

**PRODUCING WHITE AND BLACK:**

the Caucasian male Other and boundaries of the nation in contemporary Russia

By

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## Abstract

This research seeks to contribute into the discussion on intersections of nationalism and gender order in contemporary Russia through the focus on the imagery of the othered men from the North Caucasus. The work is based on three case studies, that is, ban on Dagestani men conscription, public lezghinka dancing and male-to-male rape happened in Rozhdestvenskaya village in Russia. Through the analysis of media reports, internet-commentary threads and political speeches I examine how the Russian nation, being in a transitional period, makes use of ideas about its own and other's masculinity and sexuality to reinforce nationalism and imagine "white us" as clearly distinguished from racialized Caucasian "them". The research focuses on both state and non-state practices and representations. I argue that the imagery of the Caucasian Other is based upon ambivalence; his masculinity is simultaneously imagined as "good" and "bad", his body is sexually desired and yet his sexuality is despised as perverted and dangerous. The Caucasian subject embodies the threat of domination and penetration of national spaces, bodies and institutions. The fear of loss of control over the Caucasian Other transfers itself into anxiety over nation's own masculinity. Representations of both Caucasian Other and Russian Self are employed and instrumentalized in the discourse and in the set of corporeal practices directed against "black" bodies. They are intended to produce the difference between Russian and Caucasian and reaffirm clear boundary between them. Production and fixation of Russian and Caucasian subjects and spaces heavily rely upon the practice of repetition. Through this reiteration, happening on all levels from that of representations in commentary threads and journalistic accounts to the corporeal practices of expelling of the dancing Caucasian bodies from the "white" streets, the system is able to constantly produce and sustain itself. The Caucasian subject is trapped into the space of ambivalence and repeatability, which makes it hard for him to escape.

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## Introduction

The issue of post-Soviet masculinities and, among others, Russian masculinities, gains the significant attention of the international scholarship. At the same time, researchers engaged into the analysis of post-Soviet masculinities, tend to look at the question from the temporal perspective (see, for instance, Sukovataya 2012, Attwood 1995, Mescherkina 2000, Kiblitckaya 2000, Randall 2012). Within this approach, the underlying meanings of post-communist Russian masculinities are examined with the special emphasis on the Soviet legacy. This type of research, however, neglects the fact that Russian masculinities are constructed also in tension with masculinities of racialized or sexualized others, such as the Caucasian Other. There are few works dealing with masculinity of the figure of Caucasian, but they tend to be rather descriptive, to focus on the state exclusively and are not interested in the complexity of the Caucasian imagery as well in tactics employed to deal with the othered figure (see Eichler 2006, Roman 2000, Dwyer 2008). On the other hand, there is an enormous and understandable interest in the North Caucasus as a region and, more specifically, in the relationship between the North Caucasus and the rest of Russia. However, scholarship focusing on this field tends to ignore gendered aspect of the problem even if the material of a field research itself reveals certain gender and sexual anxieties (see, for instance, Foxall 2010, Popov and Kuznetsov 2008, Croft 2011). This work seeks to pull these two interests – in Russian masculinity and in the politics related to the North Caucasus – together and address the blank spots mentioned. In particular, as I argue, it is necessary to explore the Russian state and non-state politics regarding the Caucasian figure from the gendered perspective and engage deeply with the complexity of the imagery of the Caucasian man and tensions evolving between what is constructed as “Russian” and “Caucasian” masculinity. In this research, I unfold representations of the male Caucasian Other in the mainstream media proliferating in Russia and address the question of consequences of these representations. In

other words, how power instrumentalizes these representations? What kind of subject-positions and relations does it produce with respect to the Caucasian and Russian subjects? And what are effects of it?

To explore these questions, I engage with three case studies enabling one to examine the representation of the Caucasian Other in its complexity. The first concerns an unofficial ban on conscription young men from Dagestan to the army. Exploration of the case reveals the state's involvement in the process of othering of the Caucasian population as well as the way of how masculinity of the Caucasian Other constructed in mainstream, non-state discourse. Taking into account the masculinist nature of the army and its status of one of the main national institutions, the case also promises to reveal interconnections between Russian nationalism, national masculinity and masculinity of the Other.

The second case study I focus on is that of the reaction on the practice of public amateur lezghinka dancing performed by Caucasian men on the streets of “white” cities. The practice of dancing is regularly publicly condemned by the state agents and politicians from all the political spectrum; dancers are often physically and verbally abused by bypassers and detained by the police. The case of lezghinka dancing is intriguing due to the fact that it is not obvious why the hostility toward the dancers is so strong. To examine the case means to engage with unarticulated or semi-articulated fears and anxieties provoked by the Caucasian male Other and practices he engages in. As the previous case, this is able to tell something not just about the imagery of the Caucasian Other, but also about the imagery of the Russian Self. Whereas the army case concerns the institutionalized national fraternity, the case of lezghinka dancing allows us to look deeper at how the national space is imagined.

The third case I address is that of male-to-male rape that happened in Rozhdestvenskaya village in summer 2013. The rapist who was caught and sentenced to 3 years imprisonment,

turned out to be a Dagestani (Caucasian). The case of rape opens possibility to analyze the specific intersections of gender, ethnicity and sexuality with respect to the Caucasian Other, which promises to be especially telling due to the fact that the survivor was a man of the Slavic ethnic background (allegedly Cossack).

## Methods

I use discourse analysis as my primary method to deal with all three cases. My research sample consists of journalistic accounts dedicated to the cases, comments of politicians, visual materials and internet-comments appeared underneath the journalistic accounts analyzed. I focus primarily on mainstream news webpages, engaging if necessary with right-wing (BaltInfo.ru) or liberal (Eho Moskvyy) resources, demonstrating that the certain views on the Russian and Caucasian men span the political spectrum. The research primarily focuses, however, on the following resources: newsland.com, kp.ru, mk.ru and metronews.ru. Newsland.com is a website wholly constituted by user-generated content (UGC). This content, however, is the set of journalistic accounts collected from other national and regional media. At it is stated on the page “About” of the website<sup>1</sup>, users can add those articles they consider interesting and then openly discuss them. Web-domain kp.ru belongs to the nationwide newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda, self-proclaimed the most popular newspaper in Russia (most probably, it is). Mk.ru is the website of the Moskovskyy Komsomolets newspaper, which is another mainstream popular media in Russia. Metronews.com is a resource of the Russian branch of the famous Swedish-based free daily newspaper Metro. Metro-Russia does not bear any explicit signs of its Western origin; it is a typical mainstream entertaining media with huge circulation.

These resources are particularly suitable due to the certain way they present and organize shared information. They all are very mainstream and popular media presenting the news

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<sup>1</sup> <http://newsland.com/page/show/id/1/> Accessed June 8, 2014.



articles which are considered to be interesting for the general Russian readership. It is especially explicit in the case of newsland.com with its UGC policy. The discourses appeared in journalistic accounts as well as in internet comments are shaped in a particular way by both norms of “respectability” of the internet-space and moderators’ and editors’ attempts. Moreover, due to popularity of the resources, the articles appearing there are overwhelmingly commented, which makes a plenty of data available for the analysis. I focus not only on journalistic accounts but also on internet-comments because the borders of allowable are different in the comments threads and in the articles. The particular parts of discourse which are not articulated but rather implied (or overall hidden) in journalistic texts might (and do) appear explicitly in internet discussions underneath.

At the same time those discussions are also shaped by particular norms imposed both by the settings and by moderators. As Tonkiss (1998, 249) notes in his discussion on qualitative research methods, people usually make what they say suitable for the particular settings. This pattern allows internet-comments to be fruitful source to analyze how particular meanings are constructed, since in the context of anonymous thread of comments people both can be as explicit as possible and still cannot say what is not sayable within the framework of a particular discourse formation, if one to use Foucault’s ideas. As Garcia et al. argue, the “virtual reality” to which discussion in commentary threads belong is not a realm detached from the ordinary, but rather an inherent part of the “regular” reality (2009). This stance legitimizes meanings expressed in a commentary thread as “real” and not dissimilar to ones expressed in private conversation or on the street.

Usage of internet-comments as a source of data involves particular limitations however. First, usually it is not possible to recognize clearly who is speaking. The space of the commentary thread is an open agora inviting to say something everyone who passes by. It implies that there is always a present danger of generalization, of dealing with something as if it is a

universal “Russian voice”. Aware of that possibility, I try to contextualize my sources as clear as possible taking into account the space of the discussion, the flow of conversation and self-representations of internet-users. At the same time, I always try to ground claims in other material as well, such as journalistic accounts or speeches of politicians. Second, sometimes comments lack clarity and might be confusing, and I as a researcher cannot ask internet-users elaborate more on them. However, this limitation is possible to overcome taking into account amount of comments accessible.

## Navigation

I start by setting the stage and familiarizing a reader with the historical and political background of the subject as well as with the set of theoretical approaches feeding this research and by reviewing the literature available. In chapter 2 I explore the representations of the Caucasian Other’s masculinity and sexuality. I argue that the imagery of the Caucasian Other speaks to the variety of national anxieties, such as anxiety over domination and penetration. At the same time, I show that representations of the Caucasian men sexuality are based on the ambivalence, within which the Caucasian figure is both despised and desired. In the following chapter I examine how the national Russian Self perceives its own masculinity with respect to that of the Other and what are the underlying meanings of that perception. I focus on the moments of tensions, self-pity (and even self-hated) and envy. I argue that national anxiety on men’s health and homosociality has to do with fear of loss of control over the Caucasian figure. In the final chapter, I put together the imagery of the Russian Self and the Caucasian Other and argue that these representations are indeed productive for Russian nationalism. I look at how they are instrumentalized, and what kind of consequences they have for the actors involved. I show that the Caucasian man is trapped into the space of ambivalence and engaged into the process of reiterative expelling.

## Chapter 1. Setting the stage

### 1.1 Historical and political background

Russian-Caucasian relationships are marked by the long history of bloody war conflicts and colonialism. The process of Caucasus conquest, started in 18<sup>th</sup> century, was accompanied by the half-century long Caucasian war, deportations of indigenous people and numerous smaller-scale conflicts (Dunlop 1998). In 20<sup>th</sup> century, strong separatist movement in Chechnya coincided with the Soviet Union collapse. In early 90s, Chechnya de facto enjoyed independence ruled by Dzhokhar Dudaev, since at that time Kremlin was overwhelmed by political struggles and other social, political and economic problems. However, in 1994 President Boris Yeltsin started a war campaign seeking to take Chechnya back. The war was not supported solidly by the society and political forces in the country (Hughes 2007, 77), moreover, it was unsuccessful and its results were generally considered “humiliating” for the state (Laruelle 2009, 17). As the result of a peace agreement, signed in 1996, Chechnya de facto kept self-government and turned into Islamic Republic of Ichkeria. In 1999, after the series of terrorist attacks, organizers of which still remain unknown, the government decided to launch the second Chechen campaign. This second war was the basis Vladimir Putin has built his political weight on in the first place, that is, he came into power on the wave of proliferating security discourse in Russia and was actively articulating and producing such discourse (Laruelle 2009, 19, Hughes 2007, 110, Matejova 2013, 11, Russell 2002, 73). Chechen terrorists were marked as the deadly enemies of the state and Russian people, and on grassroots level “Chechen terrorists” became equated with “Chechens” and further with Caucasians in general (Laruelle 2009).

The second Chechen war campaign was more successful for the state. Russia succeeded to retain Chechnya as the part of the Russian Federation through applying severe military power,

co-opting Chechen leaders and forming an alliance with powerful Chechen cleric Akhmad Kadyrov and, subsequently, his son Ramzan. Ramzan Kadyrov's anti-secessionist policy is based on kidnappings, torture, intimidation and killings of dissidents and arbitrary picked people. Amount of "disappeared" people in Chechnya barely can be calculated, most of them were kept in secret detention centers situated beyond Russian juridical system (Hughes 2007). However, after this fragile peace was established, terrorist attacks didn't stop. Intra-Chechen political struggle hidden from the view of the Russian public manifests itself in the multiple attacks in the neighboring Caucasian republics, such as Dagestan and Ingushetia, as well as in Central Russia (Laruelle 2009, Matejova 2013, 21). Hostage takings, killings of security forces members, suicide bombings and other terrorist acts happened in 00s and more recently, remind Russia that Caucasus is still far from being a peaceful place, unlike the state tends to pretend.

The war legacy, terrorism proliferation and non-transparent financial injections in the North Caucasus coincide with widespread xenophobia toward so-called "Caucasians". Quite differently from 90s with its hatred against Chechens in particular (Laruelle 2009, 41), the term "Caucasian" became all-including category reflecting various anxieties of Russian people. This term erases differences not only between different ethnic groups and political entities occupying the North Caucasus, but also between Russian and non-Russian citizens, since people from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia are marked as "Caucasians" as well. As a result, this group of people is widely perceived as foreigners and migrants, even though some of them are citizens of the country. This term also allows the construction of the Caucasian Other, which, I would argue, is an act of discursive violence dismantling all complexities inherent to relationships between various actors residing in the Caucasian region. As Laruelle (2009) demonstrates, the fact that Georgians and Armenians generally belong to Christianity whereas population of the North Caucasus is generally Muslim does not matter anymore, it is

not paid attention it used to in 19<sup>th</sup> century. In other words, the powerful notion of Caucasian Other easily absorbs even religious difference. The production of masculinity of this figure is often seen through the prism of war legacy and overall geopolitical situation, as I demonstrate in section 1.3.

## 1.2 Theoretical framework

Before proceeding, it is important to focus on theoretical perspectives I engage with in this research. In this section, I examine the intersections of the notions of masculinity, sexuality, and nationalism, since these are basic concepts feeding my research.

The ideas of masculinity, sexuality and nationalism are historical and exist within the discourse; their manifestations are both cultural and material. With respect to real-life societies masculinity barely can be used in singular form, since there is always a system of masculinities embedded into relations of hegemony and subordination (Connell 1995, 2005, Tosh 2004). Masculinities - and among them the hegemonic masculinity - are open to change and challenge. The system of domination and subordination does not simply reproduce itself, but require considerable effort to be sustained and perpetuated (Connell 1995). This Connell's insight is particularly important for my research, since these are dynamics of sustaining the hegemony of what is perceived "Russian" masculinity over the "Caucasian" one I focus on. By no means I wish to refer to the Russian (or Caucasian) masculinity as a totalized and homogenized entity in itself. However, as this research shows, the image of the Russian and Caucasian man is totalized and stereotyped in the discourse I engage with, even though these images are not free from ambivalences and contradictions. At the same time, even taking into account this totalizing gesture, Connell's idea of multiple masculinities still is extremely important for my research, since it helps to map out clearly the power dynamics existing in the realm of tension between "Russian" and "Caucasian" masculinities and to account for the hegemony of the "Russian" type.

As Tosh (2004) argues, a gender order and the notion of normative masculinity may crucially change in the moment of national crisis. I draw on this insight, basing my research on the fact that the process of rethinking Russian national identity after the USSR collapse entailed confusion and uncertainty with respect to nation's gender order, and masculinity in particular. As it will be clear from the literary review section, this feeling of the cracked gender order is not a unique Russian feature, but rather marks the post-Socialist situation in general.

The very rethinking of nationalism is possible because the nation itself is not a naturally emerged community rooted into eternity, but rather a historical entity in the constant process of becoming (Billig 1995, Mayer 2000). Whereas nationalisms claim that the nation is linked to the past, to some moment of origin and that a current generation of people is naturally connected to past generations creating a continuous flow of national history, in fact nationalism needs to be repetitively performed for nation as a community to exist (Bhabha 1994). As Bhabha argues, the nationalist discourse is performative, because cultural signs of the nation should be endlessly and reiteratively exhibited to produce the sense of stability of the national community. Nation is indeed not a naturally bonded collectivity, but an "imagined community", if one to cite the famous Anderson's (2006) definition. As Billig (1995) demonstrates, nationalist ideology and imagining constantly infiltrate everyday being and it is impossible to examine this phenomenon from "outside". In other words, nationalism is not an ideology articulated by the right-wing parties and their allies only, but rather the framework which makes the existence of the contemporary nation-states possible at all. Nationalisms, as Billig shows, take the notion of the nation for granted, and manifest themselves in the variety of forms in everyday life, which allow Billig to call it "banal nationalism". In Russia with respect to Caucasian Other, nationalism indeed is not only something celebrated during the annual Russian marches led by right-wing activists (Zuev 2013), but the ideology reveling itself in routine news covering dedicated to North Caucasus,

or in imagining national Caucasian dance, lezghinka, or in planning conscription policy . Nationalism heavily rests on what is remembered as national history. As Mayer (2000) demonstrates, national narratives are reconstructed and rearticulated, and the way they are presented serves current needs of nationalism. Mayer claims that national narratives, or memories, barely represent real events, they rather constitute politically necessary myth. This myth then is getting reinforced, adjusted and celebrated through national spectacles such as marches, festivals or other spectacular traditions (see f.i. McClintock 1993, Hobsbawm 1983).

National spectacle involves not only the act of performing, but also that of looking. As I make an attempt to show, the very concept of gaze is of great importance for Russian-Caucasian relationship. As Hall (1999) argues, looking is a social practice, in which both viewer and what is looked at are embedded. The two (partially) co-constitute each other, he claims, through the circuit of looking (1999, 310). Meaning, Hall claims, is not fixed and does not fully “belong” to what is seen, nor simply imposed by the spectator. In the process of “reading” the scene, both the viewer and the visual entity are relatively autonomous but simultaneously depend upon each other (1999, 311). As various works show, the act of looking is not free from a gendered and erotic component (Hall 1997, Nixon 1997, Neale 1983).

Nationalism itself is a clearly gendered endeavor. It is widely acknowledged that nationalism, masculinity and ideas about conventional sexuality co-constitute each other (Allen 2000, Mayer 2000, McClintock 1993, Nagel 1998, Karlin 2002, Kanaaneh 2005, Mosse 1985) opening the possibilities for control and disciplining. As Nagel puts it, the nation-state is generally a masculinist project (1998, 251). She argues that the hegemonic manhood (in a sense articulated by Connell) speaks the same language as the hegemonic nationalism (1998, 249). This intimate link between hegemonic masculinity and nationhood, Nagel claims, explains why racial, gendered and sexual others often are not allowed into military and para-

military institutions and organizations. Protecting borders of those institutions men are defending their own identity (259). At the same time Mosse (1985) goes deeper to the genealogies of that link between hegemonic masculinity and nationalism and demonstrates how the notions of sexual respectability and truly manliness became the core of the nationalism construction in modern Europe. He argues that the development of medical ideas about sexual “normality” and “abnormality” coincided with the growing concern regarding respectability. Those “abnormal” bodies often were perceived as a national threat, which reveals the link between the notions of nationalism, conventional sexuality and respectability (1895, 11). As Mosse writes regarding the practice of masturbation, “moral terror” (12) was a tool to ensure that the national bodies behave sexually respectable.

As Stoler (1989) shows, these tendencies occurred beyond the formal Europe’s borders as well. In colonies, the idea of white respectability and normative sexuality powerfully contributed into border delineation between colonizer and colonized, producing the modern form of racism. As she argues in her later writing, the processes of the demasculinization of the Other man were in the core of establishing and sustaining the white supremacy (2002, 46). In general, masculinity/sexuality of the Self is always constructed as different with respect to masculinity/sexuality of the racialized Other. Other’s sexuality may be exotic, excessive, deviant or weak one in contrast to what is considered hegemonic sexuality (Bleys 1995, Stoler 1995, Stoler 2002, Rubin 1984, Mosse 1985). Other is essentialized and homogenized (Stoler 1995: 8), and his/her different, abnormal sexuality in a metonymical way represents an inherent cultural and/or ethnical difference between the races or nations (Bleys 1995: 18, 31, Rubin 1984: 273, Mosse 1985: 33). At the same time, as Bhabha (1999) shows, the discourse on the Other is never coherent. Contradictory beliefs are central to the colonial stereotype about the colonized. Ambivalence, multiple beliefs enacted simultaneously are the very constitutive core of the produced (sexualized) colonial subject.



The political element of the imagery of the masculine Other is especially evident in the case of colonialism or military conflict. As Bleys (1995) demonstrates, in Europe colonized were often perceived effeminate, weak or/and perverted on the contrast with virile, manly and respectable bodies of colonizers. In the context of armed conflict, an enemy is regularly depicted as a less-man by virtue of being effeminized or, on the contrary, is imagined as a “sexual demon” raping nation’s women (Nagel 1998). This imagery may entail sexual abuse against male war detainees seeking to mark their “emasculated” status (Žarkov 2001, Jones 2006). These various representations of the Other’s sexuality and masculinity reveal the particular power dynamics and forms of disciplining. Indeed, as Stoler (1989) demonstrates, in colonies, to assure the protection of “white” women from “sexually dangerous” colonized men various practices were implemented, and their proliferation had virtually nothing to do with the real level of danger.

The obsession with the possibility of sexual contact with Other is connected to the specific role women play in the nation imagery. Whereas male fraternity represents the imagined community of the nation (Tosh 2004, Allen 2000, Mayer 2000), and individual man is seen as the metonymical agent of the nation, woman’s body exists into the realm of metaphor (McClintock 1993:62). McClintock claims that women are considered to embody symbolic boundaries of the nation. Yuval-Davis (1997) puts it quite differently arguing that woman’s body often represents body on the nation. Other scholars show that this symbolic, metaphorical role of female body may include other things as well, such as (mother)land may be described as a symbolic female body needing to be protected from enemy (male) penetration (Spike Peterson 1999, Massad 1995). These anxieties over male agents from the other ethnic/racialized group seeking to infiltrate the passive “female” national land are especially vivid in the case of Russian-Caucasian relationship.

In this research, I make an attempt to examine how the nation in transitional period makes use of ideas about its own and other's masculinity and sexuality to reinforce nationalism and imagine clear borders between "us" and racialized "them". Drawn on the Stoler's and Mosse's insights I look at what tactics are used to assure nation's space as "white" and "us" as clearly distinguished from "them". What makes my case different and intriguing though is that the Russian Self in my research sample is widely imagined as weak, and not-so-manly as the "black" Caucasian Other. I focus on this case of the negative imagining of the Russian Self with respect to the Other, often overlooked in the literature, and argue that this alleged self-hatred and admiration of some aspects of other's masculinity does not undermine the imagined community of the nation. On the contrary, these sentiments are getting absorbed and reworked by nationalist ideology reinforcing its power.

### **1.3 Literature review**

To situate the analysis this research proposes it is necessary to trace genealogy of Russian masculinity and male sexuality from the earlier period. As elsewhere, in Russia (both in pre-revolutionary and in the Soviet times) manhood was defined through and asserted at homosocial institutions, whether it is university in tsarist 19th century Russia (Friedman 2002), tavern in the city, Communist Party or Red Army (Friedman and Healey 2002). Friedman and Healey point to the Russian-specific cult of male intimacy, which would look suspicious in the contemporary Western Europe obsessed with figure of homosexual and possibility of perverted liaisons among men. This long-standing cult of intimacy and male bonding, as Gapova (2011) demonstrates, is connected to the idea of nation understood as fraternity. However, not much attention is paid to how this idea of male intimacy is embedded in the contemporary Russian nationalism and how ultimately exclusionary it is. In this research, I demonstrate how this notion, crucial for Russian understandings of masculinity,

sexuality and nationalism, works in the nation-state now, how and why it is getting publicly articulated.

The most important institution of male socialization in the Soviet Union was the army (Eichler 2006). As Eichler claims, Soviet army, this closed and opaque masculinist institute, shaped militarized masculinity which thought to be inherent for the identity of the Soviet man. Military service was believed to produce men out of raw boys and the common Soviet male identity out of different ethnic identities of conscripts (see also Rakowska-Harmstone 1990). However, as Eichler argues, perestroika and post-Soviet transition undermined militarized masculinity of the Soviet type and this erosion was vivid during Chechen wars in 90s-00s. At the same time, as Foxall's (2013), Attwood's (1995) and Dyewr's (2008) accounts make clear, in new Russia different types of militarized masculinity appeared, linked to the criminal world or to the state authority. These masculinities, however, are barely connected to the army as an institution. There are no much written also on how military service in the contemporary Russia enable the construction of the male racialized Other and how it differs from the army-as-melting-pot perception of the Soviet era. The question of militarized masculinity produced in the realm of state-sponsored military institutions is very important though, since, as Nagel (1998) and Allen (2000) demonstrate, military represents the imagined national fraternity. In the present work, I seek to shed some light on the issue of militarized masculinity of the hegemonic Self and the Other in the contemporary Russian nation-state.

Even though scholars generally agree that the collapse of the USSR entailed crisis of gender order on the post-Soviet space, some of them argue that crisis occurred much earlier (Zdravomyslova, Temkina 2013) and was provoked by the very Soviet system (Foxall 2013, Kukhterin 2000). Kukhterin, for instance, argues that Soviet system marginalized men in the private sphere taking "father's" role itself. Articulated this way, his argument sounds

essentialist; however, this claim is the part of a more general idea reiterated in scholarship, that is, Soviet men were pushed from private to public sphere, their relationship with the state were believed to be more important than their relationship within their private families (Zdravomyslova, Temkina 2013, Sukovataya 2012, Foxall 2013, Ashwin 2000). In the liberal discourse of the late Soviet period, Zdravomyslova and Temkina argue, Soviet men were seen biologically and socially much weaker than women. Masculinity of a Soviet man was defined in the contrast with set of other “honorable” and “strong” identities, such as that of fathers-soldiers of WWII, Russian tsarist aristocracy and Western masculine subject (heterosexual, sexually assertive, rational, financially independent man). Finally, the man of the late-Soviet period was defined in the contrast with the Soviet woman, that is, the strong type of a human being, emancipated, economically independent, and dominating in the private sphere of the Soviet life. Sukovataya (2012) makes a comparable argument built from the position of psychoanalysis. She argues that masculinity of a Soviet man was “traumatic” due to withdrawal of sexual sphere from the society. The sexual energy of Soviet men should have been directed to the glory of the Soviet state.

At the same time, Friedman and Healey (2002, 233) warn against over-estimation of the Soviet state power to impose and implement particular notions of masculinity and sexuality. Inclined to agree with their critique of homogenizing analysis of Soviet masculinity, I also found extremely important to point that Zdravomyslova and Temkina’s as well as Sukovataya’s subject of analysis tends to be the universalized notion of the “Soviet man” or the discourse dedicated to this ostensibly self-explanatory figure. The universal Soviet man as a category indeed lacks intersectionality and, most probably, coincides with a category of “white Russian man”, which erases all other male figures, such as racialized or sexual Other.

The absence of the sexual Other may have to do with the specific imagery of Russian sexuality, implying that Russian people are inherently sexually innocent (Healey 2008,

Friedman and Healey 2002) and homosexuality exists only in the rotten West or primitive East and South. These sentiments, as Healey (2008) argues, were proliferating in the Soviet times, if homosexuality was discussed at all. Recently, after the Soviet Union collapse, the “gay question” came to be the source of national anxiety. Healey suggests that the massive expert discourse on “normal” or “traditional” sex appeared in the 90s has to do with this anxiety about abnormal and disruptive sex which is allegedly propagandized by gay people. Normal sex, it was acknowledged, now needs its own advocates and special protection. Healey’s article on the issue appeared in 2008, long before the gay propaganda law, and time proved his insight to possess prophetic qualities. However, as Rivkin-Fish’s work (2006) demonstrates, not only gay sex is perceived as a threat for the national heterosexual well-being, but also non-reproductive sex. It is clear from Rivkin-Fish’s account that the demographic decline the Russian nation-state faces is conceptualized in the mainstream and expert discourse as the process of dying of the nation. Rivkin-Fish points also to the racist component in this anxiety, that it, as it is said, Russians should produce more babies, otherwise those others will take the nation-state over. Here, the very important intersection of the ideas about nationalism, gender and sexuality reveals itself. Even though this research does not deal with the issue of reproduction, I will demonstrate how this very point of intersection works on the symbolic level to assure control over the Other.

The various anxieties scholars point at indeed proliferate due to the transitional stage Russian society still goes through. As Foxall (2013, 138) argues, no gender order was successfully imposed yet in post-Soviet Russia. There are no doubts that the collapse of the USSR with all its distinct societal order entailed crisis of old gender order in the post-Soviet space, and in Russia in particular. Various studies show how wreckage of old model of masculinity in the post-Soviet space affected individuals, groups of people, national culture and ideology (see Kay 2006, Foxall 2013, Ashwin 2000, Mescherkina 2000, Kiblitckaya 2000, Eichler 2006,

Randall 2012, Dwyer 2008, Attwood1995, Sukovataya 2012, Novikova and Kambourov 2003 and others). Scholars point to the different aspects of this crisis. As some of them claim, state gave up its patriarchal power and therefore put additional unpredicted responsibility on its male citizens (Ashwin 2000). Within the new economic reality, many men faced the loss of their breadwinner status which undermined their masculinity (Kiblitckaya 2000, Eichler 2006, Mescherkina 2000). As Kiblitckaya (2000) demonstrates, men also felt uncertainty and anxiety connected to dismantling of old “natural” hierarchies in the public and in private spheres. Even though she does not make this argument, it may be argued that this masculinist anxiety over deconstruction of the hierarchized order manifested not only on the individual micro-level, but also on the macro-level. That is, as Eichler (2006, 498) shows, after the collapse of the USSR the whole Russian nation turned to be in the position of powerlessness as opposite to the status of superpower the USSR enjoyed few years ago. In other words, it is claimed that the feelings of confusion about shattered hierarchies and masculinist humiliation saturated the society from the level of individuals to that of the nation.

Nonetheless, as I seek to demonstrate, this transitional stage of masculinity is still very productive for nationalism. As scholarly literature shows, post-Soviet epoch allowed new pool of various options of masculinity construction. The most vivid of them are the figure of successful entrepreneur (Mescherkina 2000), brutal over-masculinized patriotic hero of novels and films about policemen and bandits ( Attwood 1995, Dwyer 2008) and, more recently, the masculinity of the strong Russian state leader, namely, Vladimir Putin (Foxall 2013, Randall 2012).

The figure of Putin is especially interesting to discuss, since it reveals clear connections between masculinity, nationalism, compulsory heterosexuality and militarism. In addition, as Clements (2002) and Foxall (2013) argue, the Russian state historically has a tendency to promote and impose particular notions of masculinity on people seeking to create citizens out

of the mass of men. It might seem that their stance is in the debate with the argument produced by Healey and Friedman I cited above, that is, that the over-emphasis on the state's power to impose gender order is dangerous and misleading. However, they both have valuable points that complement each other. Clements and Foxall highlight state's intention and genuine interest in the gender order production, whereas Healey and Friedman warn against over-estimation of its effects and against erasure of the practices of negotiation and resistance. This research focuses more on the issues of imposing due to its research question, but it should not be forgotten that resistance is always there engaged in the interplay with power, if refer to Foucault. With this in mind, it is clear that Putin's masculinity (as it is presented) intends to have the special authoritative power. As Foxall demonstrates in his work on the visual representations of Putin's body, manhood he performs is tight up with virility, assertive heterosexuality, militarism, discipline and nationalism. As Randall (2012) points out, his figure is seen as reclaiming back masculinity and power of the nation after disorder of 90s, that is, early post-Soviet period. This image of Putin's masculinity, she claims, stands in contrast with masculinity of late-Soviet period as well as with that of his internal opponents.

With few exceptions (Dwyer 2008, Eichler 2006), scholars generally inclined to look for roots and explanations of contemporary patterns of Russian masculinity and sexuality in the Soviet past, neglecting synchronical (as opposite to diachronical) perspective. Making claims about Russian masculinity of the contemporary period, scholars examine how it is constructed in opposition or as a legacy of the Soviet period. To give a brief example, Sukovataya (2012) argues that post-Soviet masculinity is "masculinity of neurosis" emerged as a response to collapse of totalitarian regime and marked by hypercompensation, the state, when society seeks to materialize all its desires which have been previously suppressed. At the same time Attwood (1995) claims that protagonists of popular post-Soviet criminal films, assertive, strikingly heterosexual, armed men without excessive wit, mark masculinity reclaimed after

the collapse of the Soviet nanny-like state. This process of reclaiming is represented in the image of gun possessing which Attwood reads as a phallic symbol. Even though both this interpretation may seem plausible from a particular psychoanalytic perspective, it strikes one that both Sukovataya and Attwood analyze<sup>2</sup> masculinities placing them in the exclusively temporal scale. This interpretation obscures the fact that the post-Soviet manhood was inevitably constructed at the expense of bodies situated in the abnormal spaces, such as racialized, ethicized, sexualized Others.

There are also not many works focusing on the construction and/ or representation of Caucasian masculinity in contemporary Russia, even though North Caucasus for a long time was – and still is – a space of otherness, and the point of the focus of nationalistic debates. Eichler's (2006) and Roman's (2002) contributions in this sense are important. In her article, Eichler claims that the construction of the abnormal masculinity of Chechens was used by the state to gain public support for the first and the second Chechen wars. She demonstrates that Russian masculinity was represented as civilized, disciplined and patriotic, whereas Chechen manhood was shown as backward, wild, brutal, aggressive and criminal. However, even though Eichler discusses the process of othering of Chechen population, she does not explore the relationship between Russian and Caucasian masculinity in all its complexity. She is interested in the construction of Caucasian Other as a tactic of war rather than as a persistent discursive practice with long-term effect on the notion of Russian masculinity and

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to remember though that the various arguments presented and discussed in this section are fed by the different theoretical perspectives. Whereas Sukovataya and Attwood are clearly inspired by psychoanalysis, Foxall, Eichler and Ashwin work with intersections of gender and state power, Mesherkina and Kiblitckaya approach the question from the position of social sciences and Roman, Dwyer and partially Eichler focus on the discursive construction of masculinity. All these perspectives are important for the research presented, but it is necessary to acknowledge their white spots. Psychoanalytic approach, for instance, is usually criticized for being too universalizing and rigid, tending to reduce the complex problem of difference to the issue of sexual multi-stage development (Nixon 1997). However, as (for instance) Bhabha's works demonstrate, psychoanalytic theory still can be useful to think about colonial discourses. On the other hand, state-focusing approach might tend to erase the issues of resistance and negotiation on the ground, as discussed earlier. In this work, I try to balance and combine different perspectives to access the core of the issue I focus on.



nationalism. Roman (2002), quite differently, makes an attempt to explain Russian racism referring to the Soviet time legacy. He demonstrates that the USSR was officially imagined as a truly international, racism-free community constituted by distinctly different but equal nations. In this construct, the Russian nation was not superior, but rather “first among equal”. This idea was articulated in familial terms, that is, the Russian nation was presented as the “elder brother”, whereas other nations as “little brothers”, directly benefiting from and being civilized by virtue of inclusion into this family. Roman argues that this imagery was responsible for post-Soviet racialization of peoples from the ex-USSR. When republics refused to be part of hierarchized Soviet familial structure, Moscow (as a capital) was re-imagined as white, and non-Slavic, non-European people as black. This racializing gesture marked Caucasian citizens of the Russian Federation as blacks, strangers and foreigners. Though plausible and well-supported, Roman’s argument needs to be complemented by gendered analysis of nationalism structures. Even though Roman demonstrates difference in perception of “black” men and women in 90s Moscow, he does not explore the situation from the approach which sees nationalism as a masculinist endeavor per se. In my research, I make an attempt to refocus perspective and argument he proposes and look at how the process of imagining “black” masculinity in Russia contributes into Russian own masculinity and nationalism.

To sum up, even though post-Soviet situation attracts great scholarly attention, there is still not enough research done with respect to intersections of racism/nationalism and post-Soviet gender order. This research seeks to contribute into the field. As this literature review demonstrates, even though gendered component of racism toward Caucasian people is generally acknowledged, it is still barely analyzed from the perspective of its productivity for Russian (peace time) nationalism and gender order. Moreover, it seems that the ambiguity of the imagery of the Caucasian man remains unexplored. For instance, the issue of certain

jealousy and desire toward Caucasian masculinity is virtually unexamined, even though my research demonstrates that this pattern is quite persistent in the discourse. Consequently, the question of productivity of these sentiments waits to be raised. In this work, I argue that the imagery of the Caucasian male Other is much more complicated and ambiguous than it is generally pictured in the literature and that inconsistency of this imagery has its own productive power seeking to reinforce Russian nationalism. I demonstrate how exactly the transitional period the Russian society goes through affects the way the Other is imagined, and what means of control and disciplining are used. In particular, I seek to reconsider Roman's and Eichler's arguments demonstrating that the image of the Caucasian Other is not static and consistent as one might assume reading their accounts, but rather full of ambiguities and relying upon constant repetition.

## Chapter 2. Space of ambivalence: the imagery of the Other

In this chapter, I start exploring the imagery of the Caucasian Other constructed in the three case studies I work with, namely the Dagestani conscription ban, public lezghinka dancing, and male-to-male rape in Rozhdestvenskaya village as represented in mainstream media and political discourse. This imagery is not at all simple and self-explanatory, but rather complex and full of contradictions. The task to give the whole picture of the Caucasian Other imagery goes far beyond the scope of this work if it is possible at all; here, I map out the most salient features and feelings with respect to the topic explored and those which are most often articulated in my material. As Hall (1997) demonstrates, the representation of an Other is regularly fixed and reduced to stereotype. The very notion of stereotype needs unpacking. As Hall shows, stereotyping takes place in the case of inequalities of power; it seeks to reduce a person to some particular traits; these traits are exaggerated and simplified; they are essentialized and naturalized. This gesture of naturalization fosters fixation of the imagery of the Other, make it unalterable and link it to eternity (1997, 258). Moreover, the practice of stereotyping produces splitting of spaces and bodies to normal and abnormal. “Normal” space, Hall argues, is closed, and the Other is expelled. The vivid impermeable boundary between the Self and the Other is thus constructed (258). The Caucasian male Other I deal in this work is indeed stereotyped, otherwise, it would not be possible to produce the present chapter. However, as my research demonstrates, even though the image of the Caucasian male Other is fixed, as Hall’s analysis predicts, it is not without ambivalences, and it is always in the process of constant re-production. Representations I seek to explore are governed by power that produces and instrumentalizes ambivalent spaces within the given imagery.

As I argue in this chapter, the imagery of the Caucasian Other partially follows the classical pattern of colonial stereotyping as described by Hall (1997), Bhabha (1999) and Stoler (1989,

1995, 2002)<sup>3</sup>. I demonstrate that the masculinity of the Caucasian men is constructed in the discourses I engage with as excessive, undisciplined, uncontrollable and inherently violent. Moreover, the idea of violence is shifted to be associated with non-militarized and normally non-violent Caucasian practices, so the practices themselves come to be seen as inherently aggressive. Perceived through this lens, signs of visibility of Caucasianness (such as a national dance performed publicly) bear the mark of violence and are read as an attempt to assure or demonstrate domination of Caucasianness over Russianness. I also examine the “deviant” sexuality of Caucasian men exemplified by the figure of a Dagestani rapist. I argue that the figure of the Dagestani is located in the realm of extreme ambivalence, that he is the object of the eroticized gaze and fascination and simultaneously is abjected as a pervert. I start, however, by exploring the fears of domination and symbolic penetration which are constantly revealed in the discourses on the Caucasianness I examine.

## 2.1 Domination and Penetration: Spaces and Institutions

In this section, I focus on the specific fears of symbolic penetration and domination evolving around the notion of Caucasianness. As I demonstrate, these fears reveal themselves on various levels, in terms of space and national institutions. These levels, put together in the analysis, seek to show the degree to which the Other’s masculinity and sexuality is perceived as powerful and dangerous.

### 2.1.1 “Lezghinka on Manezhnaya square”: Caucasianness and Russian spaces

Caucasian lezghinka is a symbol of certain things. Caucasians push it as a symbol of the fact that they are allowed to do everything.

From an interview with a Russian nationalist Konstantin Krylov (Lenta.ru 2012a)

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<sup>3</sup> More discussion on that see in chapter 1

The lezghinka case exemplifies very well the fear of domination of Caucasianness over Russianness and penetration of the nation by the Other. One of the widely reiterated accusations against Caucasian people in Russia is that “they dance lezghinka on Manezhnaya square”. This phrase has become almost a trope. It has infiltrated mainstream discourse on the “Caucasian issue”, coming presumably from the right-wing side. Lezghinka is an extremely popular ethnic Caucasian dance originally with the strong and highly visible heterosexual component, usually performed in pairs (male+female) and accompanied by cries of encouragement of spectators who compose a circle around a pair and wait their turn to join (and who are indeed in fact participants themselves). A male dancer constantly steps toward a female one, and looks straight and up, and she smiles and looks down, and turns round. His sharp moves are intentionally in contrast with her smooth ones (Abdulaeva 2013). Public lezghinka performance which is in the center of my attention, however, somewhat differs. It is performed on the streets publicly in male only groups (so the dance thus becomes individual) and, as Caucasian men usually explain, is practiced just out of good mood, without the clear reason. The space in question, Manezhnaya square, is located just near the Kremlin walls, in the very heart of the Russian nation-state. As I show in this section, “lezghinka on Manezhnaya square” or its counterpart “lezghinka on Red Square” embodies an anxiety over alien masculine penetration of the space of pure Russianness, of the very center of the metropole. The act of dancing creates a cleft into the plain realm of Russianness, and allows the dangerous inferior Other to slide inside. In nationalist discourse the phrase “lezghinka on Manezhnaya square” works as a code to point to the expansion of Caucasianness throughout the whole country. As I show later, this fear of expansion is indeed sexualized within the (hetero)sexist national imagery of the land-as-(female)-body. This fear of penetration evolving in the point of the intersecting anxieties over the national/political space and (sexualized) male Others is registered in other national/temporal contexts as well. For

instance, Edelman (1993) points at the same set of fears and anxieties visible in the political space of the U.S. in his work on 1964 sex scandal around the figure of the president's chief of staff arrested for being with another man in a restroom.

To show how strong hostility towards public lezghinka dancing in “white” spaces is, it is worth noting that in 2013, Moscow mayor candidate and major opposition leader Alexey Navalny in interview for Eho Moskvyy radio station said he would outlaw lezghinka on Manezhnaya as a “violation of the public order” if he wins the election campaign<sup>4</sup>. There are no evidences that the other mayor candidates explicitly commented on the issue. Navalny explained his initiative insisting that lezghinka is an act which is perceived by Moscow dwellers as (gendered) defiance and provocation.

You are coming into the Gorky park [the very popular Moscow place for outdoor activities], –and now it is hot outside – and there are a lot of girls in bikinis. ... If crowds of girls in bikini appear in Makhachkala [Dagestan's capital] or Grozny [Chechnya's capital], it is going to be, I do not know, a scandal and a huge conflict! ... in some cities (we live in the huge country) some activities may count as a violation of public order, and in some cities the same activities may not [count as a violation]. ... [W]e are Muscovites, we have our culture codes, we have common understanding of what is public order (Venediktov 2013).

It should be clear that for Navalny, as well as for many others, it is only lezghinka that should be outlawed. Other dances it is said do not violate the “public order”. What is specific about lezghinka is, as I argue, its salient Caucasianness and its equation with the Other's

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<sup>4</sup> Alexey Navalny is arguably the only sound oppositional leader in the contemporary Russian nation-state. He is a civil society and political activist and open liberal-democrat with some nationalist ideas, and until recently was not connected to any official political party. Now he is under house arrest due to being a suspected person in the various criminal cases. Amnesty International states that processes against him are indeed politically motivated (Amnesty International 2013) and names him prisoner of conscience (RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty 2012). In the same interview as cited above Navalny insists that he unlike previous Moscow mayors would allow gay prides in the city if elected, which is another extremely interesting parallel statement to analyze.

masculinity performance. Lezghinka as a highly visible public male-only performance is perceived as a sign of domination, expansion and penetration “inherent” to Caucasian masculinity. Manezhnaya square here is a both metonymical and metaphorical space. As a metonymy, it stands for all other “white” spaces of the country, all other squares, streets, yards where lezghinka dancers, it is said by police and politicians, unavoidably irritate Russian people. As a metaphor, it illustrates the idea of the male Other penetrating the nation’s space. There are particular gendered and sexual dynamics at play here. That is, as McClintock (1993) claims, female body often has metaphorical relations to the nation, whereas men are seen as active agents of their nation or ethnical group. Other studies describe manifestations of this metaphorical imagery. That is, the female body can be conceptualized as limits and boundaries of the nation, as the land the nation occupies and/or as the embodiment of (male) national honor (see more Peterson 1999, Massad 1995, Nagel 1998). This theoretical approach enables one to trace sexualized imagery of the Caucasian male Other, presented by lezghinka dancers, penetrating the feminized national space of Manezhnaya square.

A line of argumentation very similar to Navalny’s was developed by Valerij Gaevsky, head of Stavropol krai (NEWSru.com 2011). He literally lists the places where lezghinka is not welcomed, namely, under windows of houses at nighttime, on days of mourning in public spaces and traffic area. It seems that this list never can be exhaustive and does not tell one much about underlying reasons of condemnation. However, Gaevsky adds some more valuable information in his statement, that is, he tells where lezghinka is allowed.

The whole thing is about time and place. <...> See, on The Day of Stavropol krai we conducted a competition among the [amateur] lezghinka dancers. I can dance lezghinka too. I do not do well so far (NEWSru.com 2011)

By this he implies that dancing is allowed only in intentionally marked spaces created for the dance, such as during a dance competition. Lezghinka must be restricted to those spaces, and dancers must know their place. The dance is thus denied the status of a normal everyday practice; it needs the special circumstances to be performed. Masculinized Caucasianness should wait the specific occasion of ostentatious “friendship of nations” to be revealed. On this occasion, Gaevsky himself, being Russian, can dance some lezghinka to perform good-neighborly relations with Caucasians by explicitly appropriating the part of their culture. The dance needs the space to be already ethnically marked to be performed and celebrated. This space should be some temporally delineated non-white realm, consciously legitimized by the white power, such as dance competition, or, may be, a Dagestani wedding. At the same time in the universal, unmarked “white” space Caucasianness must remain as invisible as possible.

There are also particular gender notions are at play here. “Organized” lezghinka from Gaevsky’s comment is most probably performed in male-female pairs, as described in the beginning of the section, and not as a male-only dance. The physical presence of the Caucasian female body, which is always not-there in the case of public street performances<sup>5</sup>, matters. During the street performances, a male dancer repeats all the moves as if female body was there, but it is absent. It might be suggested that the very lack of the female body provokes certain gendered anxiety. If the Caucasian female is absent, a question might be raised (and it is, as I show below) *whom do* Caucasian men dance (*kogo oni tanzujut?*). This intentionally grammatically wrong usage of the Accusative case in Russian implies that one, as a (inevitably male) subject can “dance someone” else as an object. “To dance someone” is also used as a common euphemism for “to fuck someone”, such as in an (intentionally grammatically incorrect) phrase “who pays the girl that one dances her” (*kto platit devushku*,

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<sup>5</sup> The situation of lack of female dancer is, most probably, connected to the specific traditional Caucasian patterns of homosocial socialization, but this question goes beyond the scope of my research, so I cannot make any claim other than based on the common sense.



*tot ee i tanzuet*). These sexual meanings of dancing as well as anxiety over an object substituting the Caucasian female body absent in the dance are revealed in the column of an Eho Moskvy<sup>6</sup> journalist:

The fact that Russians unlike Caucasians do not dance on Manezhnaya square is a problem of Russians who unlike their southern brothers do not learn folk dances. Caucasians learn and dance, and *dance our women, and dance everything* while we, decrepit Russian bags with I do not know what inside, prohibit lezghinka and whine that we, poor beings, are oppressed. (my italics) (Golubev 2013)

The journalist emphasizes assertiveness of the dancers, and it is read by him in a gendered and sexualized way. The very particular notion of self weakness is also constructed here, and I address this issue in the following chapter in detail. What is important to note now thought is the anxiety over penetration nation's female bodies as well as nation in general (they dance everything) by the male Other. Those are "our" women and "our" "everything" which is the substitute for the absent Caucasian female body in the dance. Even though this comment might seem anti-nationalist and Caucasians-friendly (indeed, it appeared in the liberal website), it is a part of the overall neo-colonial discourse framing "their" dancing and "their" overall visibility as a threat and seeking to prevent expansion of Caucasianness.

### 2.1.2 *Infiltrating the army*

The fear of penetration and domination has not only *spatial* and *bodily*, but also an *institutional* dimension. As many of internet-comments argue with regard to the Dagestani conscription case, Caucasians should not be allowed to serve in the army.

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<sup>6</sup> Eho Moskvy is a quite popular liberal radio station which has its own website where the column was published.

The army is not for them. Not for Chechens, nor for Ingushes, nor for Dagestanis of all stripes. And they must not be accepted in any military school. Or Dudaev's<sup>7</sup> example is not a lesson for you? (Ofitser zapasa, underneath Bobrova 2013b)

This commentator attests himself as a person close to the army (“Ofitser zapasa” is directly translatable as a “retired officer”) and thus possessing certain expertise and claiming the status of the military system representative implying that he shares the values of the national fraternity and seeks to preserve its borders. This comment highlights that Caucasian men are not perceived as loyal to the nation-state. They are enemies seeking to gain knowledge from the military school or the army and use that knowledge later against the nation.

They want to pursue a military career. The fame of Dudaevs and Maskhadovs<sup>8</sup> haunts their minds. And guerilla a member with military education is paid better. (Hrensgor, underneath Newsland 2012)

What is apparent here is the production of the internal male Other as a pretender and a hidden enemy making an attempt to infiltrate and destroy the militarized fraternity of the nation. This is the fear of a stranger who is among “us”. Every Caucasian in the army thus poses a particular epistemological problem. He is always potentially terrorist and/or guerilla member, always potentially an enemy, which is especially important due to the special status of the army as the masculinist representation of the nation (see section 1.3). Seeking to exclude any possibility of subversion, commentators propose to expel Caucasian men from the army all together. Here, the image of the Other who never can be trusted is produced. This sentiment contributes to delineation of the borders between different male bodies occupying the space of

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<sup>7</sup> Dzhokhar Dudayev was a leader of Chechen separatists, the first president of breakaway Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. He was the only Chechen who used to be a Soviet Air Force general. Dudayev was killed in 1996 during the first Chechen war.

<sup>8</sup> Aslan Maskhadov was a leader of Chechen separatist and third president of Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. He built his military career in the USSR army. Maskhadov was killed in 2005 by the forces of the federal government.

the country. Within the discourse my examples reveal, white bodies' loyalty and trustworthiness are never cast into question. Racialized bodies, on the contrary, are considered as enemies within the nation-state needing to be excluded from the national fraternity embodied by the army. Moreover, as the next section demonstrates, Caucasians are not welcomed in the army not just due to their disloyalty to the nation-state, but also because their very masculinity is represented as threatening for the army system.

## 2.2 Excessive masculinity

### 2.2.1 Unwelcomed soldiers

The examination of articulated reasons for ceasing Dagestani conscription presents an excellent illustration of how Caucasian masculinity is constructed in the mainstream and state-sponsored discourse as excessive, uncontrollable, undisciplined and overtly violent. The latest available trustworthy data from Dagestan conscription centers demonstrate that in 2011 the army officially planned to draft for the military service 3320 young men from Dagestan. However, only 121 were recruited, and the vast majority were of the Slavic ethnic background (Lenta.ru 2012b). At the same time, it is impossible to state that the army is overcrowded. As officially estimated, about 235,000 men have evaded the draft in 2012 (Yuridichesky centr Pravozaschita 2012). These statistics imply that Dagestani men are purposefully targeted as a group unwelcome in the army<sup>9</sup>.

To understand the rationale behind the conscription ban, it is important to look at problems specific for the Russian army. Men try to avoid the draft for different reasons, but the most prominent is the widespread *dedovschina*, a Russian term which refers to hazing newer

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<sup>9</sup> The comparable case of discrimination took place in Yugoslavia before the set of armed conflicts and the state dissolution. As Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada reports, only Serbs and Montenegrins were subject of conscription for a while (Canada: Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1991). However, it is important to note that the Caucasian young men unlike the vast majority of their Croatian counterparts from Yugoslavia are making considerable attempts to join the army and pursue a career in the security sector. In addition, as I argue in this section, the reasons of the conscription ban in Russia have to do not only with alleged non-loyalty of the Caucasian conscripts, but also with how their masculinity is imagined.

soldiers regularly become an object of. Newer soldiers suffer from various psychological and physical abuse and humiliation coming from those men who are longer in service (Eichler 2012). As The Mother's Right Fund estimates, about 2,000-2,500 soldiers die every year in peace time, and the reason of about 30 % of deaths is suicide caused by *dedovschina* (Real army 2012).

Caucasians, as believed by the army officials, constitute a group of regular perpetrators of hazing (Lenta.ru 2013a). Officially, generals refuse to comment on the topic of the conscription ban, but in private conversations with journalists they claim that Dagestanis are “too problematic”, they “provoke conflicts related to ethnic issues”, “refuse to obey”, “are involved in relations beyond-regulations” (the last term is an euphemism for “*dedovschina*”) (Lenta.ru 2012b, 2013a). These scarce comments, however, indicate that Dagestanis constitute a clearly delineated group blamed by the state in the enormous level of violence existing in the army. Even though nothing suggests that *only* Dagestanis are blamed, it is clear that they are particularly targeted as offenders who are to ban from the service. Dagestanis here are essentialized and over-masculinized. They are imagined as men whose very nature pushes them to be engaged in conflicts and violent actions directed against their fellow soldiers. To ban Caucasians from the army, these comments imply, means to reduce the violence level. It is hard to call military officials arguments plausible, taking into account widespread nature of *dedovschina* (it can be found virtually in every unit and generally believed to be the necessary part for transition from boyhood to manhood (see Eichler 2012)) and relatively small amount of Caucasian men drafted. To understand why Caucasians scapegoated it is worth looking at the internet-comments underneath an article dedicated to the case in the mainstream web-resource based on the user-generated content newsland.com. Commentators tend to repeat in different ways the arguments stated by the anonymous military officials cited above. In these comments, the figure of the Dagestani is collectively

imagined as an inherently violent, undisciplined, uncontrollable hater refusing to contribute to collective work. Moreover, all these qualities are presented as inherent for Dagestani's masculinity:

[They were] refusing to do dishes, to clean floor, and if someone from them was going to do so, elders were telling him that they will send a letter back home that *he is not a man*. They have beaten officers, raping their wives. (my italics) (serega19552010, underneath Newsland 2012)

The author of this comment presents himself as a person aware of situation, by virtue of presumably being an ex-soldier. It is suggested that the lack of discipline as imposed by the army and constant refusal to obey is what constitute inherent traits of the Caucasian code of masculinity (those who do obey are threatened to be labeled by their fellow Caucasian soldiers as "not men"). In his comment, the Caucasian man is represented not only as a lazy and violent, but also a hierarchy-breaker. He beats, it is stressed, not fellow soldiers (bad enough), but officers, and rapes their wives. The raped woman imagery with respect to the military realm is a common way to depict the most horrible deeds of the enemy men (see Nagel 1998) in the war. In other words, these are enemy men who are usually presented as sexual demons, and never nation's men. Thus, by accusing the Caucasian men in rapes, the commentator draws the clear border between "us" and "them", degrading "them" to the status of enemy of the nation. However, this is not all. As Das (1995) argues, the raped female body is a tool of communication between men of a group to which victim belongs and men of perpetrator's community. It is clear then that the image of raped officer's wives the commentator evokes again speaks to the masculinist fear of domination as discussed in the previous section. The issue of conscription ban and its framing indeed has certain consequences for the process of imagining of the nation. I return to this question in detail in sections 4.1 and 4.3.

### 2.2.2 *Dancing the violence*

Not only are Caucasians themselves often seen as violent and undisciplined, but the label of being violent also marks everyday practices they are engaging in, such as public lezghinka dancing. The nationalist discourse points to the particular connection between lezghinka and violence. Lezghinka, it is widely believed, provokes fights, national hatred, killings and even terrorism. For instance, in 2010 in Rostov the killing of a Russian man (Caucasian man was accused in the violence) and following anti-Caucasian protests entailed temporal prohibition of lezghinka by the local officials, even though in fact the violence was by no means connected to the lezghinka dancing (Argumenty I Fakty 2010a). As Zhemukhov and King mention in their article *Dancing the Nation*, in the Nalchik city (North Caucasus) there was an attempt to prohibit dancer's gatherings in the park after terrorist attacks happened in the city. Nalchik authorities argued that public dancing may create a threat to security (2013, 288-289). Lenta.ru reports that administrators in Moscow restaurants refuse to play Caucasian music even when they are offered money, because, one of them says, "this music is too aggressive, even if you do not intend that, conflict is going to happen" (Turovsky 2013). Lezghinka in all these cases is thus believed to have its own agency, its internal aggression which affects people hypnotized by it. "Aggressive dance" is more than a figure of speech, it is something provoking real violence, motivating people to fight and blow buildings and people up, like in Nalchik. If lezghinka is a sign of Caucasianness/Dagestaniness as some scholars argue (Abdulaeva 2013, Krapchunov 2013), then, I suggest, it is perceived as violent exactly by the virtue of being a Caucasian dance.

The fault of people detained by the police for lezghinka performance is regularly articulated in terms seeking to highlight the dancer's aggressive irrationality and uncontrollable behavior. In courts and police detention centers dancers are usually convicted in being too loud, screaming, insulting people passing by the street, whistling at women, sexually harassing

them, shooting at the air (NEWSru.com 2011, Aktualnye komentarii 2010, Lenta.ru 2013b). The endless police reports and journalistic accounts dedicated to the issue of delinquent Caucasian dancers reproduce the link between lezghinka, Caucasian masculinity and uncivilized behavior, presenting public lezghinka performance as always-already-hooliganism and aggressive and loud activity. Like the Black Man elsewhere, the racialized Caucasian Other is imagined as wild, chaotic and unable to control his emotions (Hall 1997, 255). This belief that the Caucasian men are wild indeed has to do with the sign of backwardness they bear, as described by Roman (2000) and Eichler (2006). However, that mark of backwardness appears not only in the discussion of the masculinist violence allegedly embodied by the public lezghinka dancing and military hazing, but also in the debate on the slightly different issue, namely, the Other's sexuality.

### 2.3 Constructing sexual “deviants”

Deviant sexuality has indeed been a key sign of backwardness of an Other in a variety of places and time periods, as I demonstrated in chapter 1 (Hall 1997, Bleys 1995, Stoler 1995, Stoler 2002). I examine the notion of sexuality of Caucasian Other drawing on the case study of public reaction to male-to-male rape happened in Rozhdestvenskaya village (Stavropol krai) in summer 2013. As described in various media reports, a Dagestani man forced a Slavic (allegedly Cossack) man to have oral “sex” because the latter didn't want to return money borrowed earlier. The Dagestani later was convicted of committing “a violent act of sexual nature” and imprisoned for 3 years. The case has attracted enormous public and media attention. It was considered especially news-worthy, I suggest, due to, first, the inter-racial character of the act, and, second, because the rape was male-to-male<sup>10</sup>. Whereas I was

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<sup>10</sup> Even taking into account explicit reasons of news-worthiness of the case, the question why it was published so widely still needs to be asked. As Žarkov (2001) demonstrates in her work on male-to-male war-time rape, this issue generally tends to be silenced due to explicit threats it presents for the masculinity of a group survivor belongs to. The attempt to resolve the case requires additional research and analysis and goes beyond the scope of this research. However, I might suggest that probably the wide coverage was possible due to the

expecting to find in the material a sort of penetration anxiety close to what was described by Edelman (1993), in fact the vast majority of comments revealed completely different feelings, that is, amusement and excitement<sup>11</sup>.

The proliferating trope linked to the feeling of amusement is the constant shift of focus from violence to sex and/or romance. To put it in other way, in the both journalistic accounts and internet-comments the rape is produced as sex, and not as violence. The survivor thus as well as the perpetrator, is produced as a homosexual figure seeking to satisfy his perverted desires. One of the reports about the case, appeared in popular mainstream Moskovskij Komosomolets newspaper and titled “The true story of the rape of Cossack done by Dagestani in Rozhdestvenskaya village” shuttles between genuine excitement provoked by the case and comic, travesty-like and ultimately degrading manner of depiction of survivor, perpetrator and act of violence itself. This report is indeed not about “rape” as it is promised in the title, but about romantic attitude and sexual affection simple-minded Russian/Cossack guy evoked in the macho-like Dagestani. The words used to describe the case are “the fire of passion”, “love”, and “affection”. The survivor is depicted as “sickly”, “unpresentable”, “timid” and “weak”<sup>12</sup>, whereas Dagestani is presented as “the first man in the village”, “a hot southern guy”, “a hot Caucasian”, “a macho”, “the main love-hero” inviting a particular (hetero)sexual following.

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fact that the survivor first was attested as a Cossack, and not as Russian. Even though later on it turned out that he is indeed Russian, media and internet-commentators were still tend to represent him as Cossack. For instance, underneath the piece of news titled “Police: Raped in Stavropol krai man **is not** a Cossack” published in the pro-state web-newspaper Vzglyad appeared 107 comments mocking Cossacks as homosexuals (Vzglyad 2013).

<sup>11</sup> The anxiety over penetration indeed revealed itself in the right-wing resources such as sputnikipogrom.com, but they are beyond my research sample.

<sup>12</sup> The figure of survivor indeed deserves particular scrutiny. He presents another type of an internal Other, namely, homosexual. Ultimately, in the article and internet-comments appeared in the mainstream media, survivor is reduced to his alleged homosexuality. He is constantly feminized and excluded from the masculine fraternity. By virtue of him being excluded, the status of the whole community of the Rozdestvenskaya village is questioned. These dynamics if analyzed tell a great deal about production of homosexual subjects as well as about othering of homosexuals in the contemporary Russian nation-state. Unfortunately, this discussion goes far beyond the scope of the present work, so I must limit myself to the discussion of the figure of Dagestani.



He [Dagestani] dated the girls. He was reputed as an answer to a maiden's prayer. It is not a surprise. Shapi [name of the rapist] was an outstanding fellow – tall, muscular, deep-chested. Which village girl would ever refuse to make a parade of such an admirer? [...] His wife was a beauty, worshipers followed him, and he had gracious living. Why did he start to desire something hot and unexplored? People say true love overleaps all bounds. Even better men got the short end of the stick because of strong feelings. (Bobrova 2013a)

Later, the journalist cites the survivor, taking his words out of the context and putting them as a subtitle of the report:

How could I refuse? He is so strong, so masculine... I said “yes” to everything<sup>13</sup>.  
(Bobrova 2013a)

These excerpts reveal a particular sexual phantasy about the desirable Dagestani. The gaze of the author describing Shapi is eroticized, and journalist clearly invites readers to admire the body of Dagestani, “tall”, “muscular” and “deep-chested”. Moreover, as I suggest the whole style of representation of the story in media and the amount of attention it attracted, and genuine amusement and excitement of the public speaks to the eroticized gaze of the Russian readership of mainstream media directed towards the figure of the Dagestani man and his imagined relationship with survivor.

It is a real pleasure! Pleasure! They totally fuck you. I would advise other Cossacks ... to take Vaseline with them to avoid pain if they meet an Avar<sup>14</sup>. These Avars do not

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<sup>13</sup> As it clear from the text, survivor intends to say that he was afraid of physical abuse from the side of the obviously more physically strong Dagestani and, therefore, decided not to oppose. In the report, on the contrary, phrase sounds as if survivor was charmed by the vigorous masculinity of the Dagestani.

<sup>14</sup> Caucasian Avar is presumably an ethnic background of the Dagestani. Caucasian Avars are the small Caucasian native ethnic group, which has nothing to do nomadic Eurasian Avars invading Europe in the early Middle Ages.

only fuck our women, but also our men. Good job, Avar! (Sveta Pahotnaya, underneath Metro 2013)

Great comment, Sveta Pahotnaya )))))) (Vasisli Vasil, ibid.)

Good job, Avar, this Cossack was not a virgin (Maria Selenina, ibid.)

[To editorial team]: Put it correctly: he didn't rape the Cossack, he fucked his Stavropol ass))) (Alexandr Sirenko, ibid.)

These comments are just the small piece of the thread evolving around the piece of news appeared in the web-site of the very popular mainstream street Metro newspaper. Even though the editorial account itself was short and relatively dry (especially in comparison with Moskovskij Komsomolets report), the comments underneath are full of sexual excitement and reveal a community of truly interested spectators. They produced dirty-like, playful talk full of salty jokes (“take Vaseline”, “Cossack was not a virgin” etc). The joy evoked by the report is highlighted by smile-imitating brackets. These comments, although they appeared in another web-resource, fully meet the presumable expectations of the “The true story of the rape of the Cossack done by the Dagestani in Rozhdestvenskaya village” report’s author.

However, the admiration of the Dagestani’s body and (hetero)sexual following which is provoked by its representation is just one side of the coin. The amusement of the eroticized gaze of the public also has to do with “perverted” desires allegedly inherent to Dagestanis. The man is not just a desirable male hero, but also a pervert presenting a peril for the Russian society. In the set of journalist accounts I analyze, citations from the local villagers constantly appear. Villagers over and over again complain about Dagestani sexual deviancy threatening the locals. In these complaints, phantasy and (presumably) reality are extravagantly mixed. As one of the locals reported, “How many girls were [sexually] abused by them [Dagestanis]! They are keeping silent so far. Just one decided to come out and tell what Shapi did with her

seven years ago <...> Raped her in broad daylight! And there are at least 10 of them like her” (Bobrova 2013a). Journalists from another newspaper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, cite what that female survivor allegedly told to her female friend: “First he raped girls, now [he rapes] guys, who are the next? Children?!” (Ponomarev 2013) That’s why, the friend admits, that girl decided to tell about the rape case. The same rationale, as it seems, is behind the male survivor’s decision to report to the police. As he said to journalists, he was afraid that the next time Dagestani will rape children. Not the rape cases itself are thus framed as worthy to investigate, but rather the progressive deviance of the Other, which is allegedly dangerous for “children”. Dagestani man, it is said, crossed the particular line when he engaged in sexual contact with another man. That is the moment when his deviant sexuality became necessary to discipline and control.

Dagestani’s homosexuality is indeed different from homosexuality of Russian or Western internal others. As Healey (2008) argues, for Russians, the Eastern and Southern Other was inclined to homosexuality due to his primitivism and traditional exclusion of women from the community (as for Europeans in general, see Bleys 1995). The western gay is different; he is spoiled by modernity and represents the overall decay of contemporary European morality. The Dagestani is thus not blamed for “being homosexual” and “desiring” the male body of the Cossack/Russian, but rather for his sexual excessiveness, promiscuity and inability to control his sexuality. The image of sexually dangerous racialized other is by no means a unique Russian case. The geography of sexual demons goes from black peril in the U.S. to the panic on white women rape in European colonies as described by Stoler (2002).

Internet-comments appearing underneath the same as above piece of news about the rape in the Metro newspaper reveal the stereotype-fantasy about excessive Caucasian sexuality. They demonstrate how far-reaching the lust and uncontrollability of the Caucasian Other’s desire is perceived by the commentators.

Somehow Avars shifted from donkeys to Cossacks... this is a mess. (Magomet Lianov, underneath Metro 2013)

I think he [Dagestani] also [fucks] male sheep... and female sheep... and chickens (Mikhail Sidorov, *ibid.*)

The perverted sexuality of Dagestani men here is presented as both well-known, totally transparent common-sense and yet needing to be repeated, restated and re-represented. This intense itching to be constantly engaged in the re-production and – through repetition – fixation of the Other’s perversity paradoxically coinciding with positioning of the Other as grasped and always-already-known is a vivid feature of the colonial discourse as theorized by Bhabha (1999). Inter-species sex Dagestanis allegedly regularly practice needs to be constantly highlighted in order to reduce Dagestani to his deviant sexuality. Indeed, one of the words in nationalist discourse commonly (in the everyday interpersonal speech) used to describe a Caucasian man is a “donkeyfucker”.

There is indeed an important ambivalence exposed by the case discussed. The Dagestani is an admired masculine hero, a sexually desirable object and a dangerous pervert full of uncontrollable lust. He is lifted and yet degraded, desired and yet despised. How does one to understand it? There is no clue in Eichler’s and Roman’s accounts which make an attempt to engage with discourse on the Caucasian Other in the post-Soviet Russia. For both, as might be clear from chapter 1, the stereotyping of the Caucasian is just the mode of a degrading representation seeking to secure the Russian nation-state’s right to declare “anti-terroristic operation” in Chechnya or to employ other coercive practices against the othered population. What is missed here is this striking ambivalence within the imagery of the Caucasian other’s sexuality (and, as I demonstrate later, masculinity) which makes it possible to produce explicitly split Caucasian subject. Bhabha’s (1999) writing on colonial discourse is useful to

account for this ambivalence. As I mentioned in section 1.2, the colonial subject as described by Bhabha is always placed in the realm of contradictory beliefs. Here, however, one deals not just with opposite views simultaneously articulated, but with the specific practice of looking possible due to unacknowledged contradictions. Eroticized public gaze is directed toward the rape case; the journalistic accounts as well as the internet-comments dedicated to the case are full of fascination and desire to see and to know. I suggest that the contradiction between desire and scorn observed might be explained in terms of fetishism and disavowal. Fetishism is understood here as a practice of representation which both shows and conceals the object of desire substituting the desired by another object (Hall 1997). As Hall argues, the eroticized way of looking at the Other has to do with disavowal, that is, the strategy allowing for both looking and denying the fact of looking. In my material, the Dagestanis' body is exhibited and every detail of his (assumed) sexuality is discussed and fantasized about. At the same time, this eroticized attention is rationalized through alleged necessity to expose and understand his perverse nature. The very obsession with perversity thus may be a tactic to disavow the erotized gaze, which fosters fixation of the Dagestani figure. However, further research is needed to confirm this claim.

In this chapter, I started to explore the imagery of the male Caucasian Other. I have demonstrated particular contradictions inherent to it, that is, the Other is both sexually desired and despised as a pervert. I have also shown how that imagery speaks to some fears exemplified by my material, such as fear of loss of control and penetration of the national spaces, bodies and institutions. I have demonstrated that the imagery of the Caucasian male Other repeats the classical colonial patterns of othering as described by Hall (1997), Bhabha (1999) and others. The representations I have examined in this chapter indeed tend to fix and stereotype the Other and should be considered as act of violence per se. As I show in chapter 4, these representations also shore up the specific mechanisms of control and disciplining of

Caucasian men. In the following chapter, I focus more specifically on how the national masculine Self is imagined with regard to the Other, and what kind of anxieties this comparison constantly reveal.

### Chapter 3. Imagining emasculation and lack of control

This chapter deals in more details with topics and sentiments mapped out in the previous one. Here, I seek to go further in examining ambivalent nature of the imagery of the Caucasian man. However, this chapter looks at the issue from different perspective, that is, I examine how the Russian imagery of masculinity of the Self corresponds with the imagery of the Caucasian Other. Occasionally (but coherently), the Caucasian Other is represented as a male hero celebrated by virtue of its difference from the weak, effete, crumbly Russian man. Those, who articulate this anxiety about weak masculinity, regularly and indifferent ways point to two major envy-evoking things which are perceived inherent for Caucasian masculinity, namely, male-to-male bonding and vitality. Sentiments evoked by comparing Russian and Caucasian masculinity vary from pity to hatred toward itself. In a variety of internet-comments, Russian masculinity is clearly put into inferior position with respect to the Caucasian one. In this chapter, I demonstrate how hierarchy between strong Caucasian masculinity and weak Russian one is constructed and acknowledged in the material and identify the main points of anxieties with respect to Russian masculinity.

I'm saying telling you – Russian men are a far cry from Caucasian ones, even though it is a shame to admit it! ... Cowardly, losing themselves in drinking, isolated Russian quasi-men (*muzchinki*) are afraid of brave and assertive Caucasians; Caucasians rule everywhere, they force Russians away everywhere, and those cannot do anything with it! They blow ropes of snot, and snivel each other (Sofiya-Bonn 12, underneath Newsland 2012)<sup>15</sup>

This comment appeared underneath the article about banned conscription from Dagestan, in the heart of the discussion about Caucasian soldiers' behavior. Clearly, the commentator imagine this contemporary hierarchy as not appropriate, as something which is wrong and

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<sup>15</sup> <http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/891087/>

needs to be fixed. Ultimately, Russian men are blamed not only for “cowardice” or lack of solidarity, but for their inability to control the Caucasian Other. At the same time, this inability is a result of the corrupted nature of Russian men on the contrast with healthy, virile, bonded Caucasians. Russian masculinity is seen as not powerful enough, inactive, full of self-pity, weak and feminized. The Caucasian is imagined as completely different – militarized, assertive, full of strength. As a leader of the Soldiers’ Mothers Committee, Valentina Melnikova, notes in her interview for *Moskovskij Komsomolets* newspaper, Dagestani young men want to go to the army “not to learn how to shoot, they are taught how to do it in childhood”, they strive to go there just to get the document about military service accomplishment (Bobrova 2013b). They need the paper, and not the knowledge how to be the man. Dagestanis are thus seen as almost naturally militarized and masculinized, not needing the special institution to complete the transfer from boyhood to the manhood. The imagery of Caucasian subject can be illustrated by the figure of *kadyrovets* (plural – *kadyrovtsy*). *Kadyrovets* is a member of Ramzan Kadyrov’s personal security forces, physically strong, militarized, healthy, pitiless, and extremely loyal to the state embodied by the figure of Kadyrov and to his fellow *kadyrovtsy*. *Kadyrovtsy* are those who assure and perform the order in Chechnya as understood by Ramzan Kadyrov (Hughes 2007). *Kadyrovtsy* are, of course, Chechens. Russians, it is said, are not like that. The comment below appeared within the same discussion thread as one cited above:

What can I say, in the Caucasus they respect power, and not only physical one. Our men do not have enough of this power. It is simpler to get wasted and then whine that Caucasians occupied everything. <sup>16</sup> (stargazer 777, underneath Newsland 2012)

The image of Russian male weeper is reiterated over and over again. Weeping marks an inability to act like a man and down-grades the subject to a baby-like or woman-like status.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.



This self-critique is indeed gendered and misogynist, driven by the feeling that the masculine self does gender in a wrong way. Whereas it may seem that articulation of self-weakness and admiration of other's strength contests the discourse I describe in the previous chapter, in fact, as I argue, it reinforces the idea of inherent "natural" difference existing between Russian and Caucasian subjects, reveals anxiety about hierarches among ethnic groups within the state and contributes to nationalism. It also contributes to the state of ambiguity of the Caucasian figure I referred to in the previous chapter. To explore the snarl of meanings presented in the discussion on weak Russian/strong Caucasian men, in this chapter I examine Russian late-Soviet and post-Soviet discourse on male health and ideas on male intimacy and bonding. I also demonstrate that fears about health and intimacy have to do with anxiety about the national power.

### **3.1 "I want a man like Putin, who does not drink"**

Anxiety about Russian men's extinction is an integral part of liberal late-Soviet and post-Soviet discourse. As Zdravomyslova and Temkina (2013) put it, in the late-Soviet period women were advised to take special care of men, for instance, help them to fight alcoholism and encourage them to visit doctors more often. Thus, the men of the late Soviet period were marked by lack of vitality. They were seen as effete, weak and needed protection and nurturing. This discourse indeed is still alive, even though it morphed through the collapse of the USSR and early post-Soviet period. The factors articulated as "real reasons" why Russian men are physically weak slightly changed. Whereas the liberal late-Soviet discourse blamed the state for depriving men of possibility to perform their "traditional" roles (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2013: 43), in post-Soviet period men it is said suffered from loss of status which entailed their physical deterioration and early death (Kiblitckaya 2000).

However seducing might be to take Kiblitckaya's interpretation for granted (this interpretation indeed is a sort of a common sense in Russia), it is necessary to go further and examine the

discourse on men's health itself. Why and how it achieved its status of common sense knowledge? As I demonstrate, this discourse reveals something more than just sad results of the USSR collapse. Fears and anxieties surrounding the issue of male health tells a lot about both nation's imagining of the self and Russian nationalism. Indeed, degradation of men's health is not only a result of societal changes, but also an instrument of nationalism. In the post-Soviet period, the anxiety about loss of virility was instrumentalized in nationalist discourse and linked to the loss of nation's power. The assumption behind this gesture is clear, and correlates with Nagel's (1998) and McClintock's (1993) points; that is, that man is perceived as agent of the nation, the metonymical figure presenting the national community. Articulated within the given context, this assumption morphs into a belief that physically weak, unhealthy men constitute an effete nation. The manifestations of men's health thus come to embody manifestations of nation's (or race's) power.

The figure illustrating this claim is the Russian president Vladimir Putin. In contrast with heavily drinking former president Boris Yeltsin, he presented himself as a guy who does not smoke, does not drink and loves sport. As Foxall (2013) notes in his work on famous pictures of semi-naked Putin, his image represents the virility and healthiness necessary for nation leader. In a very popular Russian pop-song appeared before elections in 2004 girly voice complaints about her boyfriend and wishes she could meet someone like Putin: "[I want] a man like Putin, who's full of strength, [I want] a man like Putin, who does not drink". Even though this song is often cited to demonstrate the way masculinity of Putin is presented, it should not be ignored that his image is constructed as opposite to that of anonymous regular boyfriend of a singer.

My boyfriend again got in trouble,  
He got into fight and had drunk some booze.  
I was tired of him and kicked him out,

And now I want a man like Putin.

The song is created to make as many Russian girls relate to it as possible. It reveals a great deal of how not only the Putin's manhood, but also a "regular" Russian masculinity is imagined. As the song vividly illustrates, Putin is better by virtue of his difference from other men, and not because he is just like others. One of the characteristics of the abandoned boyfriend is his unhealthy lifestyle and alcohol addiction (especially clear in the Russian version of the song).

The link between men's health and nationalism is even more salient in practices promoted by right-wing political entities in Russia. Among other things, they promote so-called Russian run (*Russaja probezhka*), which is a mass event regularly taking place on the streets of the variety of Russian cities. Young men who share nationalist ideology usually gather wearing noticeable T-Shirts or hoodies with run logo and waving flags marking them as right-wing activists<sup>17</sup>, and start running and doing other exercises together. Their typical mottos include: "For a healthy life-style!" and "Russian means sober!" Participants are overwhelmingly male, and the visual and textual production supporting the practice is openly male-oriented. For instance, the running figure located on promo T-Shirts, hoodies and flags is male. Moreover, the grammatical form of the main motto ("Russian means sober!" (*Russkij znachit trezvyj*)) explicitly calls for men, not women to participate. It is clear that the intimate link existing between *man's* health and national power. This link is by no means a Russian-only thing. As Mosse (1985) demonstrates, in the modern Europe, the virile healthy male body was praised as a sign of nation's vitality. Internet-comments I analyzed reveal this the connection between nationhood, men's health and bodily virility as well. The comments below are taken from the

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<sup>17</sup> In Russia, right-wing activists usually use a flag with black, yellow and white stripes, so-called *imperka*(imperial).

non-mainstream but quite popular right-wing resource BaltInfo; commentators use rhetoric very similar to those who propagandize Russian run:

Sirs Russians, blacks hit you because you have lost your spirit, you get *shitfaced with vodka* and then you go for heroic deeds. You should deal with [problems] while *sober* and with dignity. Caucasians respect *power*. I'm Russian, but Caucasians do not hit me, I respect them and they respect me, because I'm *strong and sober*<sup>18</sup>. (Eugeny, underneath Arsenjev 2010) (my italics)

Stop *swilling vodka*, everyone, go to *gyms* and museums! *Forward, march!*<sup>19</sup> (eugeny, *ibid.*) (my italics)

These comments appeared underneath the article about conflict between members of a military corpus and Dagestanis in the north-west region of the country. The typical Russian man is imagined here as drinking, irresponsible, physically weak, and, consequently, unable to control the othered population of Caucasians. As a phrase from a military vocabulary (*Forward, march!*) suggests, this intertwined set of problems of health, masculinity, national power and control also has to do with the right-wing anxiety about Russian militarized masculinity. As Eichler (2012) argues, militarized masculinity is in decline in Russia, and the state needs to work hard to re-produce a “natural” link between manhood and military service. As mentioned in chapter 1, other types of militarized masculinity emerged in post-Soviet Russia, represented by semi-criminal semi-entrepreneurial protagonists of various films and novels or employees of private security companies. Paramilitary activities propagandized by right-wing groups align with these other manifestations of militarized masculinity. In this respect, right-wing groups are indeed allies of the state since to maintain conscription the state

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.baltinfo.ru/2010/04/12/Draka-v-Sapernom-Rossiiskaya-armiya-s-trudom-zaschischaet-sebya-ot-kavkazskikh-banditov-139032>

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

needs the link between militarized activity, explicit physicality and normative masculinity to be as clear and natural as possible.

Whereas men's vivid physical strength, which is read as a sign of healthiness, is perceived as a sign of the nation's virility, weakness and unhealthiness of male citizens is believed to threaten the nation. This explains why in some context an internal other is pictured as physically deteriorated. As Mosse (1985) shows, in modern Germany the image of unhealthy, pale, degenerate homosexual and masturbator presented a threat for the nation and respectability evoked by modernity. Jews were believed to bear the signs of degeneracy in their appearance as well. As is clear from Mayer's (2000) account, these ideas were internalized by early Zionists and led eventually to the birth of New Jew ideology. New Jew project aimed to reconsider "weak" Jewish masculinity and create a new type of man, physically strong, able to protect himself and women and children, brave and disciplined. Even though Mosse's and Mayer's analyses demonstrate how widespread the link between man's health and nationalism is, they do not shed light on the question why Russian manhood is perceived unhealthy and physically deteriorated whereas Caucasians are seen as tough, physically strong, militarized men. Russians in Russia were never othered by the virtue of being Russians, as were Jews or homosexuals in Germany. There was no external hate to internalize. Moreover, it needs to be emphasized that the space of non-healthy and not-quite-manly Russian bodies exists not at the point of intersections of some specifically marked identity axes, such as class and race, but in the realm which is usually perceived as unmarked and universal. In other words, within the discourse on health it is not the other who presents threat for the strength of the nationhood, but usually universalized self – white ethnic Russian able-bodied heterosexual man.

To resolve the case it is useful to look at the Stoler's (1989) and Rakowska-Harmstone's (1990) arguments taken together. Stoler's study among other things focuses on discourses on

colonizer's health that proliferated in Europe in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. European doctors were especially concerned with degeneracy and physical declining colonial environment was believed to trigger. However, as Stoler points out, this panic was not about health of white people per se, but rather about their "political viability and cultural reproduction" (1989: 650). Fears about white bodies' well-being, she argues, were especially vocal in the 1930s, at the moment of economic crisis, the results of which, such as unemployment and poverty among whites, questioned white respectability and power. As Rakowska-Harmstone claims, the late-Soviet period, the 70-80s, was marked by increasing demands of the other nations constituting the USSR which entailed the revival of Russian nationalism. It was exactly the period Zdravomyslova and Temkina (2013) discuss in their work on late-Soviet masculinity I mentioned earlier. Panic over men's health thus coincided with anxiety over nation's power. Though very different contexts, the 30s in colonies and the 70-80s in Soviet Union share the panic about physical well-being of the hegemonic group manifested together with anxiety over stability of national/racial privileges and dominance. In Russia, this fear about men's health reached its peak in the post-Soviet years and revealed itself in scientific discourse. Kiblitckaya's (2000) and Kay's (2006) works I mentioned are bright examples of this kind of scholarship (see also Saburova 2011). This is not to say that Russian men's early mortality and health problems that this scholarship registers and seeks to understand do not exist or do not deserve to be examined. They do exist and do affect individual men's lives. However, it is important to recognize that this alarming scientific discourse does not mere present what happens "out there" in the real world, but has its own performative function in contributing to the production of the link between the weak alcohol-affected male body and the powerless nation that needs to be revived.

### 3.2 “The oprichnik caterpillar gathers”

Besides physical strength, within the discourse I analyze, Caucasians are believed to have genuine solidarity with each other and to be deeply rooted in their traditions (the latter claim is more complex, I discuss it in detail in the section 4.2). At the same time, bonding with each other and with nation’s “spirit” is said to be exactly what Russians lack. This motive of bonding/lack of bonding is reiterated in the material of my case studies over and over again. It is especially evident in the cases when conflicts or potential conflicts between Russians and Caucasians are discussed. This anxiety appears in both commentary threads and journalistic accounts of mainstream media:

[Unlike Caucasians], our guys just do not have feeling of a healthy collectivism<sup>20</sup>  
(stargazer 777, underneath Newsland 2012)

Self-confident, powerful because of clan solidarity, guests from South suddenly arrived to Russian regions of Central and North Russia and busily started to occupy key places in business and security sector. (Lenta.ru 2012c)

The Bumaga newspaper cites a right-wing activist Daniil from Saint-Petersburg who recently launched a campaign to walk [Russian] girls home at night:

We, Russians, can be called loafers who should be looked after. [...] Other nations are not as disengaged as we are. (Sidorova 2013)

But why are solidarity and bonding are so significant? And how one might explain the feeling of loneliness many Russians seem to share? As Friedman and Healey (2012) argue, the specific cult of male intimacy was historically typical for the Russian notion of manhood. The cult developed on the premise of sexual innocence is believed to be inherent for Russianness. Whereas in modern Europe romantic friendship among men may cause suspicious in sexual

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<sup>20</sup> <http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/891087/>

deviancy, the Russian nation was believed to be free from any perverted desires (2012: 231). This innocence thus distinguished Russians from both Westerners and Oriental people. Friedman and Healey mention that in Soviet Russia, male intimacy proliferated in the army and Communist Party. The army and the party were indeed the most important national institutions in the USSR. Male bonding thus becomes the issue not of private, but of national interest. The idea of male bonding as a national issue indeed transcends the realm of the Soviet system.

Gapova (2011) suggests an excellent example from contemporary Russian fiction illustrating this point. A dystopian novel *Day of the Oprichnik*<sup>21</sup> written by Vladimir Sorokin in 2006 places a reader into totalitarian (but not Soviet) Moscow in 2028. The protagonist of a book is *oprichnik* Andrei Komiaga, member of high rank masculine fraternity of *oprichniks* licensed by the state to keep order and punish dissidents. In one of the most powerful scenes of the novel, *oprichniks* have sex together, so their bodies are arranged into a form of caterpillar.

Batya is the first to rise. He moves Vosk close to him. Vosk sticks his member in Batya's asshole. Batya groans with pleasure, grins, and bares his white teeth. Shelet embraces Vosk, pokes his greased dick in him. Vosk lets out a belly screech. Seryi fills up Shelet; Seryi is speared by Samosya, Samosya by Baldokhai, Baldokhai by Mokry, Mokry by Nechai, who has to push his sticky stud in, and then my turn comes. I clasp the leftwing brother with my left hand, and with my right I direct my member into his asshole. Wide is Nechai's hole; I drive my member all the way to his purple core. [...] I moan in Nechai's ear. Buben groans in mine, embracing me with his valiant arms. I do not see who sticks him, but by the groans I know—it is a worthy member. Well, there aren't really any unworthy among us—the Chinese have renewed our genitals, strengthened them, equipped them. We have the wherewithal to delight one another, as well as to punish Russia's enemies. The oprichnik caterpillar gathers, coupling. [...] Batya takes a step. And we follow him, we follow the head of the caterpillar. Batya leads us into the pool. It is spacious, roomy. It is filled with warm water instead of ice water. "Hail! Hail!" we shout,

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<sup>21</sup> Oprichnik is a figure from Russian history; this is how members of personal tsar's security unit were called. The organization of oprichniks was established by Tsar Ivan the Terrible, and they became notorious for brutal, violent ways they dealt with tsar's real and imaginary enemies.



embracing each other, shuffling. We follow Batya. We walk. We walk. We walk in caterpillar steps. Our genitals glow, our members shudder between buttocks. [...]And now the long-awaited moment has come: a tremor rolls through the entire caterpillar.

And:

“Haaaaaaaiiiii!!!”

The arched ceiling shakes. And the pool—becomes a nine-point storm.

“Haaaaiiii!!!”

I roar into Nechai’s ear, and Buben screams into mine:

“Haaaaiiii!!!”

Lord, do not let us die... [...]

Wisely, oh so wisely, Batya arranged everything with the caterpillar. Before it, everyone broke off in pairs, and the shadow of dangerous disorder lay across the oprichnina. Now there’s a limit to the pleasures of the steam. We work together, and take our pleasure together. (Sorokin 2011, 170-173)

Gapova claims that this scene is not a homosexual orgy at all, but rather an act of a total masculine solidarity symbolically reinforcing power of the (Russian dystopian) state oprichniks serve to. Even though it is clear that the scene is not mere about sexual pleasure and desire, it is important do not neglect its sexual component. It is worthy to interpret this scene in a slightly different manner than Gapova does. The act of shared homosexual pleasure as described by Sorokin is the manifestation of ultimate masculine bonding and intimacy, homosociality in its paramount form of collective homosexuality. It is a grotesque embodiment of the idea of the male solidarity necessary for the nation to be sustained and reinforced. The male-to-male sexual encounter is not a private matter, but a public ritual. As the novel protagonist, Komiaga, thinks, it is a wise decision to arrange oprichniks into caterpillar and avoid pairing, exactly because it turns the whole thing into the public affair. Gapova is right that this scene is not about conventional sexual pleasure, but indeed about sex too. It is about the pleasure of being together as a male collective and enjoying the collective power. Sexual pleasure is intertwined with pleasure of being powerful by virtue of being

together. The act is both symbolic and material. Ultimately, it illustrates a Hartsock's (1983) claim that power always has an erotic component. In addition, the bonding celebrated by the caterpillar is indeed exclusionary, and boundaries of collectivity coincide with boundaries of a monstrous caterpillar's body. There is no place for women or "other" men there, and in this sense Sorokin's caterpillar is an excellent illustration for how nation is usually imagined (see Allen 2000, Mayer 2000, Mosse 1985).

Caterpillar metaphor enables one to understand deeper the military ban case described in the sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.1. As I have demonstrated, Dagestani soldiers are deprived the right to serve in the army because they are seen by military officers as violent hazing perpetrators. There is a common belief reiterated in the variety of journalistic accounts that if in the military corps there is more than one Caucasian man, they will form the enclosed group together and will threaten separated, disengaged Russian soldiers (Orehov 2009, Argumenty i Factly 2010b, Genina 2011). That is, their caterpillar is dangerous because the Russian nation does not have its own caterpillar to oppose. In 2012, the media reported a case occurred in Sverdlovskaya oblast' of Russia, where two conscripts woke up their unit, picked out 16 men and wrote on their backs with shaving foam "Dagestan", "QUBA" and other words (Lenta.ru 2012b). Even though ethnicity of the conscripts is not stated explicitly, the case is reported as a part of a larger article dedicated to the undisciplined behavior of Caucasians in the Russian army, so there is an assumption that the 16 men were Russians and two other were Caucasians. The assumption presents an interesting case by itself. A reader as well as the journalist must assume that those 16 were Russians because these are always Russians who due to lack of bonding cannot oppose the powerful caterpillar of the Caucasians.

There is another example of Russian anxiety over national solidarity, that is, public lezghinka dancing opposed by the state as well as by many Russians. Some scholars argue that hostility toward lezghinka dancers is shaped by the Russian nation's lack of shared visualized signs of

national belonging (Krapchunov 2013). I seek to broaden this claim and suggest that hostility is provoked not only by the belief that Russians do not have a connection with their nation Caucasians have, but also by the feeling that the Russian men cannot exercise the power of male bonding available for the Caucasians.

People are afraid of folk dances. ... I think, the reason is that we un-learned how to dance our dance and sing our songs. We are absorbed by Western mass culture of lonely people who are for most of the time alone with their problems in a big city. To express their emotions they need to go to a club, take a drink and join the dancing crowd of other aloners (Leila iz Kazani, underneath Aslamova 2014).

In this comment, appeared in the website of the extremely popular mainstream Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper, the dance is believed to be a form of a bonding of the nation untouched by destructive Western culture and modernity. There is a special homosocial component which makes lezghinka a source of jealousy and desire. The dance presents a desirable type of male bonding which works as a metonymy for the nation. Whereas in some discourses a nation is seen as a family with all its “natural” hierarchies (Hill Collins 1998, 1999), there is also an imagery of nation as fraternity, and national agents as members of that homosocially bonded collectivity (Mayer 2000, Mosse 1985). For the spectator, lezghinka as a male-only practice highlights the similarity of participants, their unity and bonding, group power and masculinist assertiveness. To put it another way, every *kadyrovets* is a part of the caterpillar. Russians are not.

The metaphor of caterpillar helps to understand what is desired in the contemporary Russia. It is believed that nation had this strong masculine bonding before, but lost, and it is constantly mourned. The comment cited above presents an example of that mourning. It is also evident from the debate on Dagestani conscripts. The discourse is saturated with the constant motive

of loss of national bonding, true Russian masculinity and link to one's own culture. In the comments cited below, it is believed that the generation of fathers and grandfathers had a better, more bonded army free from contemporary issues.

In the Soviet time everyone served [...] therefore, the problem is not about them, it is about the army<sup>22</sup>. (zhetkerbajb, underneath Newsland 2012)

In Soviet time, there were no diasporas, no soldiers' mothers committee, no human rights activists. Army is a state within the state, and earlier only military people had a right to intervene, but now everyone intervenes in what rest from the army<sup>23</sup>. (erbst, *ibid.*)

It is important to emphasize once again that army as an institution usually tells a great deal of how nation is imagined (Allen 2000, Mayer 2000). In the USSR, every distinct military entity was striving to present itself as ethnically diverse as possible, simultaneously perpetuating particular hierarchies in task distribution (Rakowska-Harmstone 1990). The contemporary army, it is argued, is penetrated by strange elements (diasporas, soldiers' mothers committee, human rights activists) who should not be there. The strong militarized male homosociality is disturbed and shattered, bonding is disrupted.

During Kiblitckaya's (2000) fieldwork in post-Soviet Russia, her male informants were complaining to her that societal change entailed by perestroika and the USSR collapse messed up "natural" hierarchies in private sphere. For these men, this issue was a reason for anxiety and depression. As the material I've analyzed demonstrates, not only threat for those hierarchies in private sphere is a source of anxiety, but also the peril of disruption of the Russian civilizational order itself. The fear of loss of control over the other transfers itself into anxiety over nation's own masculinity. The particular powerful and desirable manifestations

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<sup>22</sup> <http://newsland.com/news/detail/id/891087/>

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

of Other's masculinity are identified and exposed in the public discourse. The Self is constantly compared to the Other, and the results of comparison are not satisfying. In this chapter, I discussed in detail two main points of anxiety with respect to Self's masculinity, namely, men's health and homosocial bonding. Both fears are deeply rooted in the nationalist ideology and connected to the issue of national power. Anxiety over bonding and health corresponds to how the nation perceives its ability to maintain control over the Other. Now, when the anxiety is detected, it is important to see what kinds of mechanisms are used by power to reassure control. As I seek to show in the next chapter, these mechanisms and tactics in their variety are shored up by the set of representations of the Other and of the Self that was revealed in chapters 2 and 3.

## **Chapter 4. Tactics and practices: the instrumentalization of representation**

A point concerning certain ambivalence of the imagery of the Caucasian male Other was made already with respect to his sexuality and some manifestations of his masculinity. I have also accounted for tendency to reiterate things said about the figure of Caucasian. Now, I seek to show that these tendencies are actually in the core of the imagery of the Caucasian Other and what are their effects through examination of various mechanisms of control that employed to keep the hierarchy between Russian and Caucasian in its “natural” order. These mechanisms and tactics include the production and fixation of certain identities through national gaze, “cleaning” the national spaces to erase “black” corporeality, and splitting the Caucasian subject into “good” and “bad” with “good” introduced to the limited mechanisms of control over the “bad”.

### **4.1 Producing the victim**

The imagery of the dangerous other men discussed in chapter 2 coinciding with the idea of weak masculinity of the Self (chapter 3) fosters the production and fixation of particular subject-positions. In this section, I focus on these and examine how the Other is imagined as powerful perpetrator and the Self as helpless victim, using the example of a very particular type of the army hazing by Caucasian conscripts against (presumably) Russians and its media representation.

A set of pictures is posted in the Russian media over and over again, both on minor websites (such as [intertat.ru](http://intertat.ru)) and the webpages of major newspapers (Komsomolskaya Pravda and Moskovskij Komsomolets with a daily circulation of over a million copies). In those pictures, Caucasian men manipulate bodies of, presumably, Russian conscripts. Russian bodies are arranged in the way so the spectator cannot see their faces, only backs. Their backs (sometimes their heads) bear Latin or Cyrillic symbols which compose together words such as

“Дагестан” (Dagestan) or “DAG05” (which refers to Dagestan as well) or “Даги/Кавказ сила” (Dagestanis/Caucasus are/is power). The captions are usually made with shaving foam. Among these Russian bodies there is one (rarely two) Caucasian conscript looking in the camera (see Appendix). These pictures are used by some editors to illustrate any piece of news concerning Caucasian conscripts<sup>24</sup>, sometimes unconnected to hazing or violence in the army.

How do we know that these are acts of violence depicted (and not of consensual activity), and that these are Russians who are victims and Caucasians who are perpetrators? Cases of picture taking sometimes get into official military lists of misdoings and then are widely cited by journalists of (Russian) media (Lenta.ru 2012b), which implies that these acts are considered violent. One case deserves special attention. In 2013 Altai *krai*, two conscripts were convicted by the court for abuse of their fellow soldiers. They woke up their unit, picked out several soldiers, wrote DAG 05 and Buryat (*Бурят*) on their backs and took pictures while “demonstrating gestures of domination and will suppression”, as news portal NEWSru.com (2013) informs. As journalists note, according to the court materials, one was Dagestani, the other Buryat, an indigenous ethnic group from Siberia. However, in other journalistic accounts the figure of Buryat is erased. Lenta.ru (2012b) referring to the Interfax news agency does not mention any Siberia-born soldier; it is only Dagestani who is blamed. At the same time, it is clear from all accounts that victims were *Slavic* soldiers. This is a brilliant example of how Caucasian is produced and fixed as the perpetrator and Slavic (Russian) as the victim. Moreover, this case, like many similar ones, is articulated in terms of “ethnicity-based

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<sup>24</sup> Consider, for instance, the following: <http://www.kp.ru/daily/24539.4/718800/> (“Kombrig stoppes the fight between Russian and Dsagestani soldiers with the volley of automatic gunfire”, Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper), <http://intertat.ru/ru/eto-interesno/item/8399-v-armiyu-perestali-brat-dagestantsev.html> (“Dagestanis are not allowed in the army”, intertat.ru), <http://www.mk.ru/politics/article/2013/03/28/833094-minoboronyi-priznalo-bez-prizyiva-kavkaztsev-v-armii-ne-oboytis.html> (“Ministry of Defence admitted that they cannot do without Caucasians in the army”, Moskovskiy Komsomolets), <http://m.kp.ru/daily/25963/2902054/> (“Conscripts from the Caucasus have written “Dagestan” on the backs of their fellow soldiers from the Ural region”, Komsomolskaya Pravda).

conflict”, so the difference between Dagestani and Slavic background is especially emphasized.

Most pictures appear on the top of the results of Google picture search, if one uses key words “Дагестанцы в армии” (Dagestanis in the army). There is no need to enter suggestive words (such as “violence” or “bodies” or “Dagestanis and Russians”) to find such photos. This suggests that the image of the Dagestani in the army is literally reduced to the violence he allegedly perpetuates against white bodies of other conscripts. Moreover, through these representations a specific security threat regarding Caucasian conscripts is constructed, which I return to later. I cannot know how widespread this practice of picture taking is, and this is not my focus. What is important is to examine how those photos are represented and why they reappear. What governs the fixation on these images?

To explore these questions, it is important to start with the subject-positions the pictures invite. Hall’s (1999) theoretical stance is especially helpful in this regard. As it was shown in section 1.2, he demonstrates that images themselves do not have inherent “true” meanings independent from the viewer, but at the same time the spectator is never free to impose any meaning on it (311). The pictures in question were, most probably, intended for personal use outside of the Russian media-space. They probably exemplify a tiny piece of the practices of hazing and *dedovschina* proliferating in the Russian army, which I have discussed elsewhere (cf. Eichler 2012). However, put into the public Russian space, they change the spectrum of meanings they can bear, as Hall’s analysis predicts. In Foucauldian logic, the very assured presence of these images as opposed to the absence of Russian-to-Russian *dedovshchina* pictures in the mainstream press, reveals something about the discourse these pictures are a product of and what is visible and sayable within this discourse.



Posted and re-posted in Russian media, the pictures are intended for the Russian spectator. The spectator is assumed to identify not with the Caucasian man looking at him/her, but with the faceless mass of presumably Russian soldiers. In line with Hall's argument, the photos are not only speaking to the Russian subject, they produce the whiteness and Russianness of that subject through emphasis on the difference between Russians and Caucasians in the picture. Returning to Allen's (2000) argument which sees the army as a fraternity representing the imagined community of the nation, the pictures have a powerful symbolic meaning. The variety of anxieties I discuss in chapters 2 and 3 are condensed here. The man looking in the camera is represented as more strong and powerful and more assertive. He is in the position of domination, demonstrating his ability to subjugate "our" men who clearly outnumber him. "White" bodies in these pictures are often undressed and bear the marks of his touch. They are conquered, and those words on them ("Dagestan", "Caucasus is power" and so on) signify that their corporeality is the territory of the other. Taken alone, pictures suggest that the Caucasian man is always different from the Russian one (1), that he is an enemy always waiting to subjugate the Russian population (2), and he is strong enough to do it (3). The fact that this is happening in the space of the army which presumably should embody masculine strength of the nation and protect women and children from an external enemy, makes the anxiety about Other's "gestures of domination" even more vivid. These pictures are so often "cited" in a variety of contexts, because they brilliantly perform two functions: reflection and production. They are open to the particular interpretation I have mapped out, which is in line with the representations of the Self and the Other revealed throughout the thesis. That is, these photos *reflect* meanings existing out there. But it is as not simple as that. The images of Russian and Caucasian soldiers also *produce* and *fix* certain subject-positions.

To expand the last claim it is necessary to first engage with the arguments put forward by Carpenter (2009) and Helms (2012). Carpenter shows how in the situation of the war-time

rape in ex-Yugoslavia the ethnic identities of both victims and perpetrators were fixed. The perpetrator was always a Serb, and the victim always a Muslim woman. In this narrative, there was no place for the violence perpetuated, for instance, by Croatian men against Croatian women. The experience of sexual violence endured by those who did not fit into the set of ideas about victims and perpetrators was erased. The similar analysis is possible in the photos case. Indeed, the pictures fix the Caucasian men as always and only villains and the Russian men as always and only victims, as exemplified by erasure of the Buryat figure. Taking into account Carpenter's insight it seems that the pictures reveal quite a common mechanism of violence (in our case – hazing) acknowledging, namely, essentializing the identities. By reiterating and re-posting the photos, the violence Russian male subjects perpetuate against Caucasians as well as among Russians themselves or men of other ethnic backgrounds is virtually erased. The Caucasian man is constructed and fixed as an embodiment of the security threat, as an enemy within the army of the state he is a citizen of. Russian bodies are fixed as always needing protection from the violent Caucasian Other, who presents a threat not just to some bodies, but to the army itself, as an embodiment of the national fraternity, and ultimately, to the nation. In other words, his position of a soldier, responsible for the protection of the nation, is reversed, and he becomes rather a figure *from whom* the nation should be protected.

At the same time, Carpenter's analysis does not allow to understand why these images proliferate taking into account that they represent Russian male subject as weak, overthrown and dominated over. To explore that it we must ask what such self-representation does for nationalism. According to Helms (2012, 198), nationalisms always represent their own group as a victim of a conflict and never as an aggressor. This allows nationalism to make a claim about the group's ethical superiority. To take the position of moral superiority is a fruitful strategy to justify any deeds performed and mobilize support to counter the perceived security

threat. In our case actions needing to be justified are obvious. What is necessary to legitimize here is the process of not-allowing “black” bodies to be a part of the masculine fraternity of the army. Moreover, moral superiority of victimized Russianness enables power to reproduce hierarchy between Russian and Caucasian subjects within the space of the army and beyond. I return to in section 4.3.

Now, however, it is necessary to note that this account of the practices of “bad” Caucasian subject production and fixation would not be comprehensive without examining more sophisticated tactics. The next tactic I engage with is more elusive and complex. It enables those who engage in it imagine themselves and institutions they present as non-racist, while placing the Caucasian subject in the space of epistemological uncertainty and reassuring the boundaries between “black” and “white”. As previous, the next practice still relies on the idea of “weak” masculinity of the Self.

## 4.2 Good Caucasian Fantasy

From the analysis so far it might seem that all Caucasian men are imagined the same, as a homogenized group. However, it is not always so. Sometimes, they are imagined as belonging to two different groups, those of “good” and “bad” Caucasians. I call this gesture of splitting the Good Caucasian Fantasy. Not all Caucasians are threatening, it is said. In fact, “real” Caucasians are not threatening at all. They are disciplined, civilized and well behaved. Those Caucasians striking us with their impudent black appearance on the streets of our white cities are just not “authentic”. Do not let them trick you. Do not let them disrupt the peace and friendship of peoples.

I discuss two manifestations of the Good Caucasian Fantasy. The first concerns the question of authenticity. Caucasians penetrating the Russian space or threatening the “natural” hierarchy of nations are denied authenticity and/or full subject consciousness. They are

considered either outcasts among the “real” good Caucasians or are seen as babies needing some lesson from the elders. Here the second important manifestation of the Fantasy occurs. As I show, it is believed that elder Caucasians have power to teach youth how to behave in the “white” Russian spaces. Good Caucasian Fantasy enables those Russian actors/institutions that perpetuate it imagine themselves as not racist, simultaneously reinforcing control over Caucasian male bodies as well as reaffirming the boundary between “black” and “white”. In section 4.2.2, I demonstrate how the alliance between Russian nationalism and good old Caucasians is institutionalized. However, first I focus on the issue of authenticity. To discuss it, I return to the case of public lezghinka.

#### *4.2.1 Unauthentic transgressors*

The dichotomy between “authentic” and “unauthentic” possesses certain judgmental potential. As in the case of the other binaries underpinning European thought, one term is superior with regard to the other. There are always certain power relations in labeling something “authentic” or “unauthentic”. Anxieties on unauthenticity are so widespread in European thought, and this connection between authenticity and power so well-established that it is barely possible to cite a particular work on the topic. I briefly describe the play of authenticity in the domains of nationalism and gender referring to Hill Collins (1998) and Butler (1990, 1993). Collins demonstrates that people willing to acquire U.S. citizenship should internalize certain cultural norms to become undistinguishable from “real” U.S. citizens born in within state borders. This example speaks to broader issue of national authenticity: only those who are considered “true enough” are legally allowed to be part of the national family; their presence as an element of the nation is legitimized. The fantasy of authenticity is also responsible for the ideas of what it “really” means to be a man or a woman, for seeking the “truth” of gender or sex. This fantasy is thus hostile to Butler’s concept of performativity, which shows that there is no original for gender. What is necessary to highlight for my

argument is that being considered “unauthentic” is (1) a political gesture (2) heavily linked to de-legitimization and (3) exclusion from the space of “natural” and “true”.

To delegitimize some Caucasians as unauthentic, not “real”, to deny their ethnic identification is an extremely productive way to rework racism. It is also a useful idea for the Caucasian diaspora itself, since expelling someone from the space of normality negotiates the whole group’s status. By splitting Caucasians and everything Caucasian-marked onto groups of “real” and “not real” actors producing the authenticity discourse imagine themselves as non-racist, and rather tolerant and inclusive. It is not the Caucasians who are problem, it is said, it is the bad “unauthentic” Caucasians who constitute the painful issue. Likewise, Caucasian diaspora sometimes claims that only bad young Caucasians dance lezghinka on the streets of Russian cities, not good men. Generally Caucasians are good it is said, so there is no need for the nation-state to be coercive towards them. Consider the following discussion appeared underneath a report dedicated to the rape case in Rozhdestvenskaya village on the mainstream website metronews.ru (my italics everywhere).

You know, those Caucasians whom you *see* on the streets are *regular outcasts* who do not have any status back home, or have the lowest [status]. It is the same if I start to say that *those are real Russians* who abandon their parents and newborns, who are drug addicted. *Are they Russians?* (Umar Montagnard, underneath Metro 2013)

Umar Montagnard, you are a good guy Umar, I hear – *the man* is speaking! (Albina Yakovleva, *ibid.*)

Umar Montagnard, this is the voice of *the man*! (Sergey Nikulin, *ibid.*)

A name Umar Montagnard marks a man speaking as Caucasian, whereas last names of other participants are explicitly Slavic (Yakovleva and Nikulin)<sup>25</sup>. Umar points to inauthenticity of “bad” Caucasians visible on the street of “white” Russian cities, comparing them with “not-real-Russians” abandoning their families. Somehow the very visibility of the Caucasian figure becomes a marker of his inauthenticity. The reaction of (presumably) Russian commentators not only speaks to the support of the Good Caucasian Fantasy, but also *produces* Umar as a “good Caucasian”. Moreover, this production is done through reaffirming his real, authentic masculinity. Albina Yakovleva and Sergey Nikulin, searching for ways to articulate their support to what is said, choose to emphasize genuine manliness of Umar, which can be understood through the analysis provided in chapters 2 and 3. Presumably, they perceive masculinity as something Umar (as Caucasian) cares about most, as the one of the most important axes of his identity. This framework, as was shown before, fosters over-masculinization of the Caucasian figure.

So, what are examples of not-real-Caucasian practices that mark not-real-Caucasian men? One of the most telling is a public lezhinka dancing. The former head of Stavropol *krai*, Vladimir Gaevkij, for instance, directly labeled public lezhinka as a subversive practice having nothing to do with the “real” lezhinka:

As a politician, I feel that they use this incredible dance to embroil us, this is it. I feel powerful puppet masters [involved there], and they tricked us all (NEWSru.com 2011).

He evokes the image of puppet theater, implying that the public lezhinka disturbing “white” people in his *krai* is not “real”, it differs from the authentic lezhinka, “incredible dance”.

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<sup>25</sup> Albina is rather a Tatar name though, but she takes here a “Russian” part of the discussion. Ultimately, it is not that important whether these people are “really” Slavic or Caucasian; more important is what kind of subject-positions they perform.

Someone (who?), it is said, created a theater performance to dupe people, both Caucasians and Russians. But we are, it is said, not so stupid. We see that this lezghinka was not real; this is not something which Caucasians usually do. Indeed, some evil stranger made that up. Lezghinka was instrumentalized by “them” to stir up trouble between “us”, *krai* residents. Whom he blames is not clear from his statement. It might be that he does not mean to blame anyone particularly, he just needs to say something to keep the façade of the shared respect towards white norms in his *krai*. If this is the case, his statement is even more salient. It demonstrates how the binary authenticity/unauthenticity allows for moral judgments and enables one in power to delegitimize unwelcomed practices. It also works as an element of discipline and control over dancing Caucasian bodies.

In the Gaevskyj’s comment, public lezghinka is presented as a dangerous mutant morphed from the imagined pastoral authentic lezghinka, “incredible dance”. It subverts the unity of nations within the nation-state, as a terroristic performance. The most extreme internet-comments appearing underneath the news article on the UGC website newland.com directly equate the dance with terrorist attacks:

This wild night dances with yawl are a form of terrorism. The true lezghinka, by the way, is different<sup>26</sup> (odin 55, underneath Newsland 2013)

This discourse is indeed uneasy with the simple statement that any lezghinka is bad. It needs the fantasy about “true”, authentic lezghinka to justify the violence it argues for. Public lezghinka is not only evil and subversive by promoting Caucasianness, but also obscures that imagined “true” lezghinka and therefore is delegitimized as unauthentic. As shown in chapter 2, hostility towards the public lezghinka performance is provoked by the feeling that the nation’s space, imagined as white, is penetrated by black Caucasian strangers. As I show in

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<sup>26</sup> This commentator does not elaborate on what kind of lezghinka he imagines as “true”, but reader might assume that this is something close to what was described in the section 2.1.1

section 4.3, the state comes to be coercive in its attempt to “clean” Russian space from the visible signs of Caucasianness to assure the boundaries of the nation. Ultimately, the power of authenticity weapon goes beyond the lezghinka case. It is directed to everyone who dares to transgress borders between what is considered Russian space and Caucasian. It implies that every Caucasian individual may always be marked as inauthentic and therefore bad. In other words, within the Good Caucasian Fantasy every male Caucasian body is trapped into the realm of epistemological uncertainty. The possibility to transgress, which is always there, constitutes a fantastic element in the “Good Caucasian” discourse.

#### *4.2.2 Seeking for allies*

The Good Caucasian Fantasy may manifest itself in another way and be instrumentalized and institutionalized by the Russian nation-state. In this case, “good Caucasians” are identified, named and asked to be allies of the nation-state in its (failing) attempt to control those other “bad” Caucasian men. It is especially clear in the case of Dagestani conscripts. In spring 2013, Russian Defense Ministry suggested introducing in Dagestan a system of third-party guarantors (*poruchitely*) who should look after the conscripts during their service. System implies that every military recruiting office should create a pool of “respected guarantors” chosen from the local community. Among guarantors are religious leaders, elders, local cadres and members of the local parliaments. Every Dagestani seeking to be drafted should have at least two guarantors who are obliged to look after their mentee and go to the military unit (which is usually in another region of the state) if “their” conscript is accused in doing wrong (Lenta.ru 2013a). Even though system was introduced roughly a year ago, media have not reported yet about the results of the experiment. Meanwhile, in March 2014, in Hantymansijskij autonomous *okrug* (the region far to the north-east from the Caucasus), Dagestani elders invited young Dagestanis to attend a special lecture delivered by elders who have



intended to teach youth how to behave in the Russian cities. One of them was cited by the journalist writing a report in a local [Russian] newspaper about the event:

In our motherland no one abuse other people, we all live in friendship. There, we are gentle and hospitable. Here we forget everything. We are blamed that youth is doing this and doing that. We, elders, do not like to hear such things. (Stepygin 2014)

Even though the speaker uses general “we” it is clear that he separates himself and other elders (good Caucasians) from the badly behaved youth spoiled by the atmosphere of the Russian cities. He draws on the particular norms of respectability that youth does not want to subjugate to. Those norms are framed as inherently, almost naturally Dagestanis, as something constituting “the truth” about Dagestani people. These norms, it is said, are accepted by everyone back in Dagestan. There, the totalized respectability takes place. Here, far away from home, on the contrary, things are different. Young people refuse to obey Dagestanis norms, they start behaving differently. The problem thus is framed closely to the authenticity discourse discussed in the previous subsection. But what is striking here is that in fact elders intend to make youth to behave according to the “white” *Russian* norms of respectability to be embraced in the “white” community. Later during the same speech, the elder cited above asks young people to stop publicly dancing lezghinka and flirt with Russian girls on the streets. Hence, the particular norms of sexual behavior and visibility are emphasized, which are obviously coming from not only from the Caucasian, but from the Russian framework. It is hard to say from my sample whether Dagestani norms of respectability are in fact the same as the discourse I engage in this research seeks to impose on Caucasian bodies, or here one deals with competing national respectabilities, or the norms Dagestani elder evokes are in fact internalized Russian norms. This is important question to ask, but it cannot be fully addressed here due to limitations of my sample. What can and should be emphasized, however, is that somehow what is articulated as inherent Dagestani

norms coincide with the set of requirements Russian mainstream discourse seek to impose on Caucasians. So to speak, the speech of the elder cited paradoxically implies that in order to be more Dagestani young man should obey “white” norms of respectability.

There are other examples of alliances between Russian nationalism and “good” Caucasians. In 2011, head of the Caucasian Republic of Ingushetia Yunus-bek Yevkurov, being in Stavropol (the majority of population is Russian there), and commenting on the set of sound cases of public lezghinka dancing with police involvement (see more on that in the next section) said he condemns lezghinka on the city streets performed “without reasons” (Radio Eho Moskvyy 2011). Almost 3 years later, in 2013, he reiterated this idea, stating that he is against “unorganized lezghinka in the public spaces” (Radio Eho Moskvyy 2013). His statements might be read as an attempt to negotiate the position Caucasian people occupy in the Russian-dominated regions. As his counterpart from the Hanty-Mansijskij okrug, indeed speaks from the position of a Caucasian representative, trying to persuade his audience that these are “bad” Caucasians who dance in the streets, “good” Caucasians do not do it. “Good” Caucasians obey hegemonic norms of the “white” regions they reside in. In this respect, his rhetoric is not far away from the position of many Russian nationalists, that is, if Caucasians want peace they should just melt into the hegemonic Russian society (Lenta.ru 2012d).

Two points are especially interesting in respect to these stories (which are by no means exceptional or unique for the Russian context). First, the Caucasians are split into two categories – usually on the basis of generation. The older group is employed to represent an example of good, authentic Caucasians respecting boundaries between white and black, able to control themselves. The good (old) Caucasian is civilized and disciplined. There are, however, “bad” young Caucasians who are not able to obey discipline and “white” norms, and who need to be constantly controlled, patronized and sermonized. The second point is that this division into good and bad (old and young) Caucasians is re-produced and instrumentalized

by the state in seeking to correct the behavior of “blacks” that is not welcomed (see chapter 2). In other words, to achieve its own aims the nation-state allies with some Caucasians and make them responsible for the behavior of others. At the same time Caucasians, marked as “good”, seem to willingly embrace the practice. The subject-positions presented in the case are too familiar.

The uncivilized “child” unable to control himself and behave respectable and his knowing “father” willing (and even feeling obliged) to share his knowledge and civilize the child are the core subjects of the colonial discourse (see, for instance, McClintock 1993). Even though the latter position is supposed to be occupied by the Russian subject undertaking the civilizational mission, the expected role distribution does not happen. The analysis in chapter 3 makes it possible to explain why. The Russian masculinity is perceived to be too weak to be able to control the Caucasian other. The (loyal) Caucasians themselves thus are introduced to the mechanisms of control. By no means do I seek to deny the agency of the Caucasian diaspora representatives. As I mentioned, they use the power available for them to negotiate the status of the community. What is said is simply that the perceived weakness constructed within the nationalist discourse, rigorously developed and followed, came to restate the binary and reinforce hierarchies between the superior Russian and inferior Caucasian subjects. Good Caucasian Fantasy thus however Caucasian-friendly it may seem at the first glance, is used by the nationalism to reproduce boundaries between Russian and Caucasian and simultaneously to hide the racist ideology underpinning the set of practices and discourses surrounding the notion of the Caucasian.

Moreover, the Good Caucasian Fantasy in its authenticity manifestation also reveals the realm of paradoxical doubling where the Caucasian subject is trapped. As have been shown, to be recognized as authentic the Caucasian subject must always obey the particular set of norms coinciding with what is imagined as good and unproblematic by the Russian mainstream

discourse. At the same time, as one might remember from chapter 2, the Caucasian masculinity is naturalized as totally opposite to these norms. It is imagined as essentially violent, sexually dangerous, backward and troubling in many other ways. It might seem that Good Caucasian Fantasy is incompatible with the set of beliefs discussed in chapter 2. However, as I argue, in fact these two models co-exist together and reinforce each other keeping the Caucasian Other trapped in the space of ambivalence which he cannot escape. Both discourses are instrumentalized and reproduced by power in the same way with the same set of aims, namely, to fix the Other, produce the difference between “us” and “them” and justify and implement disciplining and control. However, space of ambivalence is not the only core thing within this representational complexity and subject production. Another key element is repetition, and I discuss it in the following section, focusing on the reiterative practice of expelling.

### **4.3 Corporeal expelling: cleaning the body of the nation**

The last set of tactics I focus on have to do with symbolic and corporeal expelling of “black” bodies from the national spaces and institutions (such as the army). As I demonstrate, the expelling of the Caucasian Other does productive work for nationalism on different levels. First, it allows to imagine the Russian nation and the space it (presumably) occupies as white and homogeneous (though the anxiety over heterogeneity never can be overcome; there are always various internal others necessary to be repeatedly expelled). Second, expelling is an inevitable part of boundaries re-production. Third (which overlaps with first two), it performs the function of unification of those who are not expelled, so it contributes to the nation construction, which is especially important due to anxiety over lack of masculinist bonding (see 3.2).

Two my case studies explicitly exemplify the tactic of corporeal expelling of the Caucasian Other. The first is the case of Dagestani conscripts. It is necessary to examine further the

semi-articulated reasons of the conscription ban offered by the army generals as well as the “loyalty” hypothesis discussed in chapter 2. As I demonstrate in chapter 2, Dagestani men are barely allowed to go to the army due to their ostensibly excessively violent, uncontrollable and undisciplined behavior threatening well-being of the other soldiers. In my material, they are also suspected in not being loyal to the nation-state, and therefore, needing to be deprived from any kind of military education. Due to scope of my research sample, it is hard to say if the latter kind of reasoning is shared by the military officials, but it is not the most important question for the argument I seek to make. What is more important is to look at what are the underlying consequences of the conscription stoppage. To explore this issue I focus on the pieces of scholarship dealing with the imagery of the army. As various scholarship argues (Gill 1997, Mayer 2000, Altinay 2004) in a variety of places a military as an institution is imagined as the core space for constructing both manhood and nationhood (or multinational statehood, as in the case of the USSR). As Rakowska-Harmstone (1990) demonstrates, the same ideas about the army were proliferating in the USSR. The army, Rakowska-Harmstone claims, was believed to bring people with the different ethnic background together to create the unified Soviet nationhood. Young men were going through the service far away from home in the ethnically diverse units. They were learning Russian there and were incorporated in the body of the nation. Now, “black” people from Caucasus are refused the right to serve in the army; they are excluded from the major nation-building institution. What kind of implications it may have? As Allen (2000) shows, the army represents the imagined community of the nation. She argues that this special status of the army is responsible for the fact that women and LGBT people are denied a possibility to fully serve. A possibility to serve in the army is framed as a privilege obtainable for those imagined as a part of the national community. Allen’s account does not readily explain why some ethnic minorities in the multi-ethnic countries such as Russia are eligible to serve while others are not, though her

argument is useful to consider the issue. I suggest that the question of difference matters in this case. The Dagestani men are deprived of possibility to join the army because as I demonstrate in previous chapters they are imagined as completely different from and threatening to those men who constitute the nation-state. For Dagestanis (as well as for other deprived Caucasians), the army does not serve as a way to gain place in the national fraternity anymore, unlike it was framed in the USSR. The “other” bodies, imagined as over-masculinized and wild, are thus expelled from the national fraternity, and, ultimately, national community.

Another case study illustrating the vivid corporeality of the othering discourses and fears is the case of lezghinka dancers. The very statements of Yunus-bek Yevkurov and Valery Gaevsky cited above are examples of expelling. Condemning public “unorganized” lezghinka is indeed a way to say that visible Caucasianness, in forms which are not officially made respectable, is not welcomed in the white public spaces. However, there is a variety of examples when attempts to control and disciple dancing Caucasian bodies manifest themselves not in the forms of condemnation or sermonizing, but in police detention, physical violence and verbal abuse against dancers as well as in institutional violence. Let me list some cases to illustrate what is said.

In the fall 2010, the police arrested 12 men dancing lezghinka in the center of Stavropol city; they’ve spent 10 days in the local pre-trial detention center. As media report, dancers were insulting people on the street (NEWSru.com 2011). Around the same time, five Chechen students from Pyatigorsk State University of Technology were attacked by strangers while they were dancing lezghinka on the street and, as a police report says, loudly behaving.

Approximately 10 strangers shot the dancers with a “traumatic” gun<sup>27</sup> and disappeared. Assaulters were neither found nor detected, and injured dancers were detained by the police. In a week, all five of them were dismissed from their school for the “blatant violation of the order” by virtue of dancing (Aktualnye komentarii 2010). In 2013, 18 students of the Kislovodsk College of Medicine were dismissed for lezghinka they performed on the street at evening time. Dance was ceased by the policemen who arrested the students. Later local court charged the dancers with the fine for breaking the public order (Lenta.ru 2013c). Earlier in the same year, a student from Stavropol was arrested by the police while dancing lezghinka and shooting in the air with his traumatic weapon. He was convicted of hooliganism and charged with a year sentence in the penal settlement (Lenta.ru 2013b). In all of the cases, dancers were male, and in journalistic accounts they were marked as generally “Caucasians” or in a more concrete way, such as “Chechens”, “Dagestanis” or “Ingushs”. They were regular young men, mostly students, amateur dancers performing lezghinka just for fun. There are no evidences suggesting that this kind of lezghinka is a sort of conscious political statement, even though it is read that way by nationalists (see chapter 2)<sup>28</sup>. However, as I argue, the police’s response to that is indeed a political performance.

Continuous detention, prohibition and shaming produce not just the particular notion of the Caucasian man, but also the notion of the appropriate Russian citizen and the “good” Russian space. To see mechanisms of that production it is useful to engage with Butler’s account

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<sup>27</sup> “Traumatic” guns are the range of non-lethal weapons usually used for self-defense. The category might include rubber ball guns, gas pistols and so on. I cannot know what kind of “traumatic” weapons was used in this particular case.

<sup>28</sup> Actually, publicly performed lezghinka indeed might be a form of resistance. For instance, in 2010, after Manezhnaya protests in Moscow, Caucasian activists gathered in the center of Tbilisi (Georgia) to protest against what they perceived as anti-Caucasian politics of the Russian nation-state. Public lezghinka dancing was part of the protest. As journalist of slon.ru web-newspaper reports, unlike in Russia, in Tbilisi people passing by gathered around and applauded to the dancers (Slon.ru 2010). In this case, lezghinka is indeed a political gesture of conscious resistance. But in the cases I have listed it is very unlikely that the lezghinka dancing was intended as a political performance. This by no means implies that it does not have agency by its own, distanced from the possibility of conscious intention of the dancers. However, this discussion goes beyond the framework I work within.

(1993) on normal/abnormal spaces construction within the gender order. Butler's argument cannot be simply applied to the case discussed, since she focuses on individual bodies, whereas here the group belonging is in the center of attention. However, fundamentally, mechanisms she describes are echoed in the practice of dealing with dancing Caucasian bodies. As Butler shows, some individual bodies are considered as failed to materialize as "normal"; they are delegitimized and abjected. These abjected bodies in her account constitute what she calls "the necessary "outside"" (1993, 16) for those "normal", materialized and recognized bodies. This "outside", Butler claims, shores up the space of normality and contributes to the very production of such space. In the case in question, the behavioral acts (such as dancing) are divided on appropriate and inappropriate, and inappropriate acts are heavily linked to the Caucasianness. As I demonstrate in chapter 2 and in the previous section of this chapter, lezghinka is abjected by virtue of being read as "too Caucasian". The act of lezghinka dancing is conceptualized in the discourse as transgression and as rules breaking (see more on that in the previous section). The abjection of lezghinka as a sign of Caucasianness thus contributes into creation of the Russian nation's subjectivity. By reiterative erasure of dancing Caucasian bodies, the nation performatively re-constructs the space it occupies as white, Russian, respectable, civilized and supportive of the peculiar type of gender order. The state (and non-state) violence against lezghinka dancers is thus a form of productive reiterative power seeking to clean and re-produce Russian spaces and erase unwelcomed Caucasianness understood as linked to the specific type of Other masculinity, which is perceived to be aggressive, violent, dangerously sexual, irrational and order-breaking.

It is necessary to focus further on the constant repeatability of the process of erasure. Expelling of the Caucasian men is a twofold process which never can be completed. More specifically, there is no need to complete it. The paradoxical situation emerges. On the one



hand, the processes of the discursive boundary construction are materialized upon physical Caucasian bodies. Ultimately, the play of power produces very material boundaries. On the other hand, in political terms Caucasians are not let completely go. The North Caucasus always should stay within the physical space of the country. The nation-state is explicitly anti-secessionist. Wars in Chechnya were launched to keep this piece of land within the Russian borders. Recently, in December 2013, the state Duma approved a bill allowing for prison sentences up to 5 years for publicly expressed calls for “the violation of the territorial unity of the Russian Federation” (Rossijskaja Gazeta 2013). Some internet-commentators I cite in the previous chapters are thus potential law offenders. What is important with regard to the law though is that this is an explicit statement of the nation-state seeking to demonstrate that physically North Caucasus cannot leave. It is forbidden even publicly discuss the possibility of this separation. At the same time, as this thesis (hopefully) demonstrates, the North Caucasus cannot fully stay, because it is imagined and performed as already-outside. The state agents themselves constantly re-affirm the “white” Russian space as free from Caucasianness. So how one to understand this paradox? What makes it even more intriguing, there are no signs in my material suggesting that this contradiction is acknowledged in the discourse, rationalized and somehow resolved. I suggest that the processes of keeping and expelling the Other simultaneously is what makes possible the whole play of repeated erasure and “white” national imagery and what allows for the constant production of “us” as different from “them”. This is what prevents the process of expelling from being completely done and enables power to constantly perform regulation and disciplining of the other as well as national bodies.

This chapter has demonstrated that the variety of practices are employed by the state and media to produce and fix the Russian Self and the Caucasian (male) Other and determine relations between them. Through national gaze pulled to the pictures of “conquered” bodies of

Russian conscripts the looking subject is produced as Russian, innocent, victimized and different from the Caucasian one<sup>29</sup>. Through the practice of expelling, that I discussed in the section 4.3, the public spaces and institutions of the nation are produced as Russian, white and respectable. However, these practices do not only produce, but also fix the identities and through these processes of production and fixation justify hierarchies between (always morally superior) Russian and (always potentially transgressive) Caucasian. Paradoxically, the very notion of the weak masculinity of the Self as discussed in chapter 3 is instrumentalized in these power processes; this perceived weakness fosters the reproduction of nationhood and “true” hierarchical order between the Self and the racialized Other. Weak-Self fantasy thus ultimately opens the space for more control and disciplining. Further, I have explored what underlies these practices of representation, reproduction, fixation and play of expelling and embracing. I have emphasized two core characteristics of the whole mainstream discourse on the Caucasian figure as exemplified by my research sample. First, the Caucasian Other is placed into the space of ambivalence. It is split into “good” and “bad” and “good” is always potentially “bad”. It is imagined as simultaneously naturally unproblematic and pastoral and inherently violent, irrational and uncontrollable. It is both desired and phantasized about and despised as a sexual pervert (see chapter 2). Second, the whole set of representational and corporeal practices dealing with the Caucasian Other rely on repetition. The body of the lezhinka dancer should be reiteratively erased and the event should be reiteratively spoken about; the “features” of the Caucasian masculinity and sexuality should be articulated over and over again. This repetition of practices of fixation coinciding with ambivalence makes it extremely hard for the Caucasian subject to escape.

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<sup>29</sup> The very similar thing may be argued about lezhinka performance as a national spectacle produced by the gaze of the Russian spectator.

## Conclusion

I have examined the representations of the Caucasian Other masculinity and sexuality within the realm of mainstream web-media and political discourse in contemporary Russia. I have argued that mainstream discourse on the Caucasian (male) Other in Russia reveals national anxieties about spatial, bodily and institutional penetration and domination and produces the masculinity of the othered subject as inherently violent, irrational, undisciplined, uncontrollable and order-breaking. The anxiety about control over the Other and over the Russian Self transfers itself into specific national masculinity self-imagery. The Russian man is blamed in being weaker than the Caucasian subject, being not bonded and healthy enough and generally less masculine. At the same time, this very self-perception fosters production of the specific means of control and disciplining. The Caucasian Other is trapped in the space of ambivalence and epistemological uncertainty. His body is both desired and fetishized and yet despised as a source of dangerous and perverted sexuality. He is split; “true” and “authentic” Caucasian is fantasized as good, simultaneously the Caucasian male subject is essentialized as bad and transgressive. Even within the Good Caucasian Fantasy any Caucasian subject is thus always potentially transgressive, so it never can be guaranteed that he is “good”. The subject-position of a good Caucasian actually barely exists beyond the scope of the Good Caucasian Fantasy. Within the realm of army this potential transgressiveness manifests itself in the fear of non-loyal Caucasian soldiers. Put it simply, every Caucasian conscript is always potentially terrorist and his terroristic truth is hidden and barely can be detected on the spot. This space of ambivalence and epistemological uncertainty is not the only mechanism to control the Caucasian Other. There are also various tactics at play, such as the production of the difference through fixation of identities, boundary reassuring, never-complete-expelling. All these tactics heavily rely on repetition as politics of representation themselves do. The corporeal expelling of lezhinka dancers as well as identity fixation achieved through looking

at pictures of hazing or the spectacle of the dancers detention are repeated over and over again. In the same manner, the talk about Caucasian masculinity and sexuality in the commentary thread reiterates things that everyone “knows” already. However, as I argue, through this reiteration happening on all the levels the system is able to constantly produce and sustain itself. This research ultimately demonstrates that the imagery of the Caucasian Other has a lot to do with the classical colonial patterns of othering as described by Bhabha (1999).

The material for my research sample was collected in fall 2013; the events, journalistic accounts and comments I discuss here occurred roughly in the period 2011-2013. Initially, this research was intended to analyze the contemporary situation in the Russian nation-state, to look at the interplay of the ideas about masculinity of the Self and that of the Other. However, it should be admitted that the set of events occurred during the winter and spring 2014 has changed the way one should look at the imagery of Russian masculinity. Ukrainian crisis and enormous rise of cruel nationalism and national militarized masculinity mark that Russian national and gender order might be now in somewhat different place than described in this thesis. However, as it seems, the ideas about Russian masculinity and national desires I described here are the basis feeding the changes occurring now. The notion of moral superiority gained through victimhood, the articulated problem of lack of bonding among Russian national agents, the anxiety about national spaces – all these moments were explicitly mobilized by the state at the moment of Crimea annexation and are still at play. Moreover, the very feeling of re-masculinization gained through invasion is based upon those very anxieties over “weak” national masculinity that my analysis reveals.

Though it was not my primary focus, I have worked with journalist texts appearing in the liberal and nationalist media. I am able to draw an additional and unexpected conclusion from these sporadic engagements, that is, within my research sample right-wing, liberal and

mainstream/state sponsored discourses are saturated with the same fears and anxieties regarding the nation and the national gender order. They are articulated in different terms and may be explicit or hidden, but deep inside all these discourses, as exemplified by the research sample, employ the same mechanisms of making sense of the national Self and the Other. These conjunctions indeed correspond to Billig's argument cited in the beginning of this work, section 1.2, where he claims that it is impossible to examine nationalism outside, simply because there is no position outside of it for the researcher to take. For further research, I indeed propose the topic of strange commonality between liberal, state-sponsored, mainstream and right-wing discourses in Russia.

What were not sufficiently addressed in this work are mechanisms of negotiation and resistance the Caucasian Other as well as some Russian groups engages in. This topic is of great importance; however, it is beyond the scope of this research and indeed should be examined in the further scholarship. Moreover, the very fixation of some people as "Russian" and others as "Caucasian" should be examined. These terms, though fruitful for this research, should never be taken for granted; there are certain politics behind marking someone/something "Russian" or "Caucasian". I have touched upon the problem in the chapter 4, but special coherent research is needed. It is important to trace genealogy of the unified, universal "Caucasian" imagery which contradicts the variety of peoples actually residing in the Caucasus. Also, researchers indeed may be willing to pay attention to the virtual lack of the Caucasian female subject in the Russian discourse on the Caucasian issue. The woman figure is not examined in this research due to its focus on masculinity, but at the same time its lack is not only the matter of material choice. The very term "Caucasian" in Russian language is of masculine gender (*kavkazets*) and, unlike other ethnicity or nationality markers, does not have any commonly used feminine counterpart. This strange erasure of

feminine coinciding with over-masculinization of the Caucasian men waits to be carefully examined.

Appendix







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