screen” and even applications in the field of geopolitics (McCann & Monaghan, 2019b, pp. 188-189,192). Because of its intersection and intersectionality potential, this theory appears most appropriate for this research, focusing on the potential nexus between sexuality, nationalism, and art in Georgia.

1.2. The concept of “sexual nationalism”

The core concept on which this thesis is based is “sexual nationalism” which directly originates from the concepts of “nation”, “nationalism”, and “identity”. Nations are here understood as “imagined communities” (Anderson, 1983) in the sense that they are socially constructed. Nations are a possible form of collective organisation but are not natural by essence and are not the only ones. Other levels of identity can exist, such as the regional one (Neumann, 1994). Nations are intrinsically related to the “dynamic, contested, multiple, and fluid” (Edensor, 2002, vi) concept of identity. National identities are collective identities. From the concept of the nation can emerge the ideology of nationalism that is based on the assumption that “the individual's loyalty and devotion to the nation-state surpass other individual or group interests” (Kohn, 2023).

The existence of national identities requires shared “beliefs, convictions, sentiments, and attitudes of individual people” (Norman, 2004, p. 81). They are “symbolic boundaries of membership” (Storm, 2018, p. 196) in the sense that they are “shared cultural, linguistic, racial, and religious attributes, [that] help to determine who “belongs” within the national body and who does not” (Storm, 2018, p. 196). This constitutes national narratives that maintain the nation. These narratives can, however, evolve through various societal changes (Liu & Hilton, 2005). In this regard, nations are adaptive narrations.

Traditionally, the primary agent of these narratives is the state as it recreates various artefacts to express the border of the nation (Paasi, 2011, p. 14), such as national anthems and flags (Cerulo, 1993) or banknotes (Penrose, 2011). These objects can represent the history and the heritage of a given nation. In this case, they also act its “embodied memory forms” (Parfitt,

2021, p. 4) or as what Ofofu names “mnemonic artifacts” in the sense of “any material or practice that harbors meanings based on past culturally accepted and established attributes” (Ofofu, 2021, p. 138). When the memory of a collective identity, such as a nation, is disputed between different actors, there is a “mnemonic conflict” over the heritage of the given nation and how it is represented (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014, p. 16). In parallel, national identity is also constantly affirmed by “banal nationalism” which is daily, little, familiar, and unconscious actions made by the members of a nation that define their place in the world (Billig, 1995).

In a sense, the concept of “nation” is perceived as a “signifier” of nationalism (De Cleen & Stavrakakis, 2017, pp. 306-309). In this framework, nations are understood as nodal points around which nationalist discourses are constructed (Sutherland, 2005, p. 186). This construction includes other signifiers such as culture, people, lands, or democracy (Freedon, 1998, p. 755). The very idea of nation, therefore, constitutes a set of signifiers used by the people to give significance to their (national) environment.

Sexualities are also an important component of national identities. It is now commonly recognised that “sexual identity and national identity are mutually dependent” (Thapar-Björkert, 2013, p. 810). This intersection is not a recent phenomenon. Mosse demonstrated that early twentieth-century European nationalisms were already playing on sexualised stereotypes built around the idea of “macho” masculinity (Mosse, 1998). Nationalism remains a heterosexual and masculine project, promoting male heterosexual expressions, masculine honour, and the subordination of women (Hossain, 2019, p. 639). This kind of nationalism can be specified as “heteronationalism” (Slootmaeckers, 2019). This latter often rejects sexual minorities. Thomson states that “for many nations homosexuality remains a marker of difference” (Thomson, 2020, p.7). They still perceive homosexuality as a threat to the non-sexual military male bonding necessary to defend the nation (Mole, 2016, p.107), to the importance of the heterosexual component of the family, and to continue the biological reproduction of the nation (Thomson, 2020, p. 6). This exclusion and theoretical incompatibility can create tension between the national and the sexual identity of an individual. Du Bois recognized this tension between different parts of an identity as a phenomenon of “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 1994).

These questions of sexuality, nations, and sexual nationalism are central to understanding the nation-building processes occurring within the post-Soviet space. Already in 2000, Gal and Kligman underlined the importance of gender and sexuality in the renegotiation of national identity across this region (Gal & Kligman, 2000). The most studied

case in this area is Putin's Russian national identity, built on specific "traditionally Russian" sexual and gender norms (Stella & Nartova, 2016, p. 25). The model promoted is one of a society based on the birth rate and the traditional Russian family in opposition to European values and positions such as same-sex relationships (Stella & Nartova, 2016).

Homophobia, such as in Russia, is nevertheless not always the norm. A recent shift in postcolonial countries where sexual minorities are now integrated into their national identities has been observed (Jaunait et al., 2013, p. 5), sliding the question of gay sexuality "from the margins to the centre of cultural imagination" (Mepschen & Duyvendak, 2012, p. 71). Promoting sexual minorities' rights appears to have become a democratic indicator of Western societies (Jaunait et al., 2013, p. 5). According to Puar, nations are now evaluated on their treatment of homosexuals (Puar, 2011, p. 139). Puar talks about the critical phenomenon of "homonationalism" to capture the negative sides of these reconfigurations, such as racism and islamophobia (Puar, 2007; Puar, 2011; Puar, 2013). Furthermore, homonationalism is accused of being a phenomenon that "disciplines and normalises queer bodies" (Reimers, 2017, p. 96), defining what a tolerable LGBT subjectivity is (Seidman & Meeks, 2011 as cited in Reimers, 2017, p. 96). This national and sexual disciplinary action can be exercised in various places such as schools (Reimers, 2017).

Academic research shows that marginalised groups can actually negotiate national identity daily, even in nations recognised as homophobic (Kulpa, 2014; Szulc, 2016; Jung, 2021). For instance, Polish sexual minorities participated in the mourning of their homophobic president as a collective performance of "queering the nation" that Kulpa defines as making the nation "an ambivalent and more accommodating space of homosexual identifications" (Kulpa, 2014, p. 791). In this regard, sexual minorities are also perceived as "active performers" of nation-building (Kulpa, 2014, p. 791). Szulc talks about "domesticating the nation" to explain how queer and national symbolisms are coupled "so that queers too feel minimally at home within this overarching narrative" that their nation represents (Szulc, 2016, p. 318).

The exact process is also found outside Europe. In his study of Singaporean national identity, Jung highlights how sexual minorities that have been rejected from the national imaginary can also participate "in the negotiation of their sexual and national identities" (Jung, 2021, p. 1230) and, therefore, contribute to what Zubrzycki calls "stretching [the] symbolic boundaries" of the nation (Zubrzycki, 2016, p. 82).

The very concept of “sexual nationalism” first emerged in 2011 in order to conceptualise the inclusion of sexualities in discourses on nations (Mepschen, 2011; Mepschen & Duyvendak, 2012). This concept creates a relationship between history and social sciences and illustrates how nations can be perceived as “imagined sexual communities” defining what is sexually correct for their members regarding a constantly evolving idea of their national identity (Jaunait et al., 2013, pp. 5-7). This concept rethinks the concept of “nation” as a framework shaping sexual practices and identities. In this sense, sexual nationalism comes close to the definition of “nationalism as a strategy deployed to deal with symbolic conflicts of interests, and to establish and naturalise a normative set of beliefs and values around sexuality, family and intimate life” (Stella & Nartova, 2016, p. 26).

Freude and Waites consider this concept broader and more flexible than “homonationalism” as it goes beyond Western societies (Freude & Waites, 2022, p. 3). One may say that homonationalism is part of sexual nationalism. It has the advantage of being usable in private, national, and international frameworks (Jaunait et al., 2013, pp. 7-9). It is also insightful to remember that sexual nationalism remains a form of nationalism and is, in this regard, still based on othering and exclusion processes. For instance, Québécois sexual nationalism has been progressively reinvented around the fear of new Muslim migrants (Bilge, 2012).

Interestingly enough, art seems to be a good analytical object for understanding sexual nationalism around the globe. Gutiérrez studied the nexus between Mexican nationalism, mass media, gender, and sexuality through video art, which she identifies as an interesting medium to expose urgent issues particularly influential in Mexican art (Gutiérrez, 2001, p. 105). When analysing contemporary South African artworks, Lima exposed how these later use gender and sexuality to modify national identity and highlight, through them, “the role of queerness in shaping nationalist discourses” (Lima, 2012, p. 46). Based on the homoerotic photographic archive of Archie Lindo, O’Neil analysed the cultural nationalism of Jamaica’s history (O’Neil, 2020).

Eventually, a comment should be made on the close relationship between “sexual nationalism” and “sexual citizenship”. Traditionally, gays are excluded from citizenship because of their orientation and image of “hyperindividualism” free of social and family conformities (Herman, 1997 as cited in Stychin, 2001, p. 289). When talking specifically about sexual rights, the individuals are understood as “sexualised citizens” with a state regulating their sexual identities (Binnie, 1997, p. 238). The particularity of sexual citizenship is that it invites the topic of sexuality within the public place via claims for rights and participation while

claiming, at the same time, separate places for sexual subculture (Stychin, 2001, p. 294). Sexual citizenship is, therefore, also a negotiation. As for sexual nationalism, sexual citizenship can be conditioned by heteronormativity where the “good gay” confirming the traditional heterosexual environment is accepted (Seidman, 2002 as cited in McKearney 2021, pp. 679-680), while the challenging ones are excluded (Richardson, 2018, p. 1257). This type of selective queer inclusion can be seen in today’s Western series and films (Dreher, 2017, pp. 185-8). The European Union (EU) has been identified as an actor actively promoting sexual citizenship but has also, in this regard, been accused of sexual colonisation (Stychin, 2001, p. 295).

Chapter 2: Literature review

To date, no academic articles deal specifically with sexual nationalism in Georgia. However, several articles are dedicated to homophobia and the influence of the EU in Georgia, focusing on the question of sexual minorities in Georgian national discourses. This chapter summarises the most relevant data on this subject. Additionally, as “And Then We Danced” is a film about Georgian dances, this part also presents the main elements of Georgian films and dances studied in the literature, especially paying attention to their gendered and sexualised characteristics.

2.1. The treatment of sexual minorities in national Georgian discourses

The existing literature presents Georgia as a country where homophobia is widespread. LGBT people are considered very vulnerable and discriminated against in Georgia (Public Defender of Georgia, 2020). The Caucasus Barometer survey is widely mentioned in this regard. According to it, 88% of the Georgian population considered that homosexuality could never be justified in 2011, and 74% would have disapproved of doing business with a homosexual in 2021 (Caucasus Research Resource Center, 2011; 2021). The Media Development Foundation's 2013 study is also regularly cited to demonstrate that Georgian political parties and political organisations expressed discriminatory comments towards sexual minorities in 56% of their statements (Media Development Foundation, 2013, p. 59). In 2020, Gvianishvili demonstrated that the process of othering towards the Georgian LGBT population was still very present today in political discourses throughout Georgia, particularly during events such as elections (Gvianishvili, 2020, pp. 205-206). Finally, one can also mention Rainbow Europe's map of 2022, ranking Georgia 35 out of 49 in terms of LGBT equality laws and policies (Rainbow Europe, 2023).

Regarding the academic literature, two main studies have explored the expression of homophobia in Georgia. The first is Rusieshvili-Cartledge and Dolidze's study on online hate speech regarding LGBT rights in Georgia. Looking at public online reactions about the June 2019 LGBT Pride in Tbilisi, the researchers uncovered systematic impoliteness among Pride opponents and supporters. They showed how LGBT people are victims of othering and demonising hate speech and aggressively presented as enemies of Georgian culture and traditional values (Rusieshvili-Cartledge & Dolidze, 2020, pp. 11-12).

The second study focuses on the social and cultural values associated with homophobia among adults in Tbilisi (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017). The researchers of this study consider homophobia to be one of the main intolerances holding back the democratisation process in Georgia (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017, p. 1253). The study shows that church attendance is not correlated with homophobia in Tbilisi. On the other hand, it demonstrates that education is one of the strongest predictors of homophobia but that its predictive effect diminishes when the person is exposed to liberal values. Liberal values are thus considered a better predictor than education. It also highlights a higher level of homophobia among men than women, which the authors attribute to a potential fear of these men losing their masculinity. (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017, p. 1272-1274). Their study also highlights a correlation between homophobia and its perception as a threat to the nation. Eventually, people are more likely to accept equal rights for homosexuals if they have homosexuals in their entourage. (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017, p. 1267-1268).

The other studies available in English mainly focus on the influence of religion and conservative parties on the treatment of LGBT rights in Georgia to their idea of Georgian identity, as well as on its geopoliticisation in a broader frame of reference opposing the EU and Russia. The Russian and geopolitical questions are central. Rekhviashvili states: “queer activism in Georgia must be understood in the context of the country's geopolitical history” (Rekhviashvili, 2017, p. 209). Although intrinsically relevant to the issue of sexual minorities in Georgia and Georgian national identity, none of these articles specifically use the concept of “sexual nationalism”. It indicates a need for more attention to this concept in Georgia.

The importance of the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) is undoubtedly central to understanding national identity issues concerning sexual minorities in contemporary Georgia. Its actions are both national and geopolitical, in relation to Russia and the EU. GOC's influence goes far beyond its simple religious function, producing a “conservative biopolitical discourse” (Kakabadze & Makarychev, 2018, p. 489) that presents Christian Orthodoxy as a strong marker of national identity (Kakabadze & Makarychev, 2018, p. 486-489, 494).

Europe plays a central role in the GOC's identity discourse. Georgia is perceived as a Christian land linked to the Orthodox church but at the same time as a place subject to a deviant and perverted multicultural system, not least because it accepts LGBT people (Kakabadze & Makarychev, 2018, p. 486, 489, 496). This rhetoric presents Georgia as European in identity but incompatible with queer identities (ibid.). Tolkachev and Tolordava see an even more marked opposition in their comparative analysis of the discourses of the GOC and the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) (Tolkachev & Tolordava, 2019). According to them, the GOC

presents the EU and NATO as a threat to Georgian identity due to its stance on homosexuality and they note a strong alignment with the ROC where Russia appears as a “brother” (Tolkachev & Tolordava, 2019, p. 452). Luciani also confirms this point of view (Luciani, 2021, pp. 4-5).

On the other hand, other researchers observe a more measured identity stance that is still linked to geopolitical considerations. Shevtsova speaks of a “selective Europeanization” rhetoric of the GOC in which Georgia is presented as legitimate to enter the EU and NATO but also to respect its traditional identity incompatible with LGBT rights (Shevtsova, 2022, p. 5). She attributes the emergence of this rhetoric to the country's geopolitical situation, influenced by Russian anti-LGBT discourse and anti-LGBT backlash in some EU countries (Shevtsova, 2022, p. 2). Therefore, for Shevtsova, the anti-LGBT identity discourse promoted by the GOC is based on religious and human rights, the rhetoric of protection of minors (where the promotion of LGBT rights is associated with an evil striking Georgian youth), the idea of Christian orthodoxy as inherent to the correct definition of Georgian identity and the idea that alternative Europeanisation is possible (Shevtsova, 2022, p. 6). According to her, this power has efficiently diminished or prevented sexual and gender equality in Georgia (Shevtsova, 2022, p. 2).

This opposition between Russia and the EU regarding values (and, therefore, national identity) is central. Luciani speaks of a situation of “in-betweenness” in her analysis of the geopoliticisation of queer visibility in Georgia (Luciani, 2021, pp. 2, 4). This geopoliticisation has societal effects opposing pro-European liberals and other parts of the Georgian population supported by Russia’s discourses (Luciani, 2021, p. 1).

According to her, while this geopoliticisation allows the use of a discursive strategy for Georgian queer activists in alignment with the Western agenda, it is also harmful in that it partly delegitimises their action, which is then perceived as an ideological instrumentalisation imposed by the West (Luciani, 2021, pp. 2, 4). This position is also found in Tskhadadze’s research. This latter explains that the conservative opponents actively promote a difference between what they consider “Western” and what they consider “Georgian” or “traditional” and prefer the “non-Western” Georgia's Soviet past that is now embodied by Russia (Tskhadadze, 2017). In parallel, during the last decade, this anti-LGBT opposition has started to be openly supported by far-right groups that “espouse Orthodox and traditional values that align closely with Russian soft-power narratives” (Gordon, 2020, p. 5).

Therefore, while the existing literature does not deal specifically with sexual nationalism in Georgia, it does reveal a Georgian society where homophobia is widespread, notably among extreme right-wing groups and the Georgian Orthodox Church. LGBT rights

are not only a political issue but also a geopolitical one, with Georgian identity being discussed within the context of the European Union and Russia.

2.2. Georgian films

In this study, films are understood as “cultural representations” (Casula, 2015, p. 111) with strong social values and behaviour shaping power (Novikau, 2021, p. 1726). They are, in this sense, identity negotiation tools. According to Jalilova, this shaping power also extends to “gender beliefs” (Jalilova, 2020, p. 80). Films are related to the question of representation. Chao evokes, in this regard, the notion of “cinematic representability” to question the capacity of a film to represent a “certain object or theme on the screen” (Chao, 2000, p. 234). Furthermore, films are interesting materials due to their capacity to negotiate collective memories by producing strong feelings such as empathy to the viewers (Landsberg, 2003, pp. 148-150).

No considerable work on Georgian cinema is available in English. The very notion of “Georgian cinema” and its origin is a source of debate (Radunović, 2014, p. 52) between Soviet times and the Russian imperialism period. One may also date it back to the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921), even if little is known about the film production of this period (White & Dzandzava, 2015, p. 158). The currently available corpus is only composed of one film by Germane Gogitidze entitled “Christine” (1919), depicting a young girl who, after having got pregnant by her landlord, is rejected by her family, becomes a prostitute and dies alone in a hospital and a series of six newsreels based on the idea of territorial sovereignty and the creation of strong links with Europe (White & Dzandzava, 2015, pp. 151, 162).

Much more has been written concerning Georgian Soviet times. As in any other part of the Soviet Union, the production of films in Georgia was not free. Cinema was considered a propagandist tool to educate the population through the glorification of the Revolution (Honarpisheh, 2005, p. 186; Piskova, 2020, pp. 155-156) and depict the Soviet Union as “a unified nation” (Honarpisheh, 2005, p. 187). Despite this control, Dulgheru states that Georgian Soviet cinema also had its own characteristics, such as “a certain easiness, innocence, tender nonconformism and love for life”, typical of what she considers as the Georgian “national spirit” (Dulgheru, 2014, p. 209).

Most of the films of this early Soviet period in Georgia were, however, produced, with few exceptions, such as Nutsa Gogoberidze, by men (Kartvelishvili, 2020, p. 23). The artistic freedom of this latter caused her to be deported under Stalin (ibid.). In the films produced at that time, Georgians were depicted as a “Soviet cinema’s internalised other” (Radunović, 2014, p. 56) in the sense that they were represented as exotic Easterns “from the past” unable to be accomplished without the Soviet model (Honarpisheh, 2005, pp. 188-189; Piskova, 2020, pp. 146, 156). This policy in the Caucasus also targeted women who were often depicted as vulnerable actors suffering from male domination waiting to be liberated by Soviet education and atheism (Piskova, 2020, p. 156; Jalilova, 2020, p. 82). Almost no representation of the New Soviet Women depicted at that time in Russian films can be found in the Georgian films of this period (Tsopurashvili, 2016, p. 96). The new Soviet women were depicted as highly moral, dedicated to communism, and also embraced a redefined version of femininity understood as emancipated but, at the same time, glorified for their motherhood (Tsopurashvili, 2016, pp. 95-96). “Saba” (1929), by Mikheil Chiaureli, is so far the only Georgian film of that time depicting the New Soviet Woman in Georgia (Tsopurashvili, 2016, p. 96) through the character of Olga, a mother and active comrade with “masculine features and powerful gestures” (Tsopurashvili, 2016, p. 105).

The other articles found in the literature then focus on post-1960 Georgian cinema. The Georgian society of the 1960s-1980s valued cinema, as up to 30 theatres were open in Tbilisi during these Soviet times (Gengiuri, 2021, p. 201). These decades were marked by a renaissance for Georgian cinema and a modification of the perception of Georgian identity through thematics such as national history and mythology (Radunović, 2014, p. 59). This dynamic became even more strengthened in the 1980s with the Glasnost, far from the Bolshevik and Stalinian diktats (Dulgheru, 2014, p. 209; Dönmez-Colin, 1998, p. 159). This period was also marked by a dynamic of feminisation with several female directors, such as the civil activist Lana Gogoberidze (Dönmez-Colin, 1998, pp. 159-60), who stated that Georgian films were necessarily political and that “Georgian cinema has always been a cinema of resistance” (Gogoberidze, 1993 as cited in Dönmez-Colin, 1998, pp. 159-60).

The literature then noticed a significant cultural degradation of Georgian cinema after the collapse of the USSR. This collapse is seen as an event that has “a long-lasting impact on individual and collective identities” (Ushakin, 2009, p. 1), particularly noticeable in Georgian film production produced post-1991 (Radunović, 2014, pp. 63-66). Symbolising this change, many cinemas closed in Georgia (Gengiuri, 2021, p. 201). Today, only a few cinemas subsist.

They are primarily located in Tbilisi and are mainly attended by young people under 19, privileged enough to afford cinema tickets (Sherouse, 2017, p. 139).

The 1990s Georgian cinema was marked by at least three tendencies undermining Georgian artists' voices. First, was the massive exodus of directors who developed their exilic cinema in which they renounced to create depictions of their nation (Radunović, 2014, p. 67). Second, great poverty forced directors who stayed in Georgia to accept foreign capitals whose production criteria were not considering "Georgian stories" (Shengelaya, 1990 as cited in Dönmez-Colin, 1998, p. 161). Third, massive exposure to Hollywood films, according to Gogoberidze, "changed the mentality of the people" (Gogoberidze, 1993, as cited in Dönmez-Colin, 1998, p. 160). The 1990s were, therefore, a period of vacuum for independent Georgian cinema that did not contribute to any solid nation-building dynamic.

The situation started to change by the 21st century with the emergence of a Georgian New Wave focusing on Georgian society as a society of diktats and trying to present its victims (Ochiauri, 2021, p. 128). The new Georgian directors depict young rebellious heroes trying to free themselves from social norms, change them, or otherwise destroy them (ibid.). They try to analyse "what is sometimes seen and sometimes not seen, what we sometimes see or cannot/do not see and what has many reasons, grounds and results" (Ochiauri, 2021, pp. 128-129). According to her, this generation of new directors has the potential to "determine the future of the national cinema and Georgian society" (Ochiauri, 2021, p.131). She includes in this New Wave directors such as Lasha Tskvitinidze, Zaza Urushadze, and Levan Akin, the director of "And Then We Danced" (ibid.).

This dynamic can also be placed in parallel with the new dominance of women directors in the industry and the transformation of the role of women in Georgian contemporary cinema (Kartvelishvili, 2020). By the mid-2010s, Georgian films started to pay attention to problems and the role of women in society, with deeper female characters that challenge traditional gender roles (ibid.).

Eventually, especially since the 2010s, Georgian cinema has been marked by a progressive distance from its historical Russian influence, notably since the 2011 dubbing and subtitling law of Saakashvili for any foreign film for public showings (Sherouse, 2015; 2017). This law aims to reduce the Russian language's place in Georgian cinema and promote European standards (ibid.). According to Sherouse, this law participated in constructing a "scale of inferiority" where Georgia is presented as inferior to modernity norms from Europe and reveals how Georgian cinema is still impacted by its Soviet distribution system (Sherouse, 2015, p. 224).

2.3. Georgian dances

Dances are interesting political, identity-shaping, and power-interaction mediums. In 1997, Herzfeld highlighted that “visual and musical iconicities have been especially effective in rallying entire populations” (Herzfeld, 1997, as cited in Shay, 1999, p. 33). Among dance studies, the most studied ones are folk dances, which are referred to as “traditional dance” or “ethnic dance” (Samsonadze, 2021, pp. 326-327). Shay says these dances achieve “the highly political choice of depicting and representing the nation” (Shay, 1999, p. 35). By tradition, national dance companies are considered the main dance actors embodying the nation (Shay, 1999, p. 39-40).

Their particularity is that they claim authenticity and enhance “valued symbolic and cultural capital for their respective nation-states” (Shay, 1999, p. 33). Their performances are highly staged and are, therefore, sometimes considered as “unauthentic” and as an “invented tradition” in Hobsbawm terms. Shay prefers to consider them “parallel traditions” (Shay, 1999, pp. 29-31). Their repertoires then appear as a conscious selection process. While presenting themselves as representations of the whole nation, national dance companies’ repertoires are built on the question of who is legitimate enough to represent the nation and who is not (Shay, 1999, pp. 35, 40).

Very few English-written articles mention Georgian dances. Most of the time, Georgian dances are not the main focus of the articles mentioning them. For instance, Ninoshvili mentions Georgian dances only to illustrate how the traditional warriors’ dance of Khorumi became a template of “Georgian military heroism” used in various music productions (Ninoshvili, 2010, p. 98). In their article, Gigashvili and Gigashvili also briefly mention Georgian dance to illustrate how Georgian migrant press in the 20th century served as a medium of cultural preservation (Gigashvili & Gigashvili, 2021, p. 71). They quote an article written by the journalist Nino Salia describing a performance of the Georgian Ballet in Paris in 1958 that, despite its shortness, provides an exciting outlook on Georgian dances:

“Unbreakable national spirit, chivalry, high morals and purity, the highest worship of women, all the features that characterize and express the Georgian nation in its dances” (Salia, 1958, as cited in Gigashvili & Gigashvili, 2021, pp. 81-82).

Only two articles are fully dedicated to Georgian dances in English literature. The first and most developed one was written by Fisher in 2014. She describes Georgian folk dance as “a realm of floating, fair maidens and military men who strut, tumble, and fight with heavy swords” (Fisher, 2014, p. 63). According to her, in Georgian dances, “both men and women show strength, as well as restraint and delicacy” but she admits that, in most cases, female dancers play a “decorative” role in order to magnify the movements of their male partners (ibid.). Fisher also noted the particularity of Georgian male dancers dancing on their toes (Fisher, 2014). She declares that, whereas in classical ballet, men dance on their toes only to express a comic situation (Fisher, 2014, p. 60), in Georgian dances, this can be seen as soft but also, at the same time, “as brave, masculine, and impressive”. (Fisher, 2014, p. 73). According to Fisher, Georgian dances are heteronormative performances in which contrasting male and female styles “symbolize one version of wholeness” (Fisher, 2014, p. 73). This gender division was also briefly mentioned by Shay concerning the Soviet Georgian national company, where performances represented a “powerful male sexuality” while female sexuality was “very muted” reflecting the gender relationship norms in Georgia at that time (Shay, 1999, pp. 38-39). Eventually, based on experiences, Fisher suggests that ideas of masculinity and femininity are often propagated during dance learning (Fisher, 2014, p. 72).

The other article that focused on Georgian dance was written in 2021. In this piece, the author understands Georgian folk dance as an organic and multi-directional evolutive art form (Samsonadze, 2021). She states that Georgian dance is evolving in three directions at the same time: it retains its original appearance (authentic folk dances), is transformed into a staged art form, and now sees some of its elements being used in other types of dance or performative arts (Samsonadze, 2021, pp. 327-329).

Chapter 3: Methodology

This research relies on qualitative semi-structured interviews conducted offline and secondary data² publicly available online concerning Levan Akin. In total, 13 interviews were conducted, 11 with Georgian viewers and 2 with actors who played in “And Then We Danced”. For security and anonymity reasons, spectators are presented here under pseudonyms, and actors, for greater anonymity, under neutral codes (Actor_1 and Actor_2).

Interviews are particularly beneficial because they offer us the possibility to understand the complexity of the social world via “richly textured accounts of events, experiences and underlying conditions or processes” (Smith & Elger, 2014, as cited in Brönnimann, 2022, p. 1). Furthermore, qualitative interviews provide “information about research participants’ beliefs, perspectives, opinions and experiences” (Roulston, 2019, p. 59).

These possibilities offered by the interviews are perfectly adequate with the aim of this thesis. Indeed, this research aims to explore the potential nexus between art, sexualities, and national identity in Georgia through the voices of Georgian citizens. Therefore, it focuses on subjectivity, perceptions, beliefs, and experiences. As these topics are abstract and potentially sensitive, they also require time to be deeply developed. Interviews offer such a time to develop answers.

Due to the difficulty and sensitivity of the topic chosen, I opted for semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow us to explore lived experiences “as narrated in the interview in relation to theoretical variables of interest” (Galletta, 2013a, p. 9). These interviews are less rigid than structured ones and allow more flexibility. Semi-structured interviews allow for the potential addition or rephrasing of questions. This method is particularly advantageous when dealing with complicated notions and processes when “clarification, meaning making, and critical reflection” (Galletta, 2013a, p. 24).

All the interviews were also guided through a reflexive approach in the sense that the researcher was recognising the intersubjective characteristics of the interviews while conducting them (Wilk, 2001, as cited in Arsel, 2017, p. 940) as well as the power dynamics

² These resources were all open-access online magazines and articles (17) and YouTube videos (5). They had to be used because getting in touch with him was not possible. His comments are not anonymous, as they were already public. Although they may have less analytical value than first-hand interviews, they still help us to confirm or refute various tendencies expressed by the participants of this study.

existing between the researcher and the participants (Kvale, 2006, as cited in Arsel, 2017, p. 940) and his “own biases and preconceptions” (Arsel, 2017, p. 940). This approach is considered particularly important to let the narratives of the interviewees be expressed in a free manner (ibid).

As the aim of the research was “to collect the most important ideas and themes” (Weller et al., 2018, p. 2) concerning art, sexualities, and national identity in Georgia, the salience approach was chosen to evaluate the sample of this research project. Salience is “measured by the frequency of item occurrence (prevalence) or the order of mention” (ibid.). With this method, a more significant number of responses is perceived as a way to obtain more salient items (Weller et al., 2018, p. 12). This approach was, nevertheless, to a certain extent, also dictated by issues such as time and interviewees' availability.

The research project was composed of two groups of participants. The first group included the film's actors, and the second group was a mixed sample of heterosexual and queer Georgian citizens. To be selected, the participants were required to have watched the film or played in it, be an adult, and be able to communicate in English. All the viewers were recruited through “snowball sampling” due to the difficulty locating them and the topics' sensitivity. Snowball sampling is a technique where additional participants are recruited thanks to the recommendation of existing participants until a sufficient number of interviewees is reached. A snowball sampling technique avoids the researcher having to publicly research participants in a way that could compromise their security or their participants. It is a confidential way of recruiting.

The choice of an interview location can strongly impact the interviewees' discourses. The interviews were conducted in neutral places due to the sensitivity of the topics treated, notably sexual and national identities in Georgia. I also did not want to bring them to places that could have reminded them of traumas or provoked discomfort. Interview places were, therefore, always agreed beforehand with the interviewees to ensure their safety and anonymity.

Questions were asked one at a time and constructed in order to be as not leading as possible. They were built to increase the processes of understanding the contemporary Georgian nation. Each group of participants had its own set of questions. As the interviews are semi-structured, the form of the questions themselves was nevertheless sometimes rephrased following the interview situation, and additional questions can have been introduced when needed (Galletta, 2013c, p. 75).

Although the total number of questions asked varies with each interview due to their semi-structured nature, each interview consisted of 30 to 40 questions on average. These questions were organised into several categories and concerned: the identity of the people interviewed, questions relating to the description of the film and their experiences of viewing or acting, the description of Georgian identity, Georgian dance and cinema, sexuality in Georgia, and then questions of reflection on the violence that appeared against the film “And Then We Danced”.

The majority of the questions were open-ended questions as they are considered a good technique to obtain in-depth answers by offering space to the participants to express their experiences (Galletta, 2013b, p. 47) as well as “to explore topics in depth, to understand processes, and to identify potential causes of observed correlations” (Weller et al., 2018, p. 2). As much as possible, “wh-open-ended type” questions were asked as they are seen as the “most appropriate” in qualitative research interviewing (Ballena, 2021, p. 108). Some TED questions (Tell, Explain, Describe) were also employed when more detailed information was required for analysis (ibid.).

Chapter 4: Research results

This part is divided into four subchapters and presents the main results of this research project.

4.1. Profiles of the participants and their experiences of the film “And Then We Danced”

4.1.1. Spectators’ profiles and experiences

The spectators were asked to provide a range of information, including their age, gender, sexuality, occupation, and level of education. All were living in Tbilisi at the time of the study. Seven of the participants were women, and four were men. Seven defined themselves as heterosexual (six women and one man), and four as LGBT (three men and one woman). Of these four LGBT people, one woman and one man identified themselves as bisexual, one man as gay, and one as a bisexual man predominantly attracted to men.

Participants ranged in age from 19 to 26. Their average age was 22. This average is a research bias that can be explained in part by the snowballing strategy of recruiting participants and by the fact that, as will be explained later in this research, few older people appear to have viewed this film. Therefore, the findings of this sample can only be generalised within this age group.

The occupations of these participants were varied, with a dominance of tertiary professions and students. All the participants in this study had completed or were in the process of completing university studies. Four were completing a bachelor’s degree, six had completed it, one was currently in a master's program, and one had completed a master’s degree. This dissertation is, therefore, based on the narratives of young, urban, and educated Georgians. Although this may be a limitation, their testimonies, based on their relationships and experiences, provide us with a broader vision than their own cultural and socio-economic background.

Several participants also mentioned the justifications that led them to watch the film. As shown in Table 1, the scandal and the backlash generated by this film have been their predominant motivations. Interest in the film's synopsis only came second. As Eteri explained, this type of demonstration for a film is highly unusual in Georgia, so it generated great interest. Four of them even mentioned the backlash as their only motivation. Of the three people who did not mention the film's scandal, one said he was interested in the film's synopsis and technicality, one in the film's summary, and as an LGBT person, a desire to be represented.

The last one watched it because she was familiar with one of the actors and the international exposure of the film interested her. These results show that, paradoxically, the backlash and scandal provoked by this film helped in its promotion among Georgia's youth. Due to part of the population publicly opposing the film, they were motivated to watch it.

Table 1. Number of times each reason for viewing the film was mentioned by participants

Motivations	Scandal/ Backlash	Know one of the actors	Technicity	Plot	International reception	Representativity	Total
Number of times mentioned	8	3	1	4	1	1	18

Note: The total is 18 because some participants mentioned several reasons

Most viewers watched the film within a few days or months after its premiere in Georgia. Only two watched it in 2021, and one in November 2022. It indicates a reasonably high level of interest. They had all seen it online³ except for one who was able to see it in a cinema in Tbilisi when it was released. As shown in Table 2, most of them had seen the film alone. One said he had seen it once alone and a second time with friends abroad. Of the three remaining viewers, one saw it in the presence of his nephew and two in the presence of friends. None of them watched the film in the presence of their parents. These results may be explained by the fact that watching a film online from home can encourage viewing alone. Another possibility may lie in the sensitivity of the subject matter, as was the case for Ioseb, who first watched the film at his family home in secret, hidden from his parents.

³ Illegal streaming platforms to watch new films are widespread in Georgia. Following several reforms, these platforms are now more difficult to access but remain popular.

Table 2. Viewing conditions for the film “And Then We Danced”

Watched the film with:	Friends	Family members (excluding parents)	parents	alone	Total
Number of views mentioned	3	1	0	8	12

Note: The total is 12 because a spectator has watched the film twice in two different conditions

The first part of the interviews dedicated to the spectators also included a question asking them to summarise the plot of “And Then We Danced”. This question was asked to check whether they had seen the film and whether one or more aspects of the film's plot had made a particular impression on the viewers. All participants could summarise the film corresponding to its official synopsis. Except for one participant, all stressed the importance of Georgian dances in their summaries. Two respondents also described the film as representing the socio-economic reality of Georgia.

4.1.2. Experiences of the actors and the director

The question regarding the synopsis of the film was also asked to the actors who participated in this study. Both actors provided similar summaries to those of the viewers. According to Actor_1, it is a “coming-of-age” film about a Georgian dancer discovering his sexuality and trying to come to terms with it in a society that “will not accept this sexuality”, especially in the frame of Georgian dances. They saw it as a love story about self-discovery and acceptance and a film about each individual’s journey through social norms beyond the simple sexual dimension. Actor_2 also mentioned the Georgian dance component and the idea of “breaking the traditional rules” but did not explicitly mention any sexual component.

The description of the film that Levan Akin offered in his interviews was also very similar to those mentioned above. He described the film as the story of a kid “figuring out his place” in Georgian culture, which he described as “super-normative” (Akin, as cited in Sarajevo Film Festival, 2019). On the other hand, he considered that this film was not a “love story” but more about “self-acceptance” (Akin, as cited in Allaire, 2020), “self-realization”

(Akin, as cited in Lombardo, 2021), “defiance” (Akin, as cited in Bayley, 2021) and about “owning your identity and owning yourself in a culture that does not want to accept you” (Akin, as cited in ZFF Zurich Film Festival, 2019). There seems, therefore, to be a consensus in the film descriptions the actors, the director, and the viewers offered. It ensures that all participants and the director have a similar understanding of “And Then We Danced” as the object of this study.

The descriptions of the actors’ motivations for acting in this film revealed two types of motivation: career motivation and moral motivation. Both actors offered opposing explanations of these two categories. Actor_1’s participation in the film was experienced as a personal “challenge” and a kind of moral obligation linked to their profession. They were initially hesitant about participating in this project because of the homophobic nature of the Georgian population. In their opinion, to take part in this type of film in Georgia was to risk jeopardising their career. Actor_1 then realised that the film’s subject was more important to them than their material considerations: “I felt that it is more important to talk about what you believe in than to, you know, plan your life out, like, what is convenient for you”. Then, encouraged by their friends who told them it was a “one-in-a-lifetime chance [...] to stand up for something [they] really believe[d] in”, Actor_1 finally decided to audition for the film. Their function as an actor was understood here as an act of activism. There was the idea that acting was not just about an artistic performance but also about being a public figure with the potential for activism.

Actor_2, on the other hand, did not mention having been guided by a sense of duty or activism. They agreed that the film’s subjects were important but did not declare that these were the reasons for their participation. For them, it was a personal challenge related to their interest in acting. Here, unlike Actor_1, the idea of acting is precisely valued.

Various interviews with Levan Akin shed light on the reasons that led him to create this film. The beginning of his reflection began when he saw on Swedish⁴ television the violence promoted by the Orthodox Church and far-right groups against the first Pride ever organised in Georgia in 2013 (Akin, as cited in Dunn, 2020; O’Neill, 2019; Meza, 2019; King, 2020; Barbican, 2021). He was of Georgian descent and recalled having felt “ashamed” (Akin, as cited in Dunn, 2020; O’Neill, 2019; Meza, 2019; King, 2020). This feeling of shame can be

⁴ Levan Akin is Swedish. However, his origins are Georgian. His parents moved from Georgia to Sweden during the Soviet era.

understood as a diasporic national identification that is not based on citizenship. The shock of these images led him to travel to conduct research on the subject in Georgia and create this film (Akin, as cited in O'Neill, 2019; King, 2020). He described his work as a dissection or a deconstruction: "I find this world, and then I dissect it and find out exactly how it works" (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020).

Levan Akin's interviews revealed several interconnected objectives. The first was to make a realistic film. He declared that his work was driven by the will of "authenticity" (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020) to "make it real" (Akin, as cited in O'Neill, 2019). He aimed to offer a sense of identification to the Georgian audience (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019), especially its gay community (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020). To achieve this, he included many elements of Georgian reality, such as real-life sex workers (Akin, as cited in O'Neill, 2019; Lombardo, 2021) and subtle allusions that he considered to be very easily understandable by Georgian viewers, for example, concerning the quality of cigarettes available in Georgia (Akin, as cited in Barbican, 2021).

Levan Akin described his film as an attempt "to open and to start talking and to start some movements" concerning the LGBT community in Georgia, "to speak about it and [...] to change something" in a "really closed" society (Akin, as cited in ZFF Zurich Film Festival, 2019). The director saw his film as a tool to raise awareness and, potentially, reduce homophobia in Georgia and beyond: "I wanted to make a film that could potentially have the power to change minds in Georgia, in Ukraine, and that part of the world - something accessible and quite broad. Somebody's mother in Georgia - not necessarily a homophobe, but unsure - would see the film and realise that LGBT people are struggling with their lives just like everyone else." (Akin, as cited in Gray, 2019). This objective marks a desire to liberate a place for LGBT people in Georgian society and, perhaps, ease their difficulties.

Levan Akin's interviews also revealed a desire to reclaim identity. According to him, the film aimed at reclaiming Georgian culture, making it "inclusive" (Akin, as cited in Stroude, 2020) and showing that it was compatible with different forms of sexuality (Akin, as cited in Meza, 2019; King, 2020; Stroude, 2020). He summed up this action as follows: "I wanted to show that there wasn't any contradiction in loving your heritage, being part of your culture, and also breaking the norm" (Akin, as cited in Meza, 2019). For him, it was about reclaiming a Georgian culture that he considered "dictated by a few" (Akin, as cited in Stroude, 2020). He declared and regretted that the young Georgian generation disregarded and rejected its heritage because it was hijacked by "bigots". (Akin, as cited in King, 2020). These statements may confirm a desire to negotiate Georgian national identity by redefining its sexual component.

On the other hand, these objectives were not intended to be violent (Akin, as cited in Dunn, 2020; O’Neill, 2019; Allaire, 2020; Lombardo, 2021; Anderson, 2019). He wanted “to make a celebration of Georgian tradition and culture” (Akin, as cited in Lombardo, 2021) and considered his film as “a love letter to the country, and to culture and art and how they're always changing” (Akin, as cited in De Semlyen, 2020).

4.2. Traditional Georgian dances as an expression of Georgian national identity

This subchapter presents the descriptions of Georgian identity and traditional Georgian dances offered by the participants and Levan Akin in various interviews. This subchapter reveals a substantial similarity between Georgian dances and Georgian identity. Both are built around ideas of survival, gender, and heteronormative prudishness.

4.2.1. Description of Georgian national identity

This first section focuses on the description of Georgian identity by all the participants and Levan Akin. Despite their varied responses, analysing their answers reveals several significant aspects of the Georgian identity.

4.2.1.1. A dual identity

Firstly, seven spectators and one actor emphasised the ambivalence and duality of contemporary Georgian national identity. Generally speaking, two types of duality were found in the course of the analysis:

- “Original identity” versus “perverted identity”
- “Caucasian Georgian identity” versus “European identity”

Few participants evoked the first duality. According to them, there was initially a pure, progressive, and non-violent Georgian identity that Russia and the Soviet Union had perverted. For Zurab, Georgian society is now divided between those with a progressive definition of Georgia and those with a “Soviet mentality”. Actor_1 insisted, above all, on this Soviet influence. In their view, the Soviet Union left a very inward-looking Georgian identity that did not respect the progressive and cosmopolitan identity promoted by the founding fathers. Actor_1 believed that the Soviet Union diverted Georgia from its European path by declaring

that Georgia, without it, would have now been a “regular European modern free-thinking society”.

The second duality, mentioned by four viewers, takes up this European element, where “Europe” is synonymous with “European Union”. In this framework, Georgia is either perceived as a European country or as a unique Caucasian one. All of these viewers defended this European identity in a meliorative way. They saw Europe as a natural right, synonymous with liberal values, development, and progress that benefit Georgia. Ketevan, 22 years old, declared: “We should be part of Europe because we are European people, and we want to be part of Europe”. At the same time, another camp is building up, which, according to Eteri, rejects any idea of “Westernization”. Participants did not recognize themselves in this second group. Ketevan spoke about it as “Caucasian identity”. Eteri saw this camp as an “other” that considers Western identity a threat to Georgian traditions and values. According to this view, Georgian identity is not European but unique, or at least Caucasian. This identity is mountainous, traditional, and Georgian Orthodox.

4.2.1.2. Three aspects of traditional Georgian identity

Most participants focused on traditional Georgian characteristics when asked to describe Georgian identity. In their discourse, three main themes emerged: the notion of survival, religion, and gender.

A surviving nation:

The majority of the participants mentioned the question of survival. In their view, Georgia is a country that has managed to survive numerous wars and invasions. Numerous interviews referred to war (and, therefore, defence) metaphors illustrating Georgian identity. For instance, Salome considered survival as part of the Georgian genetic “code”. In this rhetoric, the Georgian nation is constructed as one constantly obliged to defend itself and fight for its integrity. Actor_2's reaction was particularly revealing in this regard: “Oh! Georgian national identity ! If you know the history of Georgia, we had many wars, many periods when we were occupied. Now, we are occupied by Russia as well. There were several times when we were occupied by all countries so Georgia is always thinking of defending itself”.

This defense is not just territorial. It is a much broader concept. As Ioseb declared: “We always need to fight for something: fight for our freedom, peace, for our territories, even for our culture. We always need to prove something to someone”. Analysis of the interviews also showed that this rhetoric was accompanied by a central figure, that of the warrior, and an ancillary notion of courage. Avtandil summed up the idea as an expression: “To be courageous is to be Georgian.” The war (and, therefore, defence) metaphor seemed to represent Georgian identity for most participants.

A religious nation:

Most participants also directly associated Georgian national identity with Christianity, specifically Georgian Orthodoxy. According to them, this is a central, even systematic, element for Georgians. As Salome explained: “It is a very Christian country with a majority of Georgians being Christians. When you are born, you are directly baptised”. In this sense, Georgians are expected to be Christian Orthodox. Salome and Sopiko explained this importance by religion’s historically unifying and saving role in Georgia. Salome declared that religion served as a tool of survival and hope during wars, explaining why it has always been an essential component of the Georgian identity. The importance of the Orthodox religion in Georgia gives a very influential position to the GOC. Participants generally described this influence as negative and inconsistent with Christian ideals. According to Sopiko, the Orthodox religion became perverted following the collapse of the USSR. It turned away from its historical role of bringing people together to become a tool for manipulating the masses. According to her, the GOC “has a huge influence on people's minds [...] many people are religious, but the ones who follow the Orthodox Church of Georgia, they are even ... It is fanaticism, really. It is unhealthy”.

A gendered and heterosexual nation:

The third component of Georgian identity frequently mentioned was gender. Many participants described Georgian identity as gendered, imposing numerous constraints on men and women, notably through traditions, whether related to their attitudes or even their bodies. Eliso explained that this entire frame of reference is “heterosexual” and, therefore, heteronormative. Any other type of sexuality does not seem to be part of the Georgian national imagination.

The participants overwhelmingly described Georgian identity as generally male-dominated and associated with manhood. As Ketevan pointed out, the “Georgian man”⁵ is the central figure. This figure is driven by several imperatives expressed by the participants. The “Georgian man” is the leader, the masculine, even aggressive, the proposer, the *supra*-speaker⁶, the breadwinner, the warrior, and the defender. He is the dominant and active figure. The figure of the woman is constructed as a mirror. She is the one who is directed, who is asked to marry, who serves in *supras*, who is defended. She is dominated and passive.

This narrative shows Georgian men and women as complementary and symbiotic. According to the interviews, this symbiosis is achieved through marriage (with a religious undertone). According to Ketevan, this tradition is now weaker in big cities but remains essential in the villages, especially in mountainous regions. The wedding is a ritual that seals the union of man and woman, their respective traditional roles, their sexual relations, and their family’s future to be built (which is presumed to include childbearing). As Ioseb explained, a “family only exists between man and woman [...] It is impossible to imagine a family existing between man and man or woman and woman in the Georgian traditions”. A few spectators also revealed the importance of female virginity in this marriage tradition. As Salome declared about sex: “Women get pressure not to have it at all, and men get pressure to have it as early as possible”. Zviad also mentioned a tradition in this regard that if a woman “is not a virgin, the value of her as a bride lessens”. According to him, it invites families to protect their daughters’ virginity.

⁵ How the respondent presented this archetype of the “Georgian man” can be correlated with the term “Gruzini”. It is a word of Russian origin used in Georgia to negatively and mockingly qualify someone conforming to the masculine ideals of the Soviet era.

⁶ The *supra* is a traditional Georgian feast. It is an integral part of Georgian culture, included on Georgia's list of Intangible Heritage. Supras are marked by numerous toasts.

4.2.1.3. Heteronormativity and homophobia

The last point mentioned in the description of the Georgian nation is homophobia. All the respondents deplored this situation, especially LGBT participants. Twelve participants considered most of the Georgian population homophobic, and some even considered the country itself homophobic. Levan Akin also acknowledged this widespread homophobia (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020; O'Neill, 2019; Allaire, 2020).

Most of the participants described homophobia in the form of physical and verbal aggression. Five participants, including one actor, mentioned homophobia manifested as insults against sexual minorities such as “pederasti”⁷. Six participants evoked physical violence, such as in 2013 and 2021. Symbolic acts of violence were also mentioned. According to five participants, including one actor, LGBT people in Georgia often suffer a denial of their rights or existence, with very popular phrases such as “There are no gays in Georgia”, meaning that because they are LGBT, they cannot be Georgian. This generalised homophobia leads to the ostracisation of LGBT people in Georgia. They are excluded from the secular political and social life of the nation. Six participants, including one actor, said they considered LGBT people isolated and discriminated against in Georgia. According to most participants, this homophobia is a source of stress, pain, and economic hardship for LGBT people. For example, one participant mentioned his friend's difficulty finding a job because of his “feminine appearance”.

Two LGBT participants also confided in me their stress and difficulties in continuing to live in the country. Ioseb declared in this regard that, despite his love for his country, being bisexual in Georgia was now too stressful to handle. According to him, the life of a queer person in Georgia is dictated by three possibilities: fleeing the country, coming out publicly but being permanently insecure, or hiding one's sexuality. Almost half of the participants told me that, in most cases, LGBT people hide their sexual identity to avoid discrimination and violence. Four participants also gave me examples of the first option. The second option was never mentioned.

Some participants offered explanations for this homophobia. Five participants mentioned the Church and the Georgian government (or both) as promoters of homophobia.

⁷ From Greek *paiderastia* : *pais* - “boy” and *erastēs* - lover. This word is always used as an insult.

Actor_1 believed that there was genuine homophobic hatred in Georgia but that it was more often manufactured and instrumentalised by the Georgian Orthodox Church and the government for political purposes, notably to turn Georgia away from the EU and NATO, as LGBT people were traditionally considered among the most supportive of these two organisations. Five viewers mentioned the Georgian population's general lack of education about sexuality and sexual minorities within families and the education system. Marina even considered the Georgian education system homophobic, instilling a biased conception of queer people in schoolchildren from an early age. This lack of education echoes Levan Akin's comments that many Georgians are “homophobic by default” because they have never met gay people and think it is weird (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020; O'Neill, 2019; Allaire, 2020; Anderson, 2019).

Although many participants described Georgian society as homophobic, most of them, including some LGBT participants, also declared that they had observed a clear progression in recent years and decades. Levan Akin also supported this position (Akin, as cited in ZFF Zurich Film Festival, 2020). None of them stated that the situation had worsened. The testimony of Avtandil, himself a member of the LGBT community, was particularly revealing: “In recent years, as a Georgian, I am seeing much progress in terms of LGBT rights and how people happen to change their opinions”. This dynamic of inclusion was nevertheless nuanced by the participants according to four variables:

- Age: Four participants stated that acceptance of LGBT people was primarily a dynamic of younger generations. Levan Akin also supported this position and noted a significant generational gap in Georgian society (Akin, as cited in Meza, 2019; King, 2020). He declared: “It's like the 1950s and 2019 are living simultaneously in Tbilisi at the moment” (Akin, as cited in Meza, 2019).
- Geography: Two participants viewed Tbilisi as offering a more inclusive environment for LGBT people. The regions, on the other hand, were perceived as very homophobic.
- Gender: Salome stated that girls are more inclined to accept LGBT people than boys, even among the younger generation.
- Cultural capital: One participant considered the “academic and intellectual society” more accepting than the rest of Georgian society.

4.2.2. Description of traditional Georgian dances

4.2.2.1. National symbolic importance of Georgian dances

The interviews revealed Georgian dances' symbolic importance in the broader national self-image. Most participants, including one actor, said these dances were paramount in Georgian society. This popularity was also confirmed by Levan Akin (Akin, as cited in Quinzaine des Cinéastes, 2019). The majority of participants declared that they appreciated these dances. Levan Akin shared his appreciation of Georgian dances several times (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019; American Film Institute, 2019; King, 2020). A few participants added that these dances were particularly significant for the older generations. According to Avtandil, this importance is explained by a dynamic developed “in the 20th century when we collected all the dances and shaped it as the Georgian dances”. This process is akin to the “invention of tradition”. The respondents highlighted several symbolic functions to explain the importance of these dances.

According to most of them, including one actor, these dances are part of their cultural heritage and enable them to define themselves as Georgians. Salome and Marina said these dances “create” and “define” the Georgian identity. This identification was associated with a vocabulary of pride. Several said they were proud to know how to do these dances and emphasised their importance for their families' pride. According to Marina, knowing Georgian dances is a way of making “Georgians proud of themselves”. For a few of them, these dances had a representational vocation for the Georgian population. There was the idea of passing on cultural heritage. According to Avtandil, this feeling is particularly strong for religious, traditional and conservative people. They help define what is Georgian and, as Zviad pointed out, what is not. One respondent declared that these dances were a “clear representation of Georgian culture and how different from all the other cultures it is [...] and how unique it is”.

According to most participants, this identification was to be linked to the reminder of the survival of the Georgian nation thanks to its warrior values. They considered that these dances represented Georgia's tormented history of invasions, wars, and conquests and acted, in this way, as an identity reminder. Ioseb declared: “It shows us how we have survived in the past because Georgian history is so much about the wars, struggling, survival, and those traditions, those ways of living. It is just reminding us how we have survived”. These dances, therefore, go beyond their simple aesthetic performative function. They are a narrative and a reminder of Georgian history.

Zurab said this survival dimension of identity was particularly important in preserving Georgian identity during the Soviet era: “It was the way to show Georgian identity and to say that “We are not Russians. We are Georgians” but in a beautiful way that was allowed by the Kremlin or Russia”. Therefore, the myth of Georgian survival in dance is also a tool of identity-based resistance.

4.2.2.2. Learning the nation through dances

The interviews highlighted how important the learning process of Georgian dances was. They revealed dance learning as a veritable initiation rite. Most respondents learned Georgian dances as children and declared that learning these dances as a child is an extremely common practice in Georgia. This learning appeared, in their words, as a tacit social imperative⁸. Sopiko said: “It happens naturally to learn dances and teach it to your child. It has a huge meaning”. It is expected, even natural, for a Georgian to know how to do these dances. It is a possible marker of identity.

Although widely practised, this apprenticeship is not compulsory. It is an extracurricular activity. Five interviews revealed that it is most often the parents who enrol their children in these classes without their consent. One participant even declared that he was forced to go to dance by his parents. Their version was unanimous on this subject. Georgian parents generally expect their children to know how to do Georgian dances. The idea of transmission seems to drive this apprenticeship. It is particularly true for Ketevan, who declared: “We should respect it and attend these classes and study and learn dance. We will keep it and will never forget how to dance [...] we will dance and it will be kept”.

Several participants described the atmosphere in these dance classes when they were children. Their accounts revealed an intense, even violent, apprenticeship for boys. Ketevan recalled a strict apprenticeship, with parents sometimes forcing their children to participate, as mentioned above. Actor_1 spoke of a “toxic” environment where homophobia and violence were trivialised. In their opinion, this violence is still accepted. They remembered seeing instructors screaming and insulting eight and nine-year-olds during filming: “It was horrible to watch. I remembered that was my childhood. That was how we were treated”. Marina, for her

⁸ Brides and grooms who do not know how to dance traditional Georgian dances often take private dance lessons in order to perform these traditional dances during their wedding.

part, believed that this practice is now less accepted by society but mentioned many friends who have been abused during these classes. On the other hand, for both Actor_1 and Marina, this violence is deliberate and staged. According to Marina, this violence is “how you are supposed to learn because you should learn discipline, you should learn to be more resilient and tough”. Learning Georgian dances is more than just a leisure activity. Instead, how Georgian society perceives it and how it is learned reveals an apprenticeship of the nation through the body. There is the idea that, by teaching the body to do these traditional dances, Georgian learners perpetuate and keep alive their national identity.

4.2.2.3. The Georgian National Ensemble as a national authority

Analysis of the interviews also revealed another dimension of Georgian dance: the prominence of the Georgian National Ensemble. Most participants mentioned this Ensemble, one of whom described it as “the most nationalistic” place of Georgia. For Ketevan, Ensemble dancers embody the nation: “They are Georgians. They are Caucasian people. That is the mentality”. Actor_1 summed up the importance and influence of this Ensemble: “In society, it is regarded as the epitome for culture, and it is highly respected and sacred, I would say. However, it is sacred not as an art form but as one particular dance company with a monopoly, like a moral monopoly on what [Georgian dances] should be”. In this regard, the Georgian National Ensemble acts as a moral authority in defining Georgian national identity through traditional Georgian dance. It is described as an agent of Georgian nation-building.

However, this Ensemble seems to be characterised by a certain versatility. Two participants described the Ensemble as innovative. According to them, the Ensemble has not hesitated, in recent years, to reinterpret Georgian dances with elements that Eteri described as “European” and Ketevan as “modern”. Both considered these elements synonymous with greater physical closeness between male and female dancers. The inclusive description presented here is, however, contradicted by two dynamics. The first dynamic highlighted a limited understanding of inclusivity. Several participants explained that the Ensemble appeared hostile to the LGBT question. Two participants said that the Ensemble refused to collaborate with the film because they did not want their image to be associated with the LGBT community. According to Sopiko, when the production team contacted the Ensemble, the latter's management said: “In Georgian dances, there is no place for gay people, and they called other dance studios and told them not to help” Levan Akin. The latter confirmed these comments (Akin, as cited in King, 2020; Stroude, 2020). He described it as a real boycott action that

considerably impeded the realisation of the film (Akin, as cited in O'Neill, 2019; King, 2020; Stroude, 2020).

The second paradox concerned the response to change from a part of the Georgian population. Both Ketevan and Actor_1 noticed that the population reacted positively to the changes brought by the national Ensemble but not by “And Then We Danced”. They explained this treatment difference because the Ensemble is considered a respected authority in Georgia. Actor_1 deplored this situation. In their opinion, trying to participate in the renewal of Georgian identity is very challenging “because the pushback is too hard”. Actor_1 also noted that only certain people, notably the directors of the National Ensemble, benefited from such transformative authority and found this unjustified because Georgian identity is “a collective thing [... that] belongs to all of us (Georgians)”. According to them, if the attempt to reinterpret the dances comes from the Ensemble, the population will accept it “but when [it is] an LGBT film, it is a perversion, and it is not Georgian dance and it is disgusting”. In Actor_1’s opinion, this exclusive, “close-minded” character is a “shame”, and it hinders the international promotion of Georgian dances.

4.2.2.4. Dances and sexual nationalism

A final element completes this analysis of Georgian dances made possible by the participants' testimonies: gender and sexuality.

Dances and gender depictions:

All the participants mentioned the question of gender in Georgian dances. Five participants explicitly stated that Georgian dances were based on this question. As Ketevan stated: “There are roles in Georgian dances. The roles are between girls and boys”. Through the interviews, these roles appeared radically different. Ten participants commented on the roles of men in these dances, and many stated that Georgian dances were, above all, a matter of men and masculinity. Actor_1 declared: “Georgian dance culture focuses mainly on man, mainly on being a manly man when you are dancing, and masculinity.” This was also the perception of Levan Akin, who described it as “so masculine” (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019).

These ten participants described the male Georgian dancer with the following words: “brave”, “strong”, “fighting”, “courage”, “demand respect”, “active”, “manly”, “flashy”, “ready to fight”, “warrior”, and “dominant”. The Georgian male dancer is also the one who must resist pain. According to Avtandil, these dances aim at “perfection for men [...] you can perfect it by hurting yourself [...]. I would say, in Georgian dances, it is considered something godly. It is not even human. It is very elevated, and if you are masculine enough, you are doing it right”.

Some participants associated Georgian male dancers with the figure of the warrior. Marina spoke of a “protector.” According to Lela, this figure is perfectly illustrated in specific dances where male dancers must simulate fights with swords. According to her, it “represents this long way of Georgian fights and stuff and their eagerness to save whatever they have to save, like the country or maybe wives or whatever”.

At the same time, most participants, including Actor_1, described the role of Georgian female dancers as starkly opposed to that of their male colleagues. In the majority of cases, the Georgian female dancer was described as “sensitive”, “feminine”, “calm”, “very shy”, “supporting”, “soft” “very vulnerable”, “submissive”, “light and airy” or even “delicate”. This vocabulary revealed a more subdued, docile, and passive female role. In this imagery, the Georgian female dancer appeared as an ideal of femininity with an almost sacred and angelic allure. At the same time, and paradoxically, a second figure of the dancers was proposed by Avtandil. According to him, the role of women in certain Georgia dances can be understood as that of prey. He mentioned a dance where the role of the women is only to flee the men who seek to catch them. In this case, female dancers appear as objects of desire.

Georgian dances create two stereotypical archetypes of Georgian women and men that fit the general description of gender roles in Georgian nationalism discussed above. The gender imagery represented by Georgian dances goes beyond the individual identities of their participants. It is not just about showing that the men on stage are masculine but what Georgian men must be. It is not only their identity as men that is performed, but also that of Georgian men. The same pattern is applied to women. This argument was also validated by Levan Akin, who stated that: “dancing really shows the traditional patriarchal norms of Georgia in a way that you can instantly explain to a viewer who's not familiar with Georgia and what it's all about” (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020).

This argument was reinforced by the comments of Ketevan and Marina, mentioning a dance that transgresses this traditional role of women in Georgian dances. In this dance, the female dancer is disguised as a man and dances like a Georgian man. At the end of the

performance, the dancer takes off her hat and reveals her hair. The public then understands that the dancer is a woman. If this woman is authorised to perform this dance, it is because her identity becomes masculine during the time of the dance. It, therefore, reinforces the idea that a dynamic and robust dance is a man's dance that is not dedicated to women.

Heteronormative framework:

The interviews revealed that this gendered imagery also had a heteronormative component. This is what Marina mentioned when declaring Georgian dances to be based on “very heteronormative ideals.” The discussion of sexuality in Georgian dances was discussed with seven participants. All, except Actor_2, stated that there was no sex in Georgian dances. For them, sexuality and Georgian dances are contradictory.

This absence of sexuality in Georgian dances was linked, according to most of them, to the idea of distance between men and women. People of opposite genders never touch each other. According to Eteri and Zurab, it is a question of modesty and respect of men towards women. Coupled with the image of the warrior, this notion of respect gives rise to an image similar to the chivalrous figures of courtly love in the Middle Ages, where the valiant man protects and respects women. This distance rule is only valid for people of different sexes. As one of the respondents mentioned, men regularly touch each other on stage because it is not perceived as an act of brotherhood. It may reflect a heteronormative framework where homosexuality is not imagined. As explained by some participants, this physical distance is also exacerbated by the dancers' clothes that wholly cover their bodies. According to three spectators, this distance on stage has a social significance, seeking to represent the ideal of prudishness within the Georgian population. According to Salome, these dances represent the taboo that is sex in Georgia. For two other participants, they represent “the roles of men and women in the family” and “the dominant idea about their social representation about their sex, of their social norms that men are dominant.”

Invisibilisation of a queer heritage?

None of the participants said that queer people had a place in Georgian dances. Instead, Georgian dances appeared to all the participants as a place excluding queer people. Only Levan Akin mentioned in an interview knowing a former gay dancer who was fired from his ensemble because of his homosexuality (Akin, as cited in Kappeler, 2020), and Actor_1 mentioned a

former dance partner whose homosexuality was discovered years later. In both cases, their homosexuality was hidden. Levan Akin also mentioned in several interviews that he had to anonymize the name of the choreographer who helped the realisation of the film in his own condition because he was afraid to lose his job otherwise and be ostracised (Akin, as cited in Meza, 2019; King, 2020; Barbican, 2021). Several participants said this absence of queerness in Georgian dances was not always total. Their testimonies revealed what can be considered an invisibilisation of the queer heritage of Georgian dances.

A small number of the participants, including Actor_1, as well as Levan Akin (Akin, as cited in Barbican, 2021), mentioned the existence of an ancient dance reflecting nonheteronormative sexualities in Georgia. Interestingly, descriptions of this dance had a distant, ancient, uncertain, and even legendary aspect. According to these participants, this dance, “Kintauri”, was a celebratory dance only practised by male gay merchants in Tbilisi. These merchants were called “Kintos”⁹. It is said to be the only Georgian dance in which men are allowed to have so-called “more feminine” movements. This dance constituted a transgression. For three participants, the existence of this dance meant that queer people had not always been rejected in Georgia. Avtandil thought, on the other hand, that they were not accepted but simply mocked entertainment. For three participants and Levan Akin, political choices ultimately made this dance invisible. For Avtandil, it was a change of internal social norms: “The queer folk used to dance it, and they changed it because the society did not want to be this way.” For two other participants, this change could be explained by external causes. For Sopiko, this change was provoked by the importation of sexual norms from the Russian Empire into Georgia. For Actor_1, this invisibilisation was to be compared with the folk dancing policies of the 20th century, that is, the Soviet cultural policies. Levan Akin also shared this vision and stated that “the dances were sort of changed 50 years ago” (Akin, as cited in Barbican, 2021).

Two participants also mentioned the figure of the ballet dancer Vartang Chabukhiani¹⁰ (1910-1992). He was described as a very famous former dancer of the Soviet era whose

⁹ The figure of the “Kinto” is now an icon of Tbilisi Pride. The logo of Tbilisi Pride depicts the silhouette of a Kinto.

¹⁰ Even if he was a classic ballet dancer, the treatment of his sexuality is relevant to understand the nexus between art, sexuality and nation in Georgia.

homosexuality everyone knew without it blocking his career. According to Eteri, this silence and this acceptance were explained by his popularity. His talent compensated for his sexuality: “He was dancing so well, so we do not need to talk about his orientation”. His homosexuality was tolerated because it was hidden and, in this sense, was not a problem for Georgia. The figure of Chabukhiani represents, in this sense, not an acceptance of homosexuality in Georgia but, on the contrary, a taboo and, therefore, an invisibilization.

4.3. Protecting the nation: demonstrations and opposition to the film “And Then We Danced”

This subchapter presents the various manifestations of violence directed against the film “And Then We Danced” and the rhetoric used as justification. This analysis reveals various forms of violence, most of which seem to have been perpetrated by so-called “vulnerable” individuals under the influence of politico-religious elites. In the logic of the demonstrators, their violence is perceived as a defense of the Georgian nation and, therefore, goes far beyond the simple artistic framework. Homosexuality and the Georgian identity represented through traditional Georgian dance are perceived as an affront and a threat to their country's integrity. This subchapter also reveals a geopolitical dimension, placing the film between the European Union and Russia.

4.3.1. Rare and violent demonstrations

4.3.1.1. An unusual artistic situation

These events were surprising because, as most viewers and the actors explained, contemporary Georgian cinematography is underdeveloped and not very influential. Avtandil described it as “pretty much non-existent”. Three participants declared that Georgian cinemas were saturated with foreign films, especially Hollywood blockbusters, and five explained that the only really popular Georgian films were those from the Soviet era. Actor_1, nonetheless, acknowledged that Georgian cinema today was a work in progress and saw the progressive establishment of a film industry.

The main reason cited to explain this lack of influence was financial. Directors do not receive enough funding, and the population either does not have enough money to go to the cinema or, as Marina explained, has become accustomed to watching films illegally online.

Two participants also mentioned the lack of support and even censorship of the Georgian government. According to Sopiko, the government is “pro-Russia” and opposes developing this industry to block freedom of expression. Finally, Eteri mentioned a structural reason: the lack of cinemas in Georgia. According to her, cinemas only exist in Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi, and she believed it was the main reason why films are not important in Georgia today. For all these reasons, it seems rather unlikely that these demonstrations were caused by simple cinematic preoccupation. Contemporary Georgian cinema is not perceived as a central element of Georgian culture and does not seem to be a significant interest for its population.

4.3.1.2. Opposing the film with violence

Many participants and Levan Akin shared their perceptions of the protests against the film. All of them, including Levan Akin, mentioned that the demonstrators had tried to block the entrance to the cinema to prevent spectators from seeing the film (Akin, as cited in Barbican, 2021). Levan Akin also mentioned that they created a “corridor of shame” through which the viewers had to go through to enter the cinema (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020). Many described the protestors’ actions as violent. There were two types of violence. Some insisted on the physical dimension, referring to people being pushed, beaten, or pelted with stones. Eteri declared she had seen personal acquaintances who were victims of such violence. Two spectators also said that they remembered a female spectator who had suffered a head trauma. Levan Akin mentioned that one person and two police officers were injured (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019). Other spectators mentioned the verbal dimension of the violence as shouting, insults, and threats. Three spectators recalled the radical nature of their words, describing the demonstrators as ready to destroy and kill. Levan Akin also mentioned numerous threats, including death threats sent to him online even a year after the film's release (Akin, as cited in Bayley, 2021; De Semlyen, 2020).

All participants deplored these violent acts. The adjectives “terrible”, “horrible”, and “bad” were often used in their descriptions. Half of them also used the lexical field of fear. One of the participants admitted that he had given up going to the cinema because of the anxiety the violence had caused him. It is also interesting to note violence’s effect on some LGBT people. For example, Zurab remembered being psychologically affected by the violence: “I was not in Georgia, but I was really stressed [...] It is really stressful and painful because this violence is addressed not only to the people who are under this violence at that moment but totally, to the people who have non-traditional sexual orientations, for example”. Here, fear

becomes a communal affair that transcends the bystander group. Because it was interpreted as homophobic violence, Zurab also felt threatened as a queer Georgian.

4.3.1.3. Violence foreseen by the national authorities?

As one of the spectators explained, the organisers announced these demonstrations in advance. The actors' comments and Levan Akin were particularly interesting in this regard, as they revealed that the government had imposed specific security measures on the film crew. Actor_1 explained: "You had to have security. You had to have metal detectors, and there was what the Ministry of Internal Affairs demanded. So you could not refuse. You had to do that".

Actor_1 and Levan Akin (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020; O'Neill, 2019; Barbican, 2021) revealed extensive security measures, all confirmed by Marina, the only participant to have seen the film in a Georgian cinema. She said that she had even considered not going to the cinema because of the violence shown in the media. She described a multi-stage security procedure, with several police officers asking for tickets, then a bag search followed by a metal detector and another ticket check before finally being allowed into the auditorium. According to her, the atmosphere was very anxiety-provoking: "In each corner, a policeman was standing, and they were checking the people, and they were very cautious. I remember they were also checking under the chairs. I was getting already paranoid."

These testimonies demonstrate the severity of the threats and violence and reveal an actual securitisation of the demonstrations in the sense that they were perceived as a real threat to public order, requiring exceptional means. However, these exceptional means were not covered by the government and were too extensive to be implemented over the long term, according to Levan Akin (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019; Barbican, 2021). The total security represented more than 50,000 Georgian laris, according to Actor_1. It equated in December 2019 to a cost of 15,582 euros (around 17,450 euros today). It was an extremely high cost for a Georgian film that the production team could not meet, especially since, as Actor_1 and Levan Akin explained, a pirated version of the film was leaked on the Internet and had, therefore, impacted the film's potential profits at the cinema (Akin, as cited in Barbican, 2021).

4.3.2. Profiles of the protesters

Studying the profiles of protesters revealed several insights into the nature of their actions and motivations. All the participants in this study and Levan Akin provided information on the profiles of those who participated in the protests against the film. An analysis of these statements allowed us to separate the actors of these demonstrations into two categories: the demonstrators themselves and the organisers of these demonstrations.

4.3.2.1. Crowd's profiles

According to three spectators, one actor, and Levan Akin, the people who participated in the protests against “And Then We Danced” were a minority. Actor_1 estimated their number at 500. However, this actor disagreed with the viewers about the representativeness of this group. According to Actor_1, it was a minority in a population that, overall, accepted the film, whereas, for the viewers, it was a minority in a majority that did not accept the film. Ioseb declared in this regard: “Yes, I would say that most of them did not like it. Well, to take a number, maybe 90%. However, from those people, most of them were not aggressive that much because not so many of them went to the riot [...]. They were just a minority of those people that generally do not accept the LGBT community in our society”. Nevertheless, most of the interviewees agreed in describing this minority as extreme and violent. Many participants described their profiles as aggressive or extreme. Marina described them as “very extremist groups”, Salome as “radical movements” and Ketevan as “ready to kill”.

For several spectators, Actor_2, and Levan Akin, these demonstrators also stood out for their respect for Georgian traditions. Eteri said they call themselves “the people who protect Georgian traditions”. According to the comments received, these traditions are those defined earlier in the subchapter 4.2. They are mainly linked to the importance, according to Ketevan, of the family and the Georgian Orthodoxy. Religion was the most frequently mentioned traditional aspect. According to the various testimonies, these demonstrators were very religious and viewed religion as akin to fanaticism. According to Eteri, they see themselves as “protectors of the religion” and “protectors of the homeland”. The two are synonymous here, as “homeland” is associated with the Georgian Orthodox religion. Levan Akin called the demonstrators “bigots” (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019), and Salome declared that they were “crazy about” the religion.

On the other hand, most participants, including the two actors, considered these protesters disadvantaged and, for some, even vulnerable. A significant point in this description was that, for many participants, these protesters were mainly elderly. They did not believe that young people took part in these events.

The main inequality that the spectators and the two actors mentioned was the intellectual capital of the demonstrators. From this stemmed an idea of narrow-mindedness mentioned by the majority of participants. They considered them to be poorly educated and lacking in critical thinking skills. For Marina, their lack of “common sense” explained the violence of their actions. For Avtandil, it was the lack of sex education and poor teaching of biology at school that explained their negative attitudes towards queer people. Eteri considered their violence related to a lack of cultural education: “None of them have this cultural life, and they are just violent and brutal and think they can solve problems by beating the people”.

Several viewers also felt that their attitude was partly linked to a lack of exposure abroad. Salome declared: “Obviously, these are not the people that studied abroad, for sure! [...] They are not internationally exposed”. Discovering foreign (and probably Western) countries is synonymous with an inclusive mentality. This lack of exposure abroad may result from a lack of economic resources. This is in line with Actor_1 and Zurab, who considered that most of these demonstrators belonged to the lower or middle working classes and faced various economic difficulties such as unemployment.

From this general description, many participants considered these demonstrators fragile people. Eliso and Sopiko saw their situation as synonymous with “insecurities” and “complexes”. Ketevan said these problems made them vulnerable: “They are more vulnerable than the people in this situation, who are criticised for their feelings and emotions”.

For many participants, this disadvantaged profile made these protesters highly manipulable. Political and religious elites instrumentalised their lack of resources to further their own agendas. These elites were accused of orchestrating the protests against “And Then We Danced”. Actor_1 spoke of “mostly manufactured” homophobic violence. In this logic, these demonstrators became victims, presented by many participants as misinformed and manipulated. As Ketevan stated: “They were just easy to influence”. Several viewers even asserted that these demonstrators did not know why they were protesting against the film.

4.3.2.2. Profiles of the organisers

According to many participants, the protests were organised by two types of elites: Church representatives and conservative politicians. They were accused of manipulating the demonstrators, whose profiles have been described above. Actor_1 stated: “The violence is mostly manufactured by the Church and, I would say, by the government and people who are just interested in gaining power”. Although different, the participants considered them acting in pairs, as they shared common interests. This analysis revealed what appeared to be a political instrumentalization of the film “And Then We Danced” to promote a conservative, pro-Russian identity agenda.

A religious elite:

According to eight participants, including Actor_1, and Levan Akin, this event was primarily directed by religious leaders from the GOC. Levan Akin said that this institution had publicly condemned the film before its release (Akin, as cited in Barbican, 2021). According to the participants, its leaders denounced the film in the name of their beliefs, and many took part directly in the protests. Ketevan declared: “There were so many people around the building [...] and there were so many [...] who represented the Church”. Several respondents expressed their surprise at the latter’s vehemence and their incitement to violence. Avtandil declared: “Crowds were even encouraged to be violent, and a very upsetting part of it is that clergymen, the members of the Georgian Orthodox Church, were involved in it, and they were even encouraging people to stand the ground and fight”. In the participants’ words, the Church was directly seen as inciting violence and hatred.

A conservative political elite:

According to the vast majority of participants and Levan Akin, these religious authorities were also accompanied by several political figures whom they generally placed on the conservative side of the Georgian political spectrum. Some, including Levan Akin, described them as “far-right” (Akin, as cited in American Film Institute, 2019; Gray, 2019; Barbican, 2021). Participants always described them as highly influential and promoters of hatred and division. Eteri described them as “super violent, brutal parts of our political life”.

Several political parties and movements were named several times by participants, such as “Kartuli marshi” (Georgian March), a conservative movement modelled on “Russiki march” in Russia, “Eri”, a conservative movement meaning "nation" in Georgian, “Alt-Info” and the “Conservative Party”. For some participants, these political parties and movements have instrumentalised the film “And Then We Danced” for their own communication and political agenda. Some participants, including Actor_1, believed these movements were in the government’s pay. Zviad said they were not natural movements but were founded by the Georgian government to defend their conservative policies and traditional Georgian identity.

This internal political agenda was associated with geopolitical considerations for five participants and Levan Akin (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019). They considered these parties and movements pro-Russian if not directly financed by the Kremlin. In their view, these parties and the demonstrators who follow them want good relations with Russia because they see it as a more compatible ally than the EU. Eteri declared: “All of them are pro-Kremlin [...] and there are people who believe we should be friends with Russia because we have the same religion, same history for years, and that is it”.

4.3.3. National protection motivations and rhetorics

Finally, this study was completed by analysing the justificatory rhetorics employed by the demonstrators. It shed light on several rhetorics that extensively referred to a single and traditional Georgian identity. In this sense, they largely echoed the agendas of the political and religious authorities mentioned above. All the respondents were opposed to these rhetorics and described them as vehement. Although different, these rhetorics formed a coherent, unitary whole. All were linked to a vocabulary of offence such as: “mocking”, “disrespectful”, “attacked”, “deterioration”, “destroyed”, “disease”, and by extension to that of defense with words such as “protectors”, “protect”, “defend”. Their rhetoric promoted a securitisation of the film so they had to resort to extreme means: blocking the film to protect the Georgian nation. Interestingly, these rhetorics were also often found in Russia, a country with which participants associated the protests. In all, five types of rhetoric were revealed in the comments made by ten participants.

The first rhetoric was that of religion. It was mentioned by seven participants and considered by two of them to be the most frequently used. The demonstrators invoked their faith in Georgian Orthodoxy to oppose the film. As Zurab explained, “Georgia is a Christian country, and for Christian countries, for Christian culture, for Orthodox culture, it is [...] a

difficult topic”. According to Eteri and Salome, the demonstrators invoked the religious rhetoric to describe the film “full of sins” and present themselves as “protectors of the religion”. Religiously speaking, they placed this film in the category of “sins” and themselves in the camp of good. Their violence was, therefore, legitimised since they were working for Orthodoxy and, therefore, for Georgia and God.

This rhetoric was intrinsically linked to that of Georgian identity since, for the demonstrators, Christian identity and Georgian identity are inseparable. Seven participants mentioned this rhetoric. It was about opposing the film because it represented a gay relationship. It opposed not only the Orthodox faith but also the Georgian identity. The point here was to oppose any affirmation of homosexuality in Georgia since a “Georgian gay does not exist”. As several participants explained, combining homosexuality and Georgian dance was seen as an attack on their national identity. According to Sopiko, it was perceived as “mocking Georgian traditions” and as “disrespecting our country and our traditions”. For Ioseb, this was even the main reason for their aggression. According to Zviad and Eteri, these demonstrators presented themselves as “protectors of homeland” endowed with the mission of “defending Georgian identity”.

Two participants mentioned the third rhetoric. This was the rhetoric of nature. According to the latter, homosexuality is “abnormal” and “unnatural”. It defies natural norms and must, therefore, be opposed. As the film depicts homosexuality, demonstrators must also, by syllogism, oppose it.

The fourth rhetoric was the rhetoric of propaganda. According to four spectators, the demonstrators denounced the film as propaganda. Two participants specified it as European propaganda. According to Ioseb, this rhetoric was as follows: “Europe is trying to take our Georgian identity, Georgianness, from us. So this kind of film, for them, is some kind of propaganda”. Homosexuality was associated with Europe and, therefore, with something that threatened Georgian identity. This rhetoric was based on a technique of othering, where Georgia was perceived as not being European, and on a securitisation technique by presenting this “Other” as threatening. The film thus became a tool for Europeanisation's supposed domination through artistic representations of homosexuality.

The fifth and final rhetoric identified was the rhetoric of medicalisation, where homosexuality was perceived as a contagious disease. As Ioseb explained mockingly, the idea was that seeing this film would make the viewer gay, “Yes, if you watch it, this disease will be shared to you”. According to three viewers, this rhetoric was specifically aimed at children. The children here constituted a group, which, as Ioseb explained, represented the “future

generation” and implicitly was related to the myth of the nation's survival highlighted earlier. The children symbolise the future of the entire Georgian nation. If the children see this film, they run the risk of becoming gay and, by extension, of not ensuring the biological survival of the Georgian nation.

4.4. Effects of the film “And Then We Danced”

The analysis of the interviews revealed three levels of assumed or realised action of the film “And Then We Danced”: personal, national, and international. These observations concerned both the subjective perception of the participants (perceptions of the self) and their perception of others (how the participants see the impact of this film on subjects other than themselves). This subchapter revealed impacts that are not only artistic but also social, political, and identity-related.

4.4.1. Personal impacts

The first level of impact was personal. It was divided into two categories: the impact on the film's actors and the impact on its viewers. No data on Levan Akin has been found as regards this impact.

4.4.1.1. Actors’ experiences

The two actors in this study declared that “And Then We Danced” had influenced their lives. One of them described this impact as “huge”. This impact was linked to a gain in notoriety, the effects of which translated into more professional and media opportunities, as well as, for one of them, the attainment of recognised activist status.

Actor_2 mentioned that they felt a great sense of pride following all the messages of thanks they received for participating in the film. These messages made them feel useful. It also enabled them to boost their acting career by being contacted by other producers to play in subsequent Georgian films.

For Actor_1, the influence was even greater. On a personal level, they felt that the film had made them more tolerant and accepting, even of homophobic people. They considered this understanding approach necessary to bring about change in society. It has also had a major impact on their professional and public life. According to them, the film provided certain

national fame, which came with a sense of responsibility: “I now felt the responsibility that whatever I would say or do down the line, would somehow in a minuscule way but still impact something on a bigger scale than three of my friends as me”. According to Actor_1, this has created a personal need to promote human rights in Georgia. Nevertheless, they considered this notoriety a double-edged sword because it also exposed them to the risk of instrumentalization. On this subject, they mentioned certain Georgian media that have tried to use their image for their own agenda by pretending to be interested in the causes they defended in the film.

4.4.1.2. Spectators' experiences

According to nine viewers, the film did not affect their national or sexual identity. Many explained it by the fact that they had already been sensitised to the issues of the Georgian LGBT community before this film. It did not seem that the film had a substantial impact on their subjective identity.

On the other hand, several heterosexual participants declared that the film had given them a better understanding of the reality of LGBT people in Georgia and increased their empathy towards them. Zviad declared: “It made me understand the other side and how people feel on the other side of the spectrum”. Eteri thought she became more interested in the economic condition of LGBT people in Georgia after this film. In this sense, the film has increased their social inter-group awareness.

The film's impact on LGBT people seemed greater but more mixed. Access to their testimonies was precious in this analysis because they offered an insider approach that may differ from an outside-sider perception (non-queer Georgian person). Their testimonies revealed experiences and perceptions that differed in two opposite directions. Two of them said that the film had not made them question their identity but had aroused negative emotions because of its accuracy. Avtandil considered the film to have been “quite hurtful”. Zurab shared the same point of view. He declared that the film aroused “some protest” in himself and compared his viewing experience to that of a Gulag inmate forced to watch a documentary on conditions in the Soviet camps. He considered it “not necessary” and “cruel”.

For the other two LGBT people, the experience was diametrically different. They said that the film influenced the way they perceived their identity. Seeing Merab ecstatic with Irakli made Lela realise that many other LGBT people, including herself, could find themselves in this situation. It gave her hope and a sense of representation of her emotions. This feeling was also shared by Ioseb, who considered that he “changed after that a lot”. According to him, the

film's central impact was precisely in this representativeness, and he insisted that it is not a “gay film” but a “Georgian gay film”. He declared that he had long dreamed of “seeing that people like [him] also existed in [his] local community”. According to him, seeing his identity as a gay Georgian represented for the first time “meant a lot” to him and “gave [him] some strength”. This point depicted “And Then We Danced” as a tool of representativity and empowerment. In this second case, the film allowed LGBT viewers to better understand their situation accurately without being hurtful and empowered them.

4.4.2. Impacts on Georgian society

4.4.2.1. A strong, multifaceted, and contrasted impact

The second level of analysis was national. The nation is understood as an “imagined community” in this part. It refers to the perception of the Georgian nation as a single whole and includes additional elements related to a meso-analytical level. Here, these meso-elements are understood as also participating in defining the national level for simplicity and comprehensibility.

This level of impact was multifaceted. Firstly, it was essential to note that for almost all the participants, including the two actors, this was a major film for Georgia. Actor_2 declared the film an “important film of Georgia, for Georgia”. Their comments were often accompanied by expressions presenting the film as going beyond its artistic function, such as “I cannot call it a regular film”, “a public action” or “It is just a film, and it is not just a film”. These comments were also confirmed by Levan Akin, who declared that the film had been a “game changer” (Akin, as cited in De Semlyen, 2020) and a “huge deal” in Georgia (Akin, as cited in O’Neill, 2019).

The question of the nature of the impact, however, was more divided. The film had no major positive effect on the Georgian population for four viewers. Zurab, for example, felt that the film was “not for Georgian people”, as it depicted a daily life they were already familiar with. Two others were less radical but felt the film had no long-term effect.

At the same time, many of the interviews revealed national impacts. These impacts were sometimes even unconsciously reflected in the statements of the participants. Six of them, including one actor, openly considered that the film had positively impacted the Georgian population. In four interviews, as well as in the words of Levan Akin, a lexical field of necessity was also found, with the idea that Georgian society was waiting for such a film for its own

good. Ketevan declared that this film was a “necessary film for our society at the beginning of changing our mind” and Sopiko that “Georgian society really needed it” and that the “society was waiting” for it.

4.4.2.2. Opening up a space for dialogue

One of the effects most emphasised by participants was the opening up a space for dialogue. Everyone agreed that the film had been widely discussed in Georgia. Actor_2 declared: “That was an impact. We started talking about it”. The interviews revealed three main dialogue spaces: oral conversations, social networks, and television. Other means of communication, such as radio or the press, were not mentioned. All participants mentioned oral conversations. All had attended a discussion about the film with at least one friend, and eleven, including the two actors, with at least one family member. Social networks and television were both mentioned by 8 participants. Several of them told me they remembered the TV media discussing the film in generally negative terms. For Zurab, these conversations were mainly a way of letting “Neo-Nazis” spread their ideas. On the other hand, Levan Akin refuted this statement by declaring a generally positive reception of the media (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020; Meza, 2019; King, 2020).

For many participants, this has created a space for dialogue in the public space on a subject they consider taboo in Georgia. This taboo is represented by the popular expression “Georgian gay does not exist”. By denying their existence, it also denies any need for conversation. In this respect, the film acted as a taboo-breaker. The ideas of “showing” and “speaking” were frequently mentioned by participants and Levan Akin. Avtandil preferred to speak of this film as a “pusher” against homophobic social norms. The idea expressed here was particularly interesting since it revealed a confrontation at the national level understood here under the spectrum of sexual nationalism. This idea was encompassed in discourses of national identity and values attempting to overthrow a normative order based on the marginalisation of the Georgian queer question.

Eteri offered the most comprehensive explanation: “It was just a film that showed everything that no one talked about in our society. People were just criticising the LGBT community, and they were never talking about the problems, about their feelings, how hard it is for them to come out [...] what they think and how they want to live”.

These words were shared by Levan Akin, for whom this film “really leaped the dialogue of this topic ahead, like, 20 years” (Akin, as cited in Burger, 2020). He declared: “[this film]

means a lot for the Georgian people because we really need this kind of thing and these kinds of attempts to open and to start talking and to start some movements, you know, because the society is really close and like they did not take in so easily, and we have to speak about it and we have to change something so it means like a lot for me” (Akin, as cited in Svenska Filminstitutet, 2019). By showing the reality of Georgian LGBT people, this film invited the Georgian nation to shatter the myth that “Georgian gay does not exist” and start a discussion about them. It did not necessarily mean acceptance, but at least recognition in the public arena.

4.4.2.3. Reconciling national and sexual identity

Between civic and traditional conceptions of Georgian national identity:

Most participants - including Actor_1 - considered that the film also showed that Georgian national identity and queer identity were not antinomic. It is interesting because, at the same time, the majority of participants did not feel that the film had attempted to “redefine” Georgian identity. It, therefore, revealed two different conceptions of Georgian identity. For most participants, this film did not redefine Georgian identity, as they already considered it compatible with a queer identity. For others, the film illustrated it but did not redefine it. The question of redefining Georgian identity is, therefore, one of perspective. Those who thought of Georgian identity primarily as civic identity, saw this film as a representation confirming the compatibility of LGBT and Georgian nationality. Those who thought the film redefined Georgian identity, like Actor_1 and Ioseb, were thinking primarily of traditional Georgian identity, which is heteronormative. For Ioseb, this film was proof that “that can happen”. He declared: “This film can show very well in this context, how these two kinds of things that seem very far from each other, gay and Georgian, can be one thing”.

A film part of a national dynamic of inclusivity:

On the other hand, five participants also saw the film as part of a national dynamic of inclusivity. For them, the film was not a simple and separate event but also part of a line of events linked to LGBT inclusivity, particularly the violence of 2013. In this idea, the violence against this film was not understood as a state solely linked to this film but as generalised homophobic violence. The idea of “steps” was dominant in the interviews. Zviad, for example, declared: “We are opening up more and more, and this film was a step in the right direction”.

Sopiko went so far as to speak of Georgia's queer history. For her, the violence of 2013 was the first queer activist event in Georgia, and this film was the second. Some of these participants saw a dynamic less divided into stages but a process of acceptance. Zviad considered it a learning process: “I think that society still learns how to react when they see people from the queer community [...] They are learning, and they have learnt a lot after this film”. Levan Akin agreed with this idea of progression, seeing the film as an activist movement in Georgia. According to him, the film’s music was regularly used during various demonstrations as a tool of “revolution for young kids and the younger generation in Georgia.” (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019).

Ridiculing homophobia:

Six participants, including the two actors, also said that the film had helped to mock the demonstrators in front of a large part of the population. Avtandil described their action as “satiric and quite fun.” According to both actors, this ridicule was positive. According to Actor_2, it showed art cannot be fought against, while according to Actor_1, it helped to dissuade further homophobic violence: “When people identify themselves with them, they feel ashamed, and then they do not want to be associated with homophobes anymore.” This mocking process probably cannot eliminate the expression of homophobia, but it can at least prevent its unabashed public expression. Actor_1 declared: “That is good enough now, but that is a step in the right direction. When the violence is gone, we will have it”.

Impact on the LGBT population:

More specifically, six participants shared their impressions of the film's effect on the Georgian LGBT community. Zurab, an LGBT person, felt that the film had only brought stress by exposing them to the difficulties of their daily lives. Five other participants, including one actor and two LGBT spectators, thought differently. They felt that the film had given the Georgian LGBT community a sense of representation. Avtandil described the film as an “encouragement” and a “big deal” for the LGBT community because they “could see themselves in the main character and they could see themselves on the big screen, and then they could also see that there is a resolution for everything”. Ioseb also agreed: “It gave us some kind of power and some kind of confidence that, if some kind of relationships, like romantic relationships, are shown in the film, that we also have some right to exist in real life,

without any kind of worries”. The film was interpreted here as a medium enabling the LGBT community to be represented in the Georgian national community. It was a mainstreaming process in the sense of de-marginalising something or someone. It was about de-marginalising the Georgian queer identity and empowering its representatives.

This confidence that Ioseb mentioned was also evoked by Sopiko, who claimed to have observed several of her friends come out of the closet and reconcile with their own identities as a result of this film. According to her, there was a causal link. Avtandil also mentioned that this film could be a suitable medium for coming out to one's parents. Without extrapolating the impact of this film, it can have contributed to a process of identity acceptance.

Initiating a process of representation in Georgian cinema:

For some participants, the film also initiated a process of LGBT representation in Georgian films. All the participants declared that this representation was non-existent before “And Then We Danced”. On the other hand, three people mentioned a very popular series called “My Wife’s Girlfriends”¹¹. Although this was not a film, it did inform the representation of LGBT people in the Georgian audiovisual milieu. The series, which is very popular in Georgia, periodically showed LGBT secondary characters. According to Ioseb, this is the only TV series to have chosen to represent LGBT people in this way. Otherwise, they are either invisibilized or portrayed negatively. For Eteri, these people were always secondary and temporary to keep viewers from shock. “And Then We Danced” is seen by these participants as an inclusive trigger for Georgian cinema. According to Actor_1, this process of inclusivity is now in development, but acknowledges that “it takes time”. For Avtandil, the emergence of this type of film also “gives much opportunity to the Georgian actors who want to push those boundaries” and can, in this sense, be understood as a tool for the emergence of artistic activism.

¹¹ “My Wife's Girlfriends” is a popular satirical-humorous Georgian TV series aired since 2011. It currently has 19 seasons representing no less than 930 episodes lasting. This series represents the life of several childhood friends: Kato, Nina, Tina, Natashka, and Anka (from season 5). In each episode, the series deals with one or more contemporary societal issues in Georgia.

4.4.2.4. Assumed impacts

Finally, it is interesting that eight participants, including one actor, considered the film as having assumed transformative effects. Levan Akin also defended this idea. Their comments revealed a belief that this film likely could not bring about drastic mental changes but at least could start a process of reflection for homophobic people who might see it. It underscored the idea of the film's "potential power". They presented the film through a dichotomy as representative of the truth and those who opposed it as mistaken or ignorant.

However, not all participants had the same idea of the film's potential power. According to Ketevan, the film's effect on homophobic people was indisputable: "It will broaden their mind, thinking-mind which is very important [...] The more Georgians will watch this film, the more Georgians will change their minds". According to others, the film was the first step in the process of reflection that could eventually lead to greater inclusion. Actor_1 and Avtandil thought it could at least make homophobic people refrain from their aggressions and be "more emphatic".

Some, such as Levan Akin, were more moderate. In an interview, he confirmed that if more people could have seen his film, they might have felt differently (Akin, as cited in Anderson, 2019). He claimed to have seen this effect on some "homophobic by default" viewers. He illustrated his point with the example of an old woman who watched and appreciated the film: "Maybe she would have gotten riled up if somebody came up to her like, man, those gays are gonna get married on the street. But when she sees this movie she's like okay it's just a regular kid and love is love" (Akin, as cited in O'Neill, 2019).

Ioseb saw it as a medium to begin rethinking Georgian identity: "They should watch because, also me, I should have watched to start thinking about how Georgianness, like Georgian identity, and contemporary life and LGBT people can get along".

Finally, two participants considered the film as a medium for Europeanisation. For them, wanting to enter the EU meant accepting this film. On this subject, Zviad declared: "If a Georgian wants to join the European Union, which is our main goal, and if Georgians want to be represented as part of Europe, culturally. So, if a Georgian person wants to adopt European values and liberality, I think one should watch this film. It would be one of the first steps". Ketevan respected the same analogy and considered "And Then We Danced" as an exercise in accepting difference, which she saw as a value intrinsic to European identity.

4.4.3. Impacts beyond Georgia's borders

Levan Akin and six participants believed this film has had an impact abroad. Their comments revealed different impacts that can be considered “positive impacts” or “negative impacts”.

The first purported effect was that the film focused international attention on Georgia. This discovery could be positive and negative. Lela was delighted with the film's international audience because Georgia deserved international exposure and recognition for its talents. At the same time, Lela, like Ketevan, felt the protests against the film damaged Georgia’s nation-branding. In this respect, dealing with homophobia in Georgia negatively affected its image abroad.

Three other participants said the film was a good medium for introducing foreigners to the reality of contemporary Georgia. In their testimonies, the idea of “showing” was particularly recurrent and seemed to highlight the realistic aspect of this film on this subject. For example, Marina declared that she had downloaded the film to show her foreign friends “a short glimpse of the situation in Georgia regarding this topic”. Ioseb also shared this vision when he watched this film a second time with his foreign friends in Bulgaria: “I was just thinking that I could not express in a better way that this film could show what was going on in Georgia”. For these respondents, the film positively impacted Georgian LGBT rights.

Finally, according to two other viewers and Levan Akin, this film was particularly useful for Eastern European people. According to Eteri and Zurab, people from Eastern Europe were more likely to appreciate this film because of the similarities between Georgia and their countries. Zurab said the film could benefit young people in the Baltic states, as they share the same problems as Georgia, but at lower levels. According to him, if people from these countries watch this film, they will be shocked and understand that their situation is easier than it is in Georgia. This idea of similarity seemed to be confirmed by Levan Akin, who stated that many young Ukrainians and Poles wrote to him to support him and express “how much this [film] means to them” (Akin, as cited in Meza, 2019). In this regard, this film went beyond its function of advancing Georgian LGBT rights but obtained a positively perceived function of advancing LGBT rights internationally.

Chapter 5: Discussion of the results

This analysis confirms several dynamics mentioned in the existing literature and highlights new ones. Given this study's wide variety of results, only the central dynamics will be discussed here. These results are subjective by the very nature of the interview method. They also sometimes present themselves as an objective reality in that the participants think that the specific dynamics they express are objective while considering that they can evolve.

Firstly, these results confirm previous assessments of the state of Georgian cinema. The descriptions of Georgian cinema by the participants echo the analysis of Dönmez-Colin in 1998. The latter described it as largely underdeveloped, inundated by Hollywood films, and struggling to secure sufficient investment (Dönmez-Colin, 1998, pp. 160-161). Also, as several participants emphasised, and as was already pointed out by 1998, directors sometimes struggle with censorship (*ibid.*). This study, therefore, reinforces these findings and shows how relevant they remain today. The results of this study also confirm those highlighted by Sherouse in 2017, according to whom few cinemas now exist in Georgia and are mainly frequented by young and privileged Georgians (Sherouse, 2017, p. 139). I would also add to this description the urban identity of these spectators found in Sherouse's assessment. This study also highlights the increasing importance of the Internet for Georgian films, both as an opportunity and a challenge. Nevertheless, despite this current state of affairs, the interviews conducted, particularly the comments by Actor_1, attest to the gradual development of Georgian cinema. It confirms the opinion of Ochiauri, who in 2021 observed the emergence of a "Georgian New Wave" with the potential to affect Georgian society and its cinema (Ochiauri, 2021, p. 131).

This data also allows us to discuss the role of Georgian dances in detail. Firstly, it is clear that for most participants and the Georgian population, these dances represent the Georgian nation. These results show that the dances enable a sense of identification and attachment to the Georgian national identity by constructing a "self" and an "other". They can, therefore, be defined as "symbolic boundaries of membership" (Storm, 2018, p. 196). They intrinsically participate in the set of signifiers that the Georgian nation is.

Data analysis also suggests that these traditional dances are part of an unspoken identity journey. Georgians are expected to know how to perform these dances. As a result, many young Georgians are encouraged by their parents to take dance lessons. It is a way of learning about the nation through the body. More than a leisure activity, these classes are intended to transmit the national identity perceived in these dances to future Georgian generations. It is about

learning to “dance the nation”. It confirms Shay's idea that traditional dances are “depicting and representing the nation” (Shay 1999, p. 35).

An essential element of this discussion is that the myth of survival marks the representation of the Georgian nation in these dances. According to the results, these dances illustrate the Georgian nation's long tradition of war and survival. As expressed in the interviews, these dances define who Georgians are by reminding them of a shared, tormented history. In this sense, it may be possible to consider these dances as what Parfitt calls “embodied memory forms” (Parfitt, 2021, p. 4). For the Georgian nation, they represent sites of transmission of national memory and, by extension, practices of national identification. They are “mnemonic artifacts” in that they are “any material or practice that harbors meanings based on past culturally accepted and established attributes” (Ofosu, 2021, p. 138). Also, their repeated collective learning supports Samsonadze's suggestion that the survival of traditional dances is primarily due to a collective effort (Samsonadze, 2021, p. 327).

These results also reveal the domination of the Georgian traditional dance landscape by one actor: the Georgian National Ensemble. It fulfils the function of a national Ensemble as described by Shay, namely “to embody the nation” (Shay, 1999, p. 39). This function is widely recognised by the respondents, and, again, according to them, by the majority of the Georgian population. By claiming to be the guardian of authentic traditional dances, the Ensemble has authority over the definition of Georgian dances. It chooses what may or may not be represented. At the same time, specific “modern” or “European” elements may be included in their repertoire and, through their authority, accepted by the population, while others, such as queer elements, are not. This Ensemble, therefore, has authority on what traditional dances must signify for the Georgian nation.

Finally, as most participants mentioned, these dances are gendered and heteronormative. It confirms Fisher's observations that, while recognizing the strength and delicacy of both male and female dancers, most of the time, female dancers have a “decorative” position to stress the dance of their male partners (Fisher, 2014, p. 64), and that Georgian dances are heteronormative performances in which contrasting male and female styles “symbolize one version of wholeness” (Fisher, 2014, p. 73). They also re-actualise Shay's observations that traditional Georgian dances of the Soviet era represented a “powerful male sexuality” and “very muted” females (Shay, 1999, pp. 38-39). It also echoes the comments of the journalist Nino Salia in 1958 about the “chivalry” and the “highest worship of women” expressed in the Georgian dances (Salia, 1958 as cited in Gigashvili & Gigashvili, 2021, pp. 81-82).

The results of this present thesis are important because they are not based on the perception of a foreign researcher-observer but on the opinions of Georgian actors and spectators themselves. However, the interpretation of these results also goes further, as it considers here that the different gender attitudes of the dancers serve as an idealised representation of gender dynamics in Georgia. In other words, the interaction of two genders on stage represents an ideal of interaction between the two genders for the Georgian nation as a whole because these dances, as previously explained, represent the nation.

This representation is based on an active man and a passive woman but also on an ideal of feminine chastity symbolised by a physical distance between male and female dancers and fully covered skins. It allows us to state that these traditional dances embody Georgian sexual nationalism, by which Georgians are understood as an “imagined sexual communit[y]” (Jaunait et al., 2013, p. 7). Georgian dances are also catalysts of a Georgian (hetero)sexual ideal that can directly be applied to the idea of “heteronationalism” previously mentioned (Slootmaeckers, 2019).

However, this representation of the nation is not only heteronormative but also homophobic, according to the study results. As the results show, homosexuality in Georgian dances is taboo. It is not imagined in the “imagined sexual community” represented on stage. So, for example, while any contact between dancers of the opposite sex is proscribed because it could carry a sexual message, contact between the same sex is frequent because it can only translate into brotherhood and sisterhood. When an attempt is made to include a queer identity in this referential of Georgian dance, it is rejected by the institutions that represent it (the Ensemble) and the population, because the very Georgian identity these dances represent is considered hostile to queer people. If a “Georgian gay does not exist”, then a “Georgian gay dancer does not exist” either. On the other hand, the results of this study are particularly interesting in that they suggest that this supposed incompatibility between queer identity and Georgian dance (and, therefore, the Georgian nation) is the result of a policy of invisibilisation. Indeed, it would seem that there has been a queer history of Georgian dance, but one that has been invisibilised. They are not part of the current repertoire. It confirms Shay's view that the repertoire of dances is a political choice that defines who represents the nation and who does not (Shay, 1999, p. 40). In the current frame of reference, queer people are not represented on stage and, therefore, are not represented as part of the Georgian nation's signifiers set. In summary, traditional Georgian dances can be considered as “mnemonic artefacts” representing Georgian identity as one of survival, heteronormative, and excluding queer people.

This study also makes another point about using art in Georgian national sexualism. It answers the research question of this thesis concerning the role of art in the negotiation of Georgian sexual nationalism. Art can be mobilised in this negotiation and become a centre of encounter and conflict between different understandings of Georgian national sexual identity. This research shows that it is possible, through a film, in this case, “And Then We Danced”, to attempt to promote a different version of the Georgian idea. In the case of “And Then We Danced”, this is done by redefining traditional Georgian dances. This film proposes not only a redefinition of Georgian dances to include queer people but a version of Georgian identity as a whole that includes queer people. It tries to include queerness in the Georgian nation’s signifier set. As the results above show, for some, this version of queer identity is a redefinition, for others, it is not because they do not have the same understanding of Georgian identity. For some, it seems to be a civic identity (including queer people), and for others, a traditional identity (excluding queer people). The idea of redefinition is one championed by Levan Akin and Actor_1.

We can interpret this film as a medium for identity negotiation by confronting two different signifiers set of the Georgian nation. The results show several trends. Firstly, this film was designed to provoke empathy with an inclusive aim. This is in line with Landsberg's idea that films have a unique capacity to reveal other perspectives that are otherwise intimately inaccessible, and are, therefore, particularly compelling tools for producing empathy (Landsberg, 2003, p. 148). For Landsberg, this enables the renegotiation of memory collectives (Landsberg, 2003, pp. 149-150).

Here, I take up his logic and assert that they can also aim to renegotiate identity. I admit, however, that this difference is minimal, particularly in the case of Georgia, where, even in dance, collective memory and collective identity are strongly tied up around the myth of survival. Here, the film's aim (and, for some viewers, its effect) is a more inclusive proposal of the Georgian national idea by including queer people. It echoes the literature review on sexual nationalism of this thesis. This film can be considered as an attempt of “queering the nation” in the sense of transforming the national space into “an ambivalent and more accommodating space of homosexual identifications” (Kulpa, 2014, p. 791). Szulc's words are particularly transposable here: based on our analysis, this film about Georgian dances can be seen as an attempt of “domesticating the nation” in the sense that queer and national symbolism are coupled “so that queers too feel minimally at home” (Szulc, 2016, p. 318). In other words, it aims to stretch the nation’s “symbolic boundaries” (Zubrzycki, 2016, p. 82).

At least for Levan Akin and Actor_1, the transmission of this version of Georgian identity is associated with a form of activism that can be associated with the figure of the claim-maker. The claim-maker, to use the definition of Kharchilava and Javakhishvili, is the person “who articulates and promotes claims with the intent to convince the targeted audience to accept their claims as true” (Kharchilava & Javakhishvili, 2010, p. 85). They explained: “while making claims, a part of society addresses another part. This is a communicative process between claim makers and claimant clients, or those who receive the claims” (Kharchilava & Javakhishvili, 2010, p. 86).

This film also helped to highlight a desire and a need for representativeness for the Georgian LGBT community. The analysis of the interviews reveals a supposed and admitted need (by some of the LGBT participants) for representativeness in the national sphere. Ioseb’s comments were particularly striking on this subject. Therefore, “And Then We Danced” can be perceived as a “cinematic representability”, which is defined by its “possibility of representing a certain object or theme on the screen” (Chao, 2000, p. 234). Through the screen, queer and Georgian identities are reconciled through the Georgian dance of Irakli and Merab. This film can bring a feeling of representativeness and, therefore, of inclusion in the national sphere. It participates in contestating the myth that “there are no gays in Georgia” based, as we have seen, on a secular political nationalism affirming a supposed incompatibility between Georgian and queer identities. In a sense, it tries to participate in the contestation of what Du Bois called a “double consciousness” which is the feeling of having an identity divided into different parts that seem difficult or impossible to unify (Du Bois, 1994).

On the other hand, it seems important here to insist on the word “attempt” because the result is not absolute. First, for LGBT participants, it can also create suffering because of its realism. It recalls events experienced. More commentary on this suffering would exceed the ambitions of this thesis because it relates more to the field of psychology than to the social sciences. Second, as explained previously, this film has created highly varied reactions. This film also provoked demonstrations with plural violence. The description of the demonstrators and their rhetoric shows a classic example of nation-building, according to Benedict Anderson, for whom this process of negotiation between different groups can provoke the eruption of intense and violent disputes (Anderson, 1883). While the film defends a civic and inclusive vision of Georgian identity, these demonstrators, on the other hand, according to the data collected, defend a traditional (religious) and exclusive vision of this identity. The intensity of this duality around this film can confirm the comment of Gal and Kligman in 2000 concerning

the importance of sexuality in the national identity transformations within the post-soviet countries (Gal & Kligman, 2000).

On this subject, the profiles of the adherents to this second definition seem partly confirmed by the results of previous research and, in particular, that of Mestvirishvili et al. on homophobia in Tbilisi (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017). Like their study, our results show a strong link between homophobia, lack of education, and conservative values (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017, p. 1273). On the other hand, according to them, religious attendance was not correlated with homophobia (Mestvirishvili et al., 2017, p. 1268), while our results seem to show the opposite. The difference in results can be interpreted as follows: they focused on any type of homophobia (including non-violently expressed), while the homophobia profile revealed by our interviews only focused on a violent homophobic minority. In this sense, religious expectation and age are not markers of generalised homophobia in Tbilisi but can be the marker of violent homophobic expression. Our results also suggest in these profiles a lack of foreign exposure (referred to the West), which would merit further study. The results show a strong vehemence in their actions and rhetoric with a very marked defense vocabulary. There is the idea that this film attacked their idea of the Georgian nation because it displayed queerness in the context of Georgian dances.

However, as was widely emphasised by respondents, much of this violence and hatred seems to be manufactured and instrumentalized by political and religious elites for their own political agendas. These demonstrators are then perceived as victims whose economic and social vulnerability has been exploited.

As we said earlier, traditional Georgian dances act as mnemonic artefacts. They define the Georgian identity by representing the Georgian past. This past is a combat past but also a heteronormative past where homosexuality has not been depicted. The scandal and the repercussions of this film can also be interpreted as a “mnemonic conflict” in the sense of a reformulation of a collective identity provoking a confrontation between several mnemonic actors (Kubik & Bernhard, 2014, p. 16). This film crystallises Georgian identity through dances seen here as sexualised national memorials.

This debate around Georgian identity is also part of a broader identity debate between Russia and the EU. For some, this film is a pledge to improve Europeanness. Their point of view confirms earlier findings confirming the new centrality of sexual minority rights in terms of cultural imagination and the idea of democratisation (Jaunait et al., 2013, p. 9; Mepschen & Duyvendak, 2012, p. 71; Puar, 2011, p. 139). However, for others, it represents a Europeanness to be fought by agreeing with Russia. Their rhetoric and actions show, as Stychin already

mentioned in 2001, how the European Union's sexual agenda might be considered a threat and an attempt at colonisation of national narratives (Stychin, 2001, p. 295). Their opposition confirms previous studies that explained the centrality of the EU in the identity discourses and negotiations in Georgia, especially from a religious and conservative standpoint (Kakabadze & Makarychev, 2018; Tolkachev & Tolordava, 2019; Luciani, 2021; Shevtsova, 2022). Therefore, to some extent, this debate around "And Then We Danced" also has geopolitical ramifications regarding Georgia's identity and place between the EU and Russia. It illustrates that sexual nationalism is also a question of identity at the geopolitical level (Jaunait et al., 2013, p. 9).

Finally, interestingly, this study shows a feeling of projection of Georgian sexual nationalism to other post-communist countries such as Ukraine or the Baltic countries. There is in this the idea of possible transmissibility in the name of past and common characteristics. This feeling of resemblance can, in this specific context of sexuality, be perceived as a sign of a feeling of "region" in the sense of sexual "region-building" (Neumann, 1994).

Conclusion

This study answers the research question and its related secondary questions exposed in the introduction. Art can be mobilised in the negotiation of Georgian sexual nationalism in becoming a nexus of encounter and conflict between different sexual understandings of Georgian national identity. Thanks to the case study of the film “And Then We Danced”, which used first-hand interviews with spectators and actors and second-hand interviews with its director Levan Akin, we were able to highlight how art can create encounter and tension between two sexualised sets of signifiers related to Georgian identity. These collected data revealed subjectivity and objective reality in that many participants consider their descriptions objective but potentially evolving over time.

On the one hand, we have a film that seeks to offer a sexually inclusive definition of Georgian national identity through the image manipulation of traditional Georgian dances. Traditional dances are artistic mediums with an important place in Georgian national symbolism. They represent a surviving, heteronormative Georgian national identity that excludes queer people. The authority legitimising their representation on a national scale is the Georgian National Ensemble. The authority that defines what these dances are and what they are not, and by extension, what is Georgian and what is not. The words of Levan Akin and Actor_1 show that “And Then We Danced” appears here as a message of protest against this official narrative. They position themselves as claim-makers, declaring that Georgian dance, and by extension, the Georgian nation, are not incompatible with a queer identity.

On the other hand, we have strict and violent opposition from some of the Georgian population. The profiles, actions, and rhetoric reported by the participants in this study show a sense of defense in the face of what they consider an offence to the traditional (and therefore exclusive to queer people) idea of their Georgian identity. It seems to be largely supported by older generations. An actual securitisation of the film appears, perceived as a threat to the nation. Nevertheless, according to the data collected, this outbreak of violence seems to have been manufactured. The demonstrators appear more as vulnerable people (economically, socially, culturally) manipulated by the Georgian Orthodox Church elite and various extreme right-wing parties considered subordinate to the Georgian government or even to Russia. The Russian element is placed in perspective with positive or negative discourses towards the West, particularly the European Union. It can, therefore, confirm a geopoliticisation of the Georgian national sexual question between these two poles. While for some, this film is associated with a Europeanisation linked to an idea of democratic progress within the Georgian cultural

imagination, for others - especially for the demonstrators - it is associated with a threat to their traditional national narrative that needs to be fought based on the example of Russia.

At the heart of this debate is a Georgian population divided over the film “And Then We Danced” and related questions of identity. The sample obtained in this study only provides a perspective limited to educated and relatively privileged young people in Tbilisi, but it does shed light on several points. These young people generally accepted the film. Empathy has been highlighted as one of the primary outcomes produced for this audience. On the other hand, they feel that older generations have not accepted it, highlighting a generational gap. For some, the film is a redefinition of Georgian identity, while for others, it is not. Their points of view depend largely on their own definition of Georgian identity. When they see it as mainly traditional, there is a redefinition, whereas when it is civic and inclusive, it is not a redefinition but a representation. Interestingly, the opinion of LGBT people seems to be equally divided. While they generally welcomed the film and felt that their identity as LGBT Georgians was being represented for the first time, some of them seemed to have experienced pain when watching it. The question of the personal past and the psychology of the LGBT audience, therefore, seems to be a point that remains to be addressed. Nevertheless, despite divergent reactions to the film, the majority agree that it is an important film for Georgia and even a milestone in its development. It is widely credited with at least opening up a space for dialogue (and hence debate) about the queer element in Georgian national identity.

Finally, an element of resemblance and a sense of transposability with other countries in the post-Soviet space was raised. It could suggest a primitive form of region-building, at least as far as the sexual aspect is concerned. This topic remains open and may merit further attention in future research. Other avenues opened up by this thesis may also be considered. For example, it would also be interesting to study other art forms and assess their potential for sexual identity negotiation. It might also be interesting to compare the reception of “And Then We Danced” with that of other LGBT Georgian films that have since been released, such as “Wet Sand” (2021). This would help, as this dissertation has done, to extend and refine the literature on nationalism, queer, and culture in Georgia.

Bibliography

- Agenda.ge. (2022, September 16). *NDI survey shows increase in support for protection of LGBTQI+ rights in Georgia*. Agenda.ge. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://agenda.ge/en/news/2022/3554>
- Allaire, C. (2020, February 11). *In And Then We Danced, Georgian Traditions and Forbidden Love Intertwine*. Vogue. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <https://www.vogue.com/article/and-then-we-danced-levan-akin-interview>
- American Film Institute. (2019, November 6). *AFI FEST Interview : AND THEN WE DANCED Writer/Director Levan Akin*. American Film Institute. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <https://www.afi.com/news/afi-fest-interview-and-then-we-danced-with-writer-director-levan-akin/>
- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso
- Anderson, E. (2019, December 6). *Interview : 'And Then We Danced' director Levan Akin, stars Levan Gelbakhiani and Bachi Valishvili*. Awards Watch. Retrieved April 9, 2023, from <https://awardswatch.com/interview-and-then-we-danced-director-levan-akin-stars-levan-gelbakhiani-and-bachi-valishvili/>
- Arsel, Z. (2017). Asking Questions with Reflexive Focus: A Tutorial on Designing and Conducting Interviews. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44(4), 939–948.
- Bacchi, U. (2019, November 9). *Georgian police arrest more than 25 in clashes at gay movie premiere*. Reuters. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.reuters.com/article/georgia-lgbt-protests-idUKL8N27P0H6>
- Ballena, C. T. (2021). Qualitative Research Interviewing: Typology of Graduate Students' Interview Questions. *Philippine Social Science Journal*, 4(3), 96–112. <https://doi.org/10.52006/main.v4i3.376>
- Barbican. (2021, October 12). *ScreenTalks Archive: Levan Akin on And Then We Danced*. Barbican. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.barbican.org.uk/read-watch-listen/screentalks-archive-levin-akin-on-and-then-we-danced>
- Bayley, L. (2021, March 18). *"The Idea of Defiance is Universal" An interview with director Levan Akin*. Medium. Retrieved April 9, 2023, from <https://lewis-bayley.medium.com/the-idea-of-defiance-is-universal-an-interview-with-director-levan-akin-d7526609077b>

- Berlant, L., & Warner, M. (1995). Guest Column: What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 110(3), 343–349. <https://doi.org/10.1632/s003081290005937x>
- Bilge, S. (2012). Mapping Québécois Sexual Nationalism in Times of “Crisis of Reasonable Accommodations”. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 33(3), 303–318. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2012.673473>
- Billig, M. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. Thousand Oaks, Calif. :Sage.
- Binnie, J. (1997). Invisible Europeans: Sexual Citizenship in the New Europe. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 29(2), 237–248. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a290237>
- Brönnimann, A. (2022). How to Phrase Critical Realist Interview Questions in Applied Social Science Research. *Journal of Critical Realism*, 21(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767430.2021.1966719>
- Burger, M. A. (2020, February 10). *And Then We Danced* Director Levan Akin on *Revolutions and Robyn*. Interview Magazine. Retrieved April 9, 2023, from <https://www.interviewmagazine.com/film/and-then-we-danced-director-levan-akin-on-revolutions-and-robyn>
- Casula, P. (2015). Five Days of War and Olympus Inferno : The 2008 South Ossetia War in Russian and Western Popular Culture. *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 9(2), 110–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17503132.2015.1033946>
- Caucasus Business Week. (2019). “*And Then We Danced*” is Sold Around the World. Caucasus Business Week. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://cbw.ge/culture/and-then-we-danced-is-sold-around-the-world>
- Caucasus Research Resource Center. (2011). *Caucasus Barometer 2011 Georgia* [Data set]. Caucasus Research Resource Center. Retrieved June 7, 2023, from <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2011ge/JUSHOMO/>
- Caucasus Research Resource Center. (2021). *Caucasus Barometer 2021 Georgia* [Data set]. Caucasus Research Resource Center. Retrieved June 7, 2023, from <https://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2021ge/BUSINGA/>
- Cerulo, K. A. (1993). Symbols and the World System: National Anthems and Flags. *Sociological Forum*, 8(2), 243–271.
- Chao, A. (2000). So, Who Is the Stripper? State Power, Pornography, and the Cultural Logic of Representability in Post-Martial-Law Taiwan. *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 1(2), 233–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370050141113>

- Cohen, C. J. (1997). Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 3(4), 437–465.
<https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3-4-437>
- De Cleen, B., & Stavrakakis, Y. (2017). Distinctions and Articulations: A Discourse Theoretical Framework for the Study of Populism and Nationalism. *Javnost - The Public*, 24(4), 301–319. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2017.1330083>
- DeJonckheere, M., & Vaughn, M. L. (2019). Semi-structured Interviewing in Primary Care Research: A Balance of Relationship and Rigour. *Family Medicine and Community Health*, 7(2), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1136/fmch-2018-000057>
- De Lauretis, T. (1991). Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities *An Introduction*. *Differences*, 3(2), iii–xviii. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-3-2-iii>
- De Semlyen, P. (2020, March 9). ‘*And Then We Danced*’ director Levan Akin: ‘I still get death threats’. Time Out. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <https://www.timeout.com/film/levan-akin-and-then-we-danced-director-interview-lgbtq>
- Dönmez-Colin, G. (1998). Georgian Cinema: The Price of Independence. *Central Asian Survey*, 17(1), 157–162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634939808401029>
- Dreher, T. (2017). The “Uncanny Doubles” of Queer Politics: Sexual Citizenship in the Era of Same-Sex Marriage Victories. *Sexualities*, 20(1–2), 176–195.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460716645788>
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1994). *The Souls of Black folk*. Gramercy Books.
- Dulgheru, E. (2014). Serge Parajanov and Tengiz Abuladze: Two Models of Anti Communist Testimony through Cinema in Soviet Georgia. *International Journal of Orthodox Theology*, 5(3), 205-217.
- Dunn, J. (2020, March 10). *Levan Akin on And Then We Danced*. The Skinny. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.theskinny.co.uk/film/interviews/and-then-we-danced-levan-akin-interview>
- Edensor, T. (2002). Preface. In T. Edensor (Ed.), *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (pp. vi-viii). Berg Publishers.
- Edwards, P. K., O’Mahoney, J., & Vincent, S. (2014). Critical Realism and Interviewing Subjects. In P. K. Edwards, J. O’Mahoney, & S. Vincent (Eds.), *Studying Organizations Using Critical Realism* (pp. 109-131). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199665525.003.0006>
- Fabbro, R., Shoshiashvili, T., & Nikuradze, M. (2023, July 8). *Tbilisi Pride Festival cancelled after police fail to confront extremists*. OC Media. Retrieved July 16, 2023,

from <https://oc-media.org/tbilisi-pride-festival-cancelled-after-police-fail-to-confront-extremists/>

- Filax, G. (2006). Politicising Action Research through Queer Theory. *Educational Action Research*, 14(1), 139–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650790600585632>
- Fisher, J. (2014). Why Ballet Men Do Not Stand on Their Toes (but Georgian Men Do). *The World of Music*, 3(2), 59–77.
- Freedon, M. (1998). Is Nationalism a Distinct Ideology?. *Political Studies*, 46(4), 748–765. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9248.00165>
- Freude, L., & Waites, M. (2022). Analysing Homophobia, Xenophobia and Sexual Nationalisms in Africa: Comparing Quantitative Attitudes Data to Reveal Societal Differences. *Current Sociology*, 71(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921221078045>
- Gal, S., & Kligman, G. (2000). *The Politics of Gender after Socialism: A Comparative-Historical Essay*. Princeton University Press.
- Galletta, A. (2013a). Crafting a Design to Yield a Complete Story. In A. Galletta (Ed.), *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication* (pp. 9–44). New York University Press.
- . (2013b). The Semi-Structured Interview as a Repertoire of Possibilities. In A. Galletta (Ed.), *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication* (pp. 45–72). New York University Press.
- . (2013c). Conducting the Interview: The Role of Reciprocity and Reflexivity. In A. Galletta (Ed.), *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication* (pp. 75–118). New York University Press.
- Gamson, J., & Moon, D. (2004). The Sociology of Sexualities: Queer and Beyond. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 47–64.
- Gengiuri, N. (2021). Georgian Cinema Architecture in the Era of Soviet Modernism: (Modernity and Soviet Architectural Legacy). *International Journal of Arts and Media Researches*, 11(1), 201-205.
- Gigashvili, K., & Gigashvili, M. (2021). Georgian Cultural-Intellectual and National Islands beyond Ideological Frontiers. *Cultural Intertexts*, VIII(11), 71–83.
- Georgia Today. (2020, February 13). *Meet the Producer of 'And Then We Danced'*. Georgia Today. Retrieved April 9, 2023, from <http://gtarchive.georgiatoday.ge/news/19455/Meet-the-Producer-of-%E2%80%98And-Then-We-Danced%E2%80%99>

- Giurchescu, A. (2001). The Power of Dance and its Social and Political Uses. *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, 33, 109–121. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1519635>
- Gordon, A. (2020). *A New Eurasian Far Right Rising: Reflections on Ukraine, Georgia and Armenia* (Special Report January 2020). Freedom House. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/special-report/2020/new-urasian-far-right-rising>
- Gray, C. (2019, August 6). 'I couldn't have made this film if I lived in Georgia.' *The queer love story inspired by traditional dance*. New East Digital Archive. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.new-east-archive.org/features/show/11306/film-drama-reinvents-traditional-georgian-dance-as-a-thrillingly-contemporary-queer-love-story>
- Gutiérrez, L. G. (2001). Mexican Nationalism, Mass Media, and Gender/Sexuality: Unmasking Lies in Ximena Cuevas' Video Art. *Latin American Literary Review*, 29(57), 104–115.
- Gvianishvili, N. (2020). Invisible Battlefield: How the Politicization of LGBT Issues Affects the Visibility of LBT Women in Georgia. In U. Ziemer (Ed.), *Women's Everyday Lives in War and Peace in the South Caucasus* (pp. 205-224). Palgrave Macmillan Cham. https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1007/978-3-030-25517-6_9
- Hall, D. E. (2003). Introduction: What “Queer Theories” Can Do for You. In D. E. Hall (Ed.), *Queer Theories* (pp. 1-18). Red Globe Press. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1007/978-1-4039-1356-2>
- Honarpisheh, F. (2005). The Oriental “Other” in Soviet Cinema, 1929–34. *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 14(2), 185–201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10669920500135561>
- Hossain, A. (2019). Sexual Nationalism, Masculinity and the Cultural Politics of Cricket in Bangladesh. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 42(4), 638–653. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00856401.2019.1607153>
- Human Rights Watch. (2020). *Georgia Events of 2019*. Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2020/country-chapters/georgia>
- Jalilova, Z. (2020). Traditional Gender Roles Enacted by Men and Women in Azerbaijani Cinema. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe*, 7(2), 80-96. <https://doi.org/10.25364/02.7:2020.2.6>
- Jaunait, A., Le Renard, A., & Marteu, E. (2013). Nationalismes sexuels ? : Reconfigurations Contemporaines des Sexualités et des Nationalismes [Sexual Nationalisms ? : Contemporary Reconfigurations of Sexualities and Nationalisms]. *Raisons politiques* 49(1), 5-23. <https://doi.org/10.3917/rai.049.0005>.

- Jones, G. (2023, July 8). *Anti-LGBT protesters break up Pride festival in Georgia*. Reuters. Retrieved July 16, 2023, from <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/anti-lgbt-protesters-break-up-pride-festival-georgia-2023-07-08/>
- Jung, M. (2021). Embracing the Nation: Strategic Deployment of Sexuality, Nation, and Citizenship in Singapore. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 72(5), 1229–1245. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12882>
- Kakabadze, S., & Makarychev, A. (2018). A Tale of Two Orthodoxies: Europe in Religious Discourses of Russia and Georgia. *Ethnopolitics*, 17(5), 485–502. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2018.1495367>
- Kappeler, E. (2020, June 30). «*Wir hatten Leibwächter am Set*» [“*We had bodyguards on set*”]. *Tages-Anzeiger*. Retrieved April 11, 2023, from <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/wir-hatten-leibwaechter-am-set-614121060881>
- Kartvelishvili, N. (2020). Role of Woman in Georgian Contemporary Cinema [Masaryk University, Bachelor thesis], 1-33.
- Kharchilava, N., & Javakhishvili, N. (2010). Representation of “Lost Orientation,” or Lesbianism in Georgian Print Media. *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, 28(1), 83–97.
- King, J. (2020, March 11). *Levan Akin : ‘A lot of people in Georgia are living secret lives’*. Little White Lies. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <https://lwlies.com/interviews/levan-akin-and-then-we-danced/>
- Kohn, H. (2023, June 20). Nationalism | Definition, History, Examples, Principles, & Facts. Encyclopedia Britannica. Retrieved January 12, 2023, from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/nationalism>
- Kortava, D. (2020, June 5). “*And Then We Danced,*” *A Queer Love Letter to Georgian Culture*. The New Yorker. Retrieved April 8, 2023, from <https://www.newyorker.com/recommends/watch/and-then-we-danced-a-queer-love-letter-to-georgian-culture>
- Kubik, J., & Bernhard, M. (2014). A Theory of the Politics of Memory. In M. Bernhard, & J. Kubik (Eds.), *Twenty Years After Communism* (pp.7–34). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199375134.003.0002>
- Kulpa, R. (2014). On Attachment and Be *Longing* : Or Why Queers Mourn Homophobic President?. *Sexualities*, 17(7), 781–801. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460714531431>

- Landsberg, A. (2003). Prosthetic Memory: The Ethics and Politics of Memory in an Age of Mass Culture. In P. Grainge (Ed.), *Memory and Popular Film* (pp. 144–161). Manchester University Press.
- Lima, Á. L. (2012). Screw the Nation!: Queer Nationalism and Representations of Power in Contemporary South African Art. *African Arts*, 45(4), 46–57.
- Liu, J. H., & Hilton, D. J. (2005). How the Past Weighs on the Present: Social Representations of History and Their Role in Identity Politics. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(4), 537–556. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466605X27162>
- Lombardo, G. M. (2020, February 14). *Portrait of an Artist : Film Director Levan Akin*. The Harvard Crimson. Retrieved April 8, 2023, from <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/2/14/portrait-levan-akin/>
- Love, H. (2011). Queers _____ This. In J. E. Halley, & A. Parkers (Eds.), *After Sex ? On Writing Since Queer Theory* (pp.180-191). Duke University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822393627-016>
- Luciani, L. (2021). Where the Personal Is (Geo)Political: Performing Queer Visibility in Georgia in the Context of EU Association. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 70(2), 197–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2021.1937228>
- McCann, H., & Monaghan, W. (2019a). Defining Queer Theory. In H. McCann, & W. Monaghan (Eds.), *Queer Theory Now From Foundations to Futures* (pp.1-21). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- . (2019b). Negotiating Intersections. In H. McCann, & W. Monaghan (Eds.), *Queer Theory Now From Foundations to Futures* (pp.179-212). Bloomsbury Publishing.
- McKearney, A. (2021). Sexual Citizenship: Rhetoric or Reality for Rural Gay Men in Ireland and England? *Citizenship Studies*, 25(5), 678–693. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2021.1952930>
- Media Development Foundation (2013). *Monitoring Hate Speech and Discrimination in Georgian Media* (15 April - 15 August, 2013). Media Development Foundation. <http://mdfgeorgia.ge/uploads/Hate%20Speech-Publication-ENG.pdf>
- Mepschen, P. (2011, January 11). Seksueel nationalisme in de polder [Sexual nationalism in the polder]. BNN Vara. Retrieved November 18, 2022, from <https://www.bnnvara.nl/joop/artikelen/seksueel-nationalisme-in-de-polder>
- Mepschen, P., Duyvendak, J. (2012). European Sexual Nationalisms: The Culturalization of Citizenship and the Sexual Politics of Belonging and Exclusion. *Perspectives on Europe*, 42(1), 70–76.

- Merrill, J. (2012). Brothers and Others: Brotherhood, the Caucasus, and National Identity in Post-Soviet Film. *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, 6(1), 93–111.
https://doi.org/10.1386/srsc.6.1.93_1
- Mestvirishvili, M., Zurabishvili, T., Iakobidze, T., & Mestvirishvili, N. (2017). Exploring Homophobia in Tbilisi, Georgia. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 64(9), 1253–1282.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00918369.2016.1244445>
- Meyer, S. J., Dale, E. J., & Willis, K. K. M. (2022). Where My Gays At? The Status of LGBTQ People and Queer Theory in Nonprofit Research. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 51(3), 566–586. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1177/08997640211021497>
- Meza, E. (2019, August 19). *Levan Akin on the Impact of 'And Then We Danced'*. Variety. Retrieved April 7, 2023, from <https://variety.com/2019/film/global/levan-akin-and-then-we-danced-1203305898/>
- Mole, R. C. M. (2016). Nationalism and Homophobia in Central and Eastern Europe. In K. Sloopmaeckers, H. Touquet, & P. Vermeersch (Eds.), *The EU Enlargement and Gay Politics: The Impact of Eastern Enlargement on Rights, Activism and Prejudice* (pp. 99–121). Palgrave Macmillan Cham. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1057/978-1-137-48093-4>
- Mosse, G. L. (1998). *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford University Press.
- Murray, I. (2020, February 4). *How And Then We Danced Became 2020's Most Controversial Movie*. GQ. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.gq.com/story/how-and-then-we-danced-became-2020s-most-controversial-movie>
- Neumann, I. B. (1994). A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe. *Review of International Studies*, 20(1), 53–74.
- Nikuradze, M., & Edgar, A. (2023, July 10). *In pictures | Broken statues and stolen yoga mats: Georgia's far right stop Pride Festival*. OC Media. Retrieved July 16, 2023, from https://oc-media.org/in_pictures/in-pictures-broken-statues-and-stolen-yoga-mats-georgias-far-right-stop-pride/
- Ninoshvili, L. (2010). Georgian Popular Music and the Cliché of the Nation at War. *Ulbandus Review*, 13, 94–108.
- Norman, W. (2004). From Nation-building to National Engineering: The Ethics of Shaping Identities. In M. Ramón & R. Ferrán (Eds.), *Democracy, Nationalism and*

- Multiculturalism* (pp. 79-95). Routledge. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.4324/9780203313923>
- Novikau, A. (2021). Tobacco Use Depictions in Popular Soviet and Post-Soviet Movies from 1950 to 2019: The Possible Impact of Restrictive Policies. *Substance Use & Misuse*, 56(11), 1726–1731. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2021.1954030>
- Ochiauri, L. (2021). Cruelty and Tolerance Through the Lens of New Wave Of Georgian Cinema. *International Journal of Arts and Media Researches*, 11(1), 128-131. <https://artsmediajournal.tafu.edu.ge/article/view/3690>
- OC Media. (2018, August 2). *Only 23% of Georgians think queer people’s rights are important, poll shows*. OC Media. Retrieved June 25, 2023, from <https://oc-media.org/only-23-of-georgians-think-queer-peoples-rights-are-important-poll-shows/>
- Ofoosu, T. B. K. (2021). Youthful Bodies as Mnemonic Artifacts: Traversing the Cultural Terrain from Traditional to Popular Dances in Post-independent Ghana. In C. Parfitt (Ed.), *Cultural Memory and Popular Dance Dancing to Remember, Dancing to Forget* (pp. 137-153). Palgrave Macmillan Cham. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1007/978-3-030-71083-5>
- O’Neil, L. (2020). Through Archie Lindo’s Lens: Uncovering the Queer Subtext in Nationalist Jamaican Art. *Small Axe*, 24(3), 143–163.
- O’Neill, A. J. (2019). *Interview - And Then We Danced Director Levan Akin & Actor Levan Gelbakhiani*. Movies.ie. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <http://www.movies.ie/interview-and-then-we-danced-director-levan-actor/>
- Paasi, A. (2011). A Border Theory: An Unattainable Dream or Realistic Aim for Border Scholars?. In D. Wastl-Walter (Ed.), *The Routledge Research Companion to Border Studies* (pp. 11-32). Routledge. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.4324/9781315612782>
- Parfitt, C. (2021). Introduction: Dancing with Memory. In C. Parfitt (Ed.), *Cultural Memory and Popular Dance Dancing to Remember, Dancing to Forget* (pp.1-22). Palgrave Macmillan Cham. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1007/978-3-030-71083-5>
- Penrose, J. (2011). Designing the Nation. Banknotes, Banal Nationalism and Alternative Conceptions of the State. *Political Geography*, 30(8), 429–440. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2011.09.007>
- Piskova, M. (2022). The Movies that Were Expected to Take off the Chador from the Face of the “Exotic East”. The Cinema of Transcaucasia in the 1920s and 1930s. In M. Angelova, & S. Glebov (Eds.), *Academic Cultures between Dependencies and*

- Independencies in the Interwar Black Sea Region* (pp. 133-158). University Publishing House Neofit Rilski.
- Powys, M. E. (2019, November 9). *Georgian far-right groups attempt to storm cinema at gay romance movie premiere*. Pink News. Retrieved January 24, 2023, from <https://www.thepinknews.com/2019/11/09/and-then-we-danced-premiere-georgia-far-right-protests/>
- Puar, J. K. (2007). *Terrorist Assemblages*. In Duke University Press eBooks. <https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822390442>
- . (2011). Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking about the Sexual Politics of Israel. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 19(2), 133-142. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10691-011-9176-3>.
- . (2013). Rethinking Homonationalism. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45(2), 336–339.
- Public Defender of Georgia. (2020). *Special Report of the Public Defender of Georgia on Combating and Preventing Discrimination and the State of Equality 2019*. <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2020031712325453928.pdf>
- Quinzaine des Cinéastes. (2019, May 17). *Q&A AND THEN WE DANCED avec Levan Akin, Levan Gelbakhiani & Bachi Valishvili [Q&A AND THEN WE DANCED with Levan Akin, Levan Gelbakhiani & Bachi Valishvili]* [Video]. Youtube. 20:38. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxL4rcQ67Ds>
- Radunović, D. (2014). Incommensurable Distance : Georgian cinema as a (Trans)national Cinema. In S. Bahun, & J. Haynes (Eds.), *Cinema, State Socialism and Society in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, 1917-1989: Re-visions* (pp. 49-73). Routledge. <http://www.routledge.com/9780415813235>
- Rainbow Europe. (2023). *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Georgia*. Rainbow Europe. Retrieved July 24, 2023, from <https://rainbow-europe.org/#8634/0/0>
- Reimers, E. (2017). Homonationalism in Teacher Education – Productions of Schools as Heteronormative National Places. *Irish Educational Studies*, 36(1), 91–105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2017.1289703>
- Richards, S. (2020, April). *And Then We Danced : Queer sounds and movement*. Senses of Cinema. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.sensesofcinema.com/2020/feature-articles/and-then-we-danced-queer-sounds-and-movement/>

- Richardson, D. (2018). Sexuality and Citizenship. *Sexualities*, 21(8), 1256–1260.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460718770450>
- Rekhviashvili, A. (2018). Tracing the LGBT Movement in the Republic of Georgia: Stories of Activists. In M. Barkaia, M., & Waterston, A. (Eds.), *Gender in Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation, and History in the South Caucasus* (pp. 205–222). Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw04d83.19>
- Roulston, K. (2019). Research Interviewers as ‘Knowers’ and ‘Unknowers’. In K. Roulston (Ed.), *Interactional studies of Qualitative research interviews* (pp. 59-78). John Benjamins Publishing Company. <https://doi.org/10.1075/z.220.03rou>
- Rusieshvili-Cartledge, M., & Dolidze, R. (2021). Hate Speech in Online Polylogues: Using Examples of LGBT Issues in Georgian Computer-Meditated Discourse. *FLEKS - Scandinavian Journal of Intercultural Theory and Practice*, 7(1), 1–16.
<https://doi.org/10.7577/fleks.4171>
- Samsonadze, A. (2021). Modernity and Folk Choreography: (On the Example of Georgian Folk Choreography). *International Journal of Arts and Media Researches*, 11(1), 326-330. <https://artsmediajournal.tafu.edu.ge/article/view/3707>
- Sarajevo Film Festival. (2019, September 17). *Interview with Levan Akin* [Video]. Youtube. 3:52. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CfX-Sdw79gw>
- Seidman, S., & Meeks, C. (2011). The Politics of Authenticity: Civic Individualism and the Cultural Roots of Gay Normalization. *Cultural Sociology*, 5(4), 519–536.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1749975511401272>
- Shay, A. (1999). Parallel Traditions: State Folk Dance Ensembles and Folk Dance in “The Field”. *Dance Research Journal*, 31(1), 29-56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1478309>
- Sherouse, P. (2015). Russian Presence in Georgian Film Dubbing: Scales of Inferiority. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 25(2), 215–229.
- . (2017). The Politics of Russian-Language Film Showings in Post-Soviet Georgia. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 40(1), 137–157.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/plar.12209>
- Shevtsova, M. (2022). Religion, Nation, State, and Anti-Gender Politics in Georgia and Ukraine. *Problems of Post-Communism*, 70(2), 163–174.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10758216.2022.2085581>

- Slootmaeckers, K. (2019). Nationalism as Competing Masculinities: Homophobia as a Technology of Othering for Hetero- and Homonationalism. *Theory and Society*, 48(2), 239–265.
- Stella, F., & Nartova, N. (2016). Sexual Citizenship, Nationalism and Biopolitics in Putin’s Russia. In F. Stella, Y. Taylor, T. Reynolds, & A. Rogers (Eds.), *Sexuality, Citizenship and Belonging: Trans-National and Intersectional Perspectives* (pp. 22-42). Routledge.
- Storm, K. T. (2018). Unpacking the Georgian *Nation* : Examining the Symbolic Boundaries of Group Membership through National Iconography. *Identity*, 18(3), 195–217.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2018.1487300>
- Stroude, W. (2020, February 28). ‘*And Then We Danced*’: *An inside look at the powerful gay film that sparked protests in Georgia*. Attitude. Retrieved April 10, 2023, from <https://www.attitude.co.uk/culture/film-tv/and-then-we-danced-an-inside-look-at-the-powerful-gay-film-that-sparked-protests-in-georgia-300894/>
- Stychin, C. F. (2001). Sexual Citizenship in the European Union. *Citizenship Studies*, 5(3), 285–301. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13621020120085252>
- Sutherland, C. (2005). Nation-Building through Discourse Theory. *Nations and Nationalism*, 11(2), 185–202. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1354-5078.2005.00199.x>
- Svenska Filminstitutet. (2019, May 22). *Interview: And Then We Danced director and actors in Cannes 2019* [Video]. Youtube. 5:45. Retrieved April 21, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0hZSdejjB8>
- Szulc, L. (2016). Domesticating the Nation Online: Banal Nationalism on LGBTQ Websites in Poland and Turkey. *Sexualities*, 19(3), 304–327.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460715583604>
- Thapar-Björkert, S. (2013). Gender, Nations and Nationalisms. In G. Waylen., K. Celis., J. Kantola., & S. L. Weldon (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Politics* (pp. 803-833). Oxford University Press. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199751457.013.0032>
- Thomson, J. (2020). Gender and Nationalism. *Nationalities Papers*, 48(1), 3–11.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/nps.2019.98>
- Tolkachev, D., & Tolordava, T. (2020). Shared Past, Different Future? Russian and Georgian Authorities’ Discourse Concerning Homosexuality. *Sexuality & Culture*, 24(2), 447–464.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-019-09688-2>
- Tskhadadze, T. (2018). “The West” and Georgian “Difference”: Discursive Politics of Gender and Sexuality in Georgia. In M. Barkaia, & A. Waterston (Eds.), *Gender in*

- Georgia: Feminist Perspectives on Culture, Nation, and History in the South Caucasus* (pp. 47–60). Berghahn Books. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvw04d83.8>
- Tsopurashvili, S. (2016). Meet the New Soviet Woman of 1920s: Incompatibility of Strength and Femininity. *Journal of Young Researchers*, 3, 94-110.
- Ushakin, S. (2009). *The Patriotism of Despair: Nation, War, and Loss in Russia*. Cornell University Press.
- Weller, S. C., Vickers, B., Bernard, H. R., Blackburn, A. M., Borgatti, S., Gravlee, C. C., & Johnson, J. C.(2018). Open-ended Interview Questions and Saturation. *PLoS ONE*, 13(6), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198606>
- White, J., Dzandzava, N. (2015). The Cinema of Georgia’s First Independence Period: Between Republican and European. *Film History*, 27(4), 151-182. <https://doi.org/10.2979/filmhistory.27.4.151>
- ZFF Zurich Film Festival. (2019, October 6). *AND THEN WE DANCED / Interview with Levan Akin and Levan Gelbakhiani / ZFF Daily 2019* [Video]. Youtube. 5:44. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0HY-NmnoUU>
- ZFF Zurich Film Festival. (2020, June 19). *Interview Levan Akin & Levan Gelbakhiani - AND THEN WE DANCED* [Video]. Youtube. 4:43. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2dEM1w629Ts>
- Zubrzycki, G. (2016). Nationalism, “Philosemitism,” and Symbolic Boundary-Making in Contemporary Poland. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 58(1), 66–98.