

THE POLITICS OF RACIAL TRANSLATION

Negotiating Foreignness and Authenticity in Russophone Intersectional
Feminism and Timati's Hip-hop (2012-2018)

Dinara Yangeldina

Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
University of Bergen, Norway
2023

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN



THE POLITICS OF RACIAL TRANSLATION

Negotiating Foreignness and Authenticity in
Russophone Intersectional Feminism and Timati's Hip-
hop (2012-2018)
Dinara Yangeldina



Thesis for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD)
at the University of Bergen

Date of defense: 14.06.2023

© Copyright Dinara Yangeldina

The material in this publication is covered by the provisions of the Copyright Act.

Year: 2023

Title: THE POLITICS OF RACIAL TRANSLATION

Name: Dinara Yangeldina

Print: Skipnes Kommunikasjon / University of Bergen

*Я нашёл в лесу жука,
Я принёс жука домой.
Жук живой ещё пока.
Всё в порядке – жук живой!*

Abstract in English

What happens to race, gender, and sexuality politics of intersectional feminism and hip-hop when they travel eastwards into post-Soviet Russophone contexts? This thesis explores the role of translation in the circulations of the US Anglophone idiom ‘race as resistance’ in 2012-2018 Russophone adaptations of hip-hop and intersectionality. Drawing on the digital ethnography, discourse analysis, and close reading of a selection of music videos, it empirically analyzes two translation projects: a grassroots Russophone translation-based intersectional feminist page, FIO (Feminist Intersectionality Against Oppression) and – a controversial in Russia – Tatar-Jewish hip-hop entrepreneur, Timati. This thesis, situated at the intersection of gender and sexuality studies, race and ethnicity research, and post-Soviet cultural studies, foregrounds translation in its theoretical framework and methodological research design. Theoretically, the dissertation’s approach to translation is inspired by feminist theory, feminist anthropology, and translation studies, as well as by transnational perspectives on racialization and the growing scholarship on race in Russia. Methodologically it draws on the tools from translation studies and sociolinguistics. Conceptualizing translation as a precondition for travel, as a site of negotiation where things are produced as ‘foreign’ and as a generative rather than imitative process, this thesis asks what racial translation generates and why some translation projects are rendered as more foreign than others. The method is to track the attributions of foreignness and examine the translation strategies used by the two projects mentioned above when rendering English-language racial categories such as ‘white,’ ‘black,’ ‘people of color,’ and ‘women of color.’ The study also uses the multimodal approach that goes beyond the limits of the semantics of ethnoracial categories, allowing for the exploration of racial translation across multiple semiotic modes. Conceptualizing racial translation as saturated in gender and sexuality dynamics, embedded in geopolitical confrontations, and informed by Russian imperial legacies, the thesis argues that racial translation is generative in several central ways. It creates novel and modern idioms (Russophone intersectional feminism and Russian commercial hip-hop), chronotopically positioned types of personhood associated with particular translation strategies or resistance to them, as well as affective responses and contestations of translation choices and translation projects stigmatized or valorized as ‘foreign.’ The translators approach the Anglophone idiom of ‘race as resistance’ as ‘foreign and modern,’ indexing advanced time and place, the USA, brought up to invigorate, repair, and modernize Russophone feminisms and Russian music scenes. Both translation projects position foreignization as a source of modernization, explaining the predisposition for foreignizing translation strategies. However, foreignizing translation strategies and the aversion to literalism within post-Soviet Russophone contexts may render translators themselves foreign, propelling the search for originality, the attempts to negotiate the stigma of translation, and to repair chronic inauthenticity.

On the pages of the Russophone intersectional feminist community, the moderators' predisposition to transliterations generates visceral unease, accusations of unintelligibility, anxieties about the language mixing, and the roles of moderators as cosmopolitan bilingual feminist elites different from ordinary Russophone readers. Intersectionality circulates as a feminist chronotope, envisioned by FIO as a feminist future, a remedy against exclusions within Russophone feminisms such as racism, homophobia, and transphobia. Circulating feminist chronotopes are used in contestations around translation, harnessed on local chronotopic imaginaries such as Russian peasant backwardness and Slavophile parochialism. The literal translation of the category 'white' generates figures such as 'white man' and 'white women,' which enter the Russophone intersectional feminist idiom. The production of anti-racist whiteness-in-translation mobilizes chronotopic figures of backward racist others in comparative contrast with more modern bodies of knowledge and types of personhood. It also propels the questioning of the limits of the translatability of the category 'white' for the situated anti-racist post-Soviet praxis in the comment threads, including the shifting category *Кавказцы*/Caucasians. Non-translation of the categories 'people of color' and 'women of color' generates, amongst other things, the search for a post-Soviet 'woman of color' as a Russophone intersectional feminist subject, the canonization of raw translation, the translingual proliferation of ethnoracial categories and the instrumentalization of the figure of 'trans woman of color' by Russophone *radfem* as a mark of Russophone intersectionality's total foreignness. Finally, the term *realia* emerged in the empirical materials as the quest for localizing the US idiom of race, adjusting intersectionality to the specificities of post-Soviet ethnoracial power dynamics.

Within the project of racial translation in Timati's hip-hop, I show how Timati marrying of US black hip-hop aesthetics and Russian glamour in the 2000s deployed untranslated foreign US blackness as a cosmopolitan cultural capital to alleviate the violence of post-Soviet racialization. Approximating US black aesthetics through the direct experience of 'the source,' Timati's ethnoracial malleability and capacity to mediate between post-Soviet markets, local economic elites, US racial authenticity, and US hip-hop celebrities brought him international success, yet hardly helped alleviate chronic hip-hop inauthenticity in Russia. Attempts to manage the stigma of foreignness and imitation and hence achieve a stronger hip-hop authenticity domestically marked a reorientation of Timati's project of racial translation. From 2012-2013, the Caucasus and Caucasian masculinities figure as 'regional originals,' allowing Timati to translate the US black masculinity underpinning US hip-hop authenticity through the strategies of vicarious realness, memetics, and hip-hop homophobia in a gay bashing hip-hop *meykhana* cipher and visual Imperial tropes of the Caucasian sublime. The beard as racial/sexual metonymy is central for understanding Timati's project of racial translation involved in East-West sexual geopolitics in the period of 2014-2015: through hip-hop modernity and the twin fantasy of ethnoracial mixing and Central Asian migrant

economic uplift in Russia, the ethnoracial other is revalorized away from the image of the security threat (bearded terrorist) as modern, homophobic and cool, able to secure Russia's organic and multinational future against corrupt and sexually perverse Europe. The pinnacle of Timati's project of racial translation in 2014-2016 resulted in the invention of a deliberately memetic character, Teymuraz, enacting racialized clichés of Caucasian and Central Asian men. Teymuraz, as part of Russia's hybrid cultural trend of aesthetic populism, recycles the elements of New East *gopnik* style, Soviet and post-Soviet comedies about men from the Caucasus and Central Asia, mixes elements of social critique, and appropriates the voices of the subaltern, performing a peculiar patriotic anti-racist project with contradictory implications. Timati's 2015 ludic performances of hip-hop patriotism, coupled with performative disidentifications from the USA as a source of hip-hop, are read as a strategy of hip-hop localization in the changing geopolitical context of Russia's turn away from the West. Russian discourses of hip-hop authenticity, preoccupied with detecting and exposing plagiarism in Timati's work, serve to discern 'real' hip-hop from 'fake' hip-hop. These acts of discernment draw on the racialized discourses of commerce and immorality, marking Timati as 'foreign' - both outside the borders of the genre and the Russian nation - thus exposing the Russian ethnonational bias underpinning Russian discourses of hip-hop authenticity.

Keywords: translation, intersectionality, race, ethnoracial, post-Soviet, Russian hip-hop, hip-hop, rap, Russian rap, grassroots feminism, digital feminism, feminist chronotopes, feminist translation, feminist activism, popular music, Russia, Russophone, translation strategies, literalism, transliteration, homophobia, transphobia, vicarious realness, memetics, realia, racial/sexual metonymy, indexicality, multimodality, Cold War, Russian popular culture, digital activism, authenticity, hip-hop masculinities, racialization, Caucasus, Central Asia.

Abstract in Norwegian

Hva skjer med rase-, kjønns- og seksualitetspolitikk i interseksjonell feminisme og hiphop når de forflytter seg østover til postsovjetiske, russiskspråklige kontekster? Denne avhandlingen utforsker oversettelsens betydning i sirkulasjonen av det amerikanske, engelskspråklige idiomet 'rase som motstand' i russiskspråklige tilpasninger av hiphop og interseksjonalitet i perioden 2012-2018. Ved hjelp av digital etnografi, diskursanalyse og nærlesing av et utvalg musikkvideoer, analyseres to oversettelsesprosjekter empirisk: en russiskspråklig grasrotside for interseksjonell feminisme, FIO (Feminist Intersectionality Against Oppression), og den – i Russland kontroversielle – tatarisk-jødiske hiphop-entreprenøren Timati. Denne avhandlingen, som befinner seg i skjæringspunktet mellom kjønns- og seksualitetsstudier, rase- og etnisitetsforskning og postsovjetiske kulturstudier, framhever oversettelse både i sitt teoretiske rammeverk og i metodologisk forskningsdesign. Teoretisk er avhandlingens tilnærming til oversettelse inspirert av feministisk teori, feministisk antropologi og oversettelsesstudier, samt av transnasjonale perspektiver på rasialisering og den voksende forskningen på rase i Russland. Metodologisk trekker avhandlingen på verktøy fra oversettelsesstudier og sosiolingvistik. Ved å begrepsliggjøre oversettelse som en forutsetning for geografisk forflytning av ideer, som et sted for forhandling der ting produseres som 'fremmede', og som en generativ snarere enn imiterende prosess, spør den hva raseoversettelse frambringer og hvorfor noen oversettelsesprosjekter framstilles som mer fremmede enn andre. Metoden er å spore hvordan fremmedhet tilskrives ulike objekter, samt å undersøke de oversettelsesstrategiene som brukes i de to nevnte empiriske tilfellene når de gjengir engelskspråklige rasekategorier som 'white', 'black', 'people of color' og 'women of color'. I tillegg til å undersøke hvilke generative effekter oversettelsene har, bruker studien en multimodal tilnærming som overskrider de semantiske grensene til etnorasekategorier og muliggjør utforskning av rasemessig oversettelse på tvers av flere semiotiske moduser. Avhandlingen begrepsliggjør rasemessig oversettelse som gjennomsyret av kjønns- og seksualitetsdynamikk, innebygd i geopolitiske konfrontasjoner og informert av russisk imperial arv, og argumenterer for at rasemessig oversettelse er generativ på flere sentrale måter. Den rasemessige oversettelsen skaper nye og moderne formspråk (russofon interseksjonell feminisme og russisk kommersiell hiphop), kronotopisk plasserte former for personlighet knyttet til bestemte oversettelsesstrategier eller motstand mot dem, samt affektive responser og bestridelser av oversettelsesvalg og oversettelsesprosjekter som stigmatiseres eller verdsettes som 'fremmede'. De som oversetter, tilnærmer seg det engelskspråklige formspråket 'rase som motstand' som 'fremmed og moderne', og indekserer en avansert tid og et avansert sted, USA, for å styrke, reparere og modernisere russiskspråklig feminisme og russiske musikkscener. Begge oversettelsesprosjektene posisjonerer fremmedgjøring som en kilde til modernisering, noe som forklarer predisposisjonen for fremmedgjørende oversettelsesstrategier. Fremmedgjørende

oversettelsesstrategier og motviljen mot bokstavtrohet i postsovjetiske, russiskspråklige kontekster, kan imidlertid gjøre oversetterne selv fremmede, noe som fremmer jakten på originalitet, forsøk på å forhandle oversettelsens stigma og å reparere kronisk inautentisitet.

På nettsidene til det russiskspråklige, interseksjonelle feministiske digitale fellesskapet, skaper moderatorenes tilbøyelighet til translitterasjoner en form for uro, beskyldninger om uforståelighet og en slags motvilje for språkblanding. Moderatorenes rolle som en kosmopolitisk, tospråklig, feministisk elite skiller seg fra vanlige russiskspråklige lesere. Interseksjonalitet sirkulerer som en feministisk kronotop, som FIO ser for seg som en feministisk fremtid, et botemiddel mot den russiskspråklige feminismens rasisme, homofobi og transfobi. Feministiske kronotoper blir brukt i diskusjoner rundt oversettelse og blant annet utnyttet i lokale kronotopiske forestillinger om russisk bakstreverskhhet og slavofil transsynthet. Den bokstavelige oversettelsen av kategorien 'hvit' genererer figurer som 'hvit mann' og 'hvite kvinner' og inngår i det russiskspråklige interseksjonelle feministiske formspråket. Produksjonen av modererende antirasistisk hvithet-i-oversettelse mobiliserer kronotopiske figurer av tilbakestående rasistiske andre som komparativ kontrast til mer moderne kunnskap. Den driver også frem spørsmål om grensene for oversettbarheten til kategorien 'hvit' for den situerte antirasistiske post-sovjetiske praksisen i kommentartrådene, inkludert den skiftende kategorien *Кавказцы*/Kaukasiere. Manglende oversettelse av kategoriene 'people of color' og 'women of color' genererer blant annet søken etter en postsovjetisk 'woman of color' som et russiskspråklig interseksjonelt feministisk subjekt. Slik kanoniseres "rå" oversettelse, den transspråklige spredningen av etno-rasistiske kategorier og instrumentaliseringen av figuren 'trans woman of color' av russiskspråklige *radfem* som et tegn på den russiskspråklige interseksjonalitetens totale fremmedhet. Begrepet *realia* brukes i materialet som en søken etter å lokalisere det amerikanske raseidiomet og for å belyse særtrekkene ved den post-sovjetiske etnorasistiske maktdynamikken.

I undersøkelsen av raseoversettelse i Timatis hiphop, vises det hvordan Timati, ved å kombinere amerikansk svart hiphop-estetikk med russisk glamour på 2000-tallet, brukte uoversatt amerikansk svarthet som en kosmopolitisk kulturell kapital for å motvirke volden i den post-sovjetiske rasialiseringen. Ved å nærme seg amerikansk svart estetikk gjennom direkte erfaring med 'kilden', fikk Timati transnasjonal suksess med sin etnorasiale formbarhet og evne til å formidle mellom postsovjetiske markeder, lokale økonomiske eliter, amerikansk raseautentisitet og amerikanske hiphop-kjendiser. Han bidro derimot neppe til å avhjelpe hiphopens kroniske inautentisitet i Russland. Forsøk på å håndtere stigmaet fremmedhet og imitasjon, og å oppnå sterkere hiphop-autentisitet på hjemmebane, markerte en reorientering av Timatis prosjekt for rasemessig oversettelse. Fra 2012-2013 figurerer Kaukasus og kaukasiske maskuliniteter som 'regionale originaler', noe som gjør det mulig for Timati å oversette den amerikanske svarte maskuliniteten som ligger til grunn for amerikansk hiphop-

autentisitet. Han tar i bruk ulike strategier, som 'vikarierende autentisitet', memetikk og hiphop-homofobi, og skaper en homofobisk hiphop-*meykhana*-cipher og visuelle, imperiale troper av et kaukasiske sublim. Skjegget som rasemessig/seksuell metonymi er sentralt for å forstå Timatis prosjekt for rasemessig oversettelse i 2014-2015, som er involvert i seksuell geopolittikk mellom øst og vest. Gjennom hiphop-modernitet og tvillingfantasi om etnisk raseblanding og sentralasiatiske migranternes økonomiske oppsving i Russland, oppvurderes den etniske andre fra å være symbol på en sikkerhetstrussel (skjeggete terrorister) til å bli moderne, homofob og kul – og slik i stand til å sikre Russlands organiske og multinasjonale fremtid mot et angivelig korrupt og seksuelt perverst Europa. Høydepunktet i Timatis prosjekt for rasemessig oversettelse i 2014-2016 resulterte i oppfinnelsen av en bevisst memetisk karakter, Teymuraz, som iscenesetter rasistiske klisjeer av kaukasiske og sentralasiatiske menn. Teymuraz, som en del av Russlands hybridkulturelle trend med estetisk populisme, resirkulerer elementer fra New East *gopnik*-stil, sovjetiske og postsovjetiske komedier om menn fra Kaukasus og Sentral-Asia, blander elementer av samfunnskritikk og tilegner seg de subalternes stemmer. Han utgjør med dette et særegent patriotisk, antirasistisk prosjekt med motstridende implikasjoner. Timatis lekne fremføringer av patriotisme og performativ disidentifikasjon fra USA som kilde til hiphop i 2015 forstår hiphop-patriotisme som en strategi for å lokalisere hiphop i den skiftende geopolitiske konteksten av Russlands vending bort fra Vesten. Russiske diskurser om hiphop-autentisitet, som er opptatt av å oppdage og avsløre plagiat i Timatis arbeid, gir stemme til et særegent arbeid med å skille 'ekte' hiphop fra 'falsk' hiphop. Dette arbeidet bygger på rasistiske diskurser om handel og umoral, og markerer Timati som 'fremmed' - både utenfor sjangerens og den russiske nasjonens grenser – og avslører en russisk etnonasjonal skjevhet som ligger til grunn for russiske diskurser om hiphop-autentisitet.

Nøkkelord: oversettelse, interseksjonalitet, rase, etnorasisk, postsovjetisk, russisk hiphop, rap, russisk rap, grasrotfeminisme, digital feminisme, feministiske kronotoper, feministisk oversettelse, feministisk aktivisme, populærmusikk, Russland, russofon, oversettelsesstrategier, litteralisme, translitterasjon, homofobi, transfobi, vikarierende autentisitet, memetikk, realia, rasemessig/seksuell metonymi, indeksikalitet, multimodalitet, den kalde krigen, russisk populærkultur, digital aktivisme, autentisitet, hiphop-maskuliniteter, rasialisering, Kaukasus, Sentral-Asia.

Table of Contents

Abstract in English	2
Abstract in Norwegian	5
Table of Contents	8
Acknowledgments	11

PART I

1.INTRODUCTION	13
Locating the context	15
Aims and research questions	16
Summary of the framework and key concepts	17
Positioning the research, contributions, and novelty	19

2. CONTEXTS, THEORETICAL DEBATES, AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK	20
DEPARTURES	20
Intersectionality	20
Hip-hop	25
ARRIVALS	33
Translation anxiety in Russophone academic receptions of ‘Western’ feminism	33
Translation as imitation: the search for authenticity in Russian hip-hop	38
RACE	43
Transnational perspectives on racialization	43
Race in Russia	49
TRANSLATION	59
Traveling theory without translation	59
Metaphorization of translation in cultural translation	61
FRAMEWORK	65
Out of the authenticity deadlock	65
Racial translation	74
Translation studies and sociolinguistics	77
Methodological approach, data collection, and ethics	85
Outline of the empirical chapters	91

PART II: TRANSLATING INTERSECTIONALITY

3. THE POLITICS OF RUSSOPHONE TRANSLATIONS OF INTERSECTIONALITY	95
Introduction: Buzzing digital feminisms in times of a ‘conservative turn.’	95
Translating intersectionality to fight exclusion: dis-identifying with Russophone <i>radfem</i>	97

Between power and stigma of translation: translators as figures of intersectional authority	101
The privilege to know. Monolingual Russophone backwardness vs. cosmopolitan English-Russian bilingualism.	107
Circulating feminist chronotopes: <i>дремучий radfem</i> stuck in ‘the 60s.’	115
4. FOREIGN ELEMENTS: TRANSLITERATING FEMINIST CONCEPTS	121
Introduction	121
On loving Russian language: ideologies of language mixing and linguistic purism	122
Intelligibility trouble: ugly words and speaking ‘in bird language.’	125
Visceral unease with transliterations	131
Chronotopic displacements. ‘Slavophile feminism with blackjack and intersectionality!’	135
Conclusion	138
5. AVERSION TO LITERALISM: CALQUING WHITENESS, BORROWING ANTI-RACISM	140
Introduction	140
<i>Белые парни</i> and other backward figures	141
Translating anti-racist white allyship discourse	146
The limits of literalism: ‘But who are these whites in Russia?’	152
Translingual mutability of the category <i>Кавказцы</i> /Caucasians	161
Conclusion	168
6. SIGNS OF FOREIGNNESS: LEAVING ‘POC’ AND ‘WOC’ UNTRANSLATED	169
Introduction	169
Starting from scratch. Foreignization as modernization	173
From untranslatability to raw translation: canonical footnoting and translingual proliferation of categories	179
Searching for post-Soviet ‘WOC’: <i>проблемы гражданок средней Азии и Кавказа</i>	183
‘Trans woman of color’ as totally foreign: <i>radfem</i> critiques of Russophone intersectionality	195
Conclusion	199
7. LOCALIZING RACE: REALIA, REFLEXIVITY AND RACIAL DISCERNMENT	200
Introduction	200
What about ‘our realia’?	200
Prefacing, replacement, and adaptation. Moderatorial reflexivity in racial translation	207
Practices of ethnoracial discernment: slippery (non)Russianness and racial metonymy of hair	214
Conclusion	223
PART III: TRANSLATING HIP-HOP	
8. ANTAGONIZING RUSSIAN RAP: TIMATI’S CHRONIC INAUTHENTICITY	225
Introduction	225
US hip-hop and R&B aesthetics meets Russian glamour	227

Locating post-Soviet ‘blackness.’ On partial equivalences of ‘black’ and <i>чёрный</i> .	236
US Blackness as cosmopolitan cultural capital. Why ‘black’ in Black Star was left untranslated	242
Hip-hop moguls, business empires, and post-Soviet capitalist realism of Black Star Inc.	248
Conclusion	256
9. FROM MIMETISM TO MEMETICS: CAUCASIAN REGIONAL ORIGINALS, VICARIOUS REALNESS, AND HIP-HOP HOMOPHOBIA	258
Introduction	258
Translating South Caucasian homosociality of <i>meykhana</i> into homophobic hip-hop diss	259
Sexual and gender deviance of Russian <i>Estrada</i> vs. masculine realness of Russian rap	267
Masculine maturation, politics of friendship, and poetics of the Caucasus in <i>Что видишь ты</i> (2013)	275
Conclusion	284
10. RACIAL/SEXUAL METONYMY OF THE BEARD	285
Introduction	285
Racialized non-Russian masculinities against Western sexual perversion in <i>Борода</i> (2014)	285
Fantasies of migrant economic uplift and ethnoracial mixing: Central Asian realness of MC Doni in <i>Ты такой</i> (2015)	300
Conclusion	313
11. MEMETIC FIGURE OF TEYMURAZ: ORIGINALITY, AESTHETIC POPULISM AND PATRIOTIC ANTI-RACISM	314
Introduction	314
<i>Понты (Swag)</i>	318
<i>Баклажан (Eggplant)</i>	323
<i>Мага (Maga)</i>	329
‘We have our own “blacks,” and it is Caucasus’	338
Conclusion	346
12. RESISTANCE, FOREIGNNESS AND RACE: CONTESTING HIP-HOP AUTHENTICITIES	348
Introduction	348
Russian hip-hop as music of resistance? From Cold War visions to patriotism as a strategy of hip-hop’s localization	349
Discerning fakes, exposing plagiarism: the search for authenticity in Russian hip-hop	361
Immoral commerce: race, markets, and authenticity in Russian hip-hop	369
Rap panics, homo-hauntings, and nesting hierarchies of masculine realness	380
13. AFTERWORD	385
BIBLIOGRAPHY	392

Acknowledgments

This thesis was made possible through the institutional support of SKOK (Senter for kvinne- og kjønnsforskning), University of Bergen, Norway, where I worked as a research fellow from 2016 to 2022. I want to express my warm gratitude to my supervisor, Randi Gressgård, and my co-supervisor, Redi Koobak, as well as to former and current center leaders Christine Jacobsen and Kari Jegerstedt, for their kind support along the long way. I started this journey at Uppsala University. I warmly thank my colleagues there: Mai Lundemark, Hannah Bradby, and Sandra Torres. I kindly thank my SKOK colleagues: Kari Anne Klovholt Drangslund, Marry-Anne Karlsen, Hanne Marie Johansen, Anders Rubing, Maria Skjelbred Meyer, Silje Mo, Sissel Aasheim, Rowan Maddox, Judith Ann Larsen, Kjersti Irene Aarstein, Idunn Bjørlo Tandstad, Kamilla Stølen, Tone Lund-Olsen, Nadzeya Husakouskaya, and Noor Jdid. Throughout my years at UiB, I greatly benefitted from the collaborations with the Research Group for Contemporary Russia, whose members I thank for intellectual inspiration, academic collaborations, and friendships: Benedikte Fjellanger Vardøy, Margje Post, Kåre Johan Mjør, Ingunn Lunde, Johanne Kalsaas, Brita Lotsberg Bryn, and especially Irina Anisimova and Stehn Aztlan Mortensen. I also had a chance to participate in long-term transnational collaboration STINT with residencies in Linköping, Budapest, and Cape Town. I thank all those with whom I could share these experiences: Nina Lykke, Tammy Shefer, Jasmina Lukic, Madina Tlostanova, Petra Bakos, Caili Forrest, Pralini Naidoo, Kharnita Mohamed, Swati Aurora, Victoria Kawesa, Carmin Rustin, Susheela Mcwatts, Adriana Qubaiova, Stanimir Panayotov, Tigist Shewarega Hussen. I thank Brian James Baer for his generous feedback on my 90 percent draft. Warm gratitude goes to John Vandervert and Daniil Zhaivoronok; thanks for the careful readings of my draft, warm encouragement, and your passion for popular culture. I also want to thank Galina Miazhevich and Saara Ratilainen warmly. Thanks to Arielle Concilio, Kondratiy Hvatit, Yulia Gradsikova, Wiebke Straube, Katya Gusakova, Oleg (and Varvara Olegovna), Landysh, Valentina, Roma, Olya, and Ben. I also thank friends from Bergen: Khadija, Masha, Irina, Zsofie, Daniel, Karen, Charlotte, Anders, Nora, Fabio, Alice, Jose, Stian, and Rebecca. Finally, Byalyakyay, Ira, Dara, and the Fruitbat, thank you for being there for me throughout the last few years. This thesis would have never been finished without your love in all the strange shapes and forms it takes. Each of you means a great deal to me in very profound ways.

People often describe their PhDs as journeys, and the image of mobility usually accompanies the imagery of the journey. My Ph.D. was saturated with prolonged periods of immobility, uncertainty, exhaustion, death, mourning, waiting, and finally, the unending shock of 2022. With the idea of a journey also comes the image of arrival. Ph.D. candidates are supposed to reach their destinations changed but not ruined. I remember how in 2013, during the gender studies MA, an overly excited colleague shared how

overwhelmed she was by a highly stimulating course on women's migration offered by our program (I picked other courses, which were also highly stimulating). The idea from that course that blew her mind and that she wanted to share with me was that post-socialist migration to 'the West,' although helping sustain families left behind, depletes and destroys relations and communities at home. Somehow, her comment stayed with me for years, perhaps because having 'arrived,' I sometimes can no longer discern if the 'journey' was worth it. Sometimes it seems that if I had stayed, all those who are now gone would not have left. I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Farida, who passed away after a long fight against cancer in July 2018, and to others who have passed away during Covid years, especially Elena Mikhaylovna Lobkovskaya and Svetlana Nikolayena Voroshko.

Part I

1. Introduction

*Почему в странах СНГ не любят интерсекциональный феминизм? Причем не любят не только очевидные идеологические противники типа альт-райтов, но и, казалось бы, «свои» - феминистки других направлений? Одна из гипотез: интерсекциональный феминизм пришел в Постсовок без минимальной адаптации к его реалиям. И остался таким вот достаточно андерграундным движением для молодежи из миддл-ап класса с уровнем английского выше среднего. Что нужно интерсекциональному феминизму в СНГ, чтобы он не выглядел как нелепая калька с работы западных активист_ок?*¹

In 2019, a Russophone grassroots feminist social media page *pretty eerie* published an online post opening with a provocative question: ‘Why is intersectional feminism not loved in CIS² countries?’ The affective paradox deepens further: intersectional feminism is said not to be loved ‘not only by the most obvious ideological opponents such as alt-rights but those seemingly *svoi* (one’s own) – feminists of other orientations.’³ *Pretty eerie* hypothesizes that one way to account for this contradiction is to examine how intersectionality arrived in post-Soviet contexts. It is said that ‘intersectional feminism entered *post-sovok* without minimal adaptation to its *realia*’ and ‘remained a rather underground movement for the middle-upper class youth with above-average knowledge of English.’ *Pretty eerie* then questions what intersectional feminism in CIS countries needs to understand so that it would not ‘look like a ridiculous calque from the works of Western activists.’

The post above formulates the problem of traveling feminist thought as the problem of translation. Intersectionality arrives in Russophone feminist contexts as foreign feminist knowledge: it enters through English and requires translation. What is listed above as ‘one possible hypothesis’ reflects a much broader discourse surrounding intersectionality’s arrivals into grassroots Russophone feminist scenes, where intersectionality is framed as something that does not quite fit in. The paradox, highlighted by *pretty eerie*, also brings in an additional dimension of the post-Soviet feminist encounters with intersectionality. Those who appear as ‘*svoi*’ that is, Russophone feminists of non-intersectional orientations - do not hurry to welcome intersectionality. Perhaps, taking the presumed absence of love and inverted commas around the word, these feminists are not as ‘*svoi*’ as they appear. Or perhaps, it is

¹ Throughout this thesis all translations from English are mine. Sometimes, as with the quote above I experiment with embedding translation in the text. When it comes to individual translation choices, I often prefer deliberate foreignizing of Russian words into English to highlight the difference in connotations or semantic gaps in meanings, especially for cognates. See the Framework section in Chapter 2 for more details on Translation Studies tools that inform the approach used in this thesis.

² CIS (*CHG*) stands for Commonwealth of Independent states – regional intergovernmental organization comprised of 9 member states after Soviet Union’s dissolution. ‘CIS countries’ is often used as a synonym of post-Soviet space in the everyday language as in the above quote.

³ vk.com/@peerie-sng-i-intersekcionalnost

intersectionality that appears foreign or even alien. Or maybe, as the post also seems to imply, intersectionality appearing foreign is an effect of bad translation?

Intersectional feminism, it is said, has not been adequately adapted to post-Soviet *realia*. *Realia*, a term used in the Russian language to point to sociocultural, historical, and material context, on the one hand, is also a translation studies concept from Soviet translation tradition, describing words naming these contextual, culturally specific elements, presenting difficulties in translation. When *pretty eerie* further elaborates on some of the post-Soviet *realia*, it specifies how racism in the USA featuring in intersectional feminist texts differs from racism and xenophobia of the average inhabitant of CIS countries, targeted against migrants, Kazakhs, Jews, Tatars, and other *small peoples* whose situation is described as ‘no less sad, deep and interesting than the oppression of the people of color in the USA and Europe.’⁴ In lacking the proper adaptation to the post-Soviet *realia*, translated intersectionality for *pretty eerie* looks like a ‘ridiculous calque’ from Western activism. Calling something a ‘calque’ is a highly pejorative yet widespread vernacular Russian-language term that indicates moral disapproval of faithful borrowings from ‘the West.’ It follows that the problem of love, or not-loving intersectionality, may also be a translation problem. Translation in post-Soviet Russophone contexts appears to be a highly charged, affectively invested practice.

This vignette touches upon this thesis’s key concerns: hip-hop’s and intersectionality’s Russophone circulations and encounters with post-Soviet *realia* of race. At the center of my story are two racial translation projects mediating US black cultural forms. The first is a grassroots Russophone intersectional feminist page, Feminist intersectionality Against Oppression (FIO), that introduced intersectionality through English to Russian translations to Russophone audiences on social media platforms.⁵ The second translation project I look at concerns the cultural productions of a controversial in Russia hip-hop celebrity with Tatar and Jewish roots, Timati (Timur Younousov), who brought US black commercial hip-hop aesthetics to post-Soviet Russia, building the country’s first urban music label Black Star.⁶ As the introductory vignette makes clear, within the heterogenous field of Russophone feminisms, *some* forms are positioned as more foreign than others. Equally, no other hip-hop artist, despite his international success and post-Soviet fame, is hated in the country and

⁴ The original fragment: *В РФ не было такого расизма, как в США. Да, страны бывшего СССР ксенофобны и полны предрассудков по поводу некоторых рас и национальностей, но здесь стоит не просто переводить статьи про черных, коренных американцев и других интересных людей – а вспомнить именно о характерных для среднего жителя СНГ расистских и националистских идеях. Вспомнить о мигрантах с Ближнего Востока, казахах, татарах, представителях малых народов, евреях. О дискриминации этих людей можно много говорить, и истории этой дискриминации будут совершенно иными, чем истории черных в США. И, главное, это все не менее печально, глубоко и интересно, чем угнетение people of color в США и Европе.* Source: vk.com/@peerie-sng-i-interseksionalnost

⁵ The name of the page is anonymized, and I do not reveal the platform where it was based. See more in the section on Methodological approach.

⁶ Timati has left the label in 2020. Throughout the thesis I write about Timati being on the Black Star label in the present tense for the sake of style.

beyond more than Timati, especially by the fans of Russian hip-hop. While there are some legitimate reasons for that in the case of Timati, this thesis is concerned more broadly with why and how some translation projects get construed as ‘foreign’ or imitative and generate, among other things, charged affective responses such as labelings of intersectionality as ‘ridiculous calque from the West.’ What is at stake in these affective articulations of translation, and what role do race and gender play in this process?

Locating the context

Temporally this research is situated in the span between 2012 and 2018.⁷ This period, most often associated with the third term presidency of Vladimir Putin, the Russian Federation’s increasing geopolitical confrontation with ‘the West’ and the 2014 war in Donbas, is also widely known domestically and internationally as the so-called ‘conservative turn.’ Distinguished by the rhetoric of ‘traditional values’ (Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2014) and repressive politics of gender and sexuality that marks feminism and gender studies as foreign, Western, and non-Russian (Davydova 2019), this vision of the ‘conservative turn’ hardly evokes anything but gloom. The fact that Russophone grassroots feminist scenes thrived on social media during the very same period not only troubles the prevalent narratives about feminism’s alleged unpopularity in post-Soviet contexts but also, in a Foucauldian vein, reveals the intimate links between repression and resistance. In many ways, the grassroots digital feminist spaces this thesis examines paved the way for the subsequent demarginalization of feminist politics in broader oppositional Russophone public discourse in the second half of the 2010s. Russian hip-hop rose to the status of the most popular music genre in the country during the same period. Reflected in the millions of views of the viral YouTube rap battles, the emergent powers of Russian rap generated both intense attachments and anxieties, propelling the authorities’ repeated attempts to harness its influence. From 2018 onwards, moral panics provoked by popular music’s capacity to affect Russian youth inaugurated the securitization of youth politics (Kukulin 2021). Unsurprisingly, hip-hop is often read to epitomize violence, aggression, and pathology within Russian scholarly discourse. Hip-hop’s corrupting influence on Russian youth is attributed to its perceived capacity to destabilize the normative conventions, reflected in the presence of obscenities and anglicisms, specificities of rap flow, and intertextuality of lyrics (Zavalishin and Kostyurina 2020:62). Within these narratives, hip-hop, seen as connected to drug addiction, is blamed for the moral corruption of youth (Zavalishin and Kostyurina 2020:62–65). This framing paradoxically evokes some of the tropes that inform LGBT-related moral panics.

⁷ Occasionally I venture deeper into the past to contextualize the case of Timati.

The powers of foreign influence or foreign cultural forms' capacity to shape Russia's youth stand firmly at the center of these contestations. The youth, in turn, becomes positioned as if in need of shielding from such an influence. It may be tempting to consider these developments through the narrative of rebellious Western cultural forms (feminism and hip-hop) confronting the Russian state's repressive apparatus that tries to stifle youth seeking freedom. However, as feminist critiques of hip-hop make clear, the genre's trouble with homophobia and misogyny may call into question such a narrative. What is more important for the purposes of my project is that for younger generations in Russia and broader post-Soviet space, neither feminism nor hip-hop is longer seen as essentially foreign or inherently Western. Throughout the 2010s, both feminism and hip-hop were successfully localized, as their immense popularity among post-Soviet youth indicates. Russophone feminism and hip-hop are heterogeneous discursive fields fractured across competing claims about authenticity and politics. This thesis centers on these dynamics as they occur *within* these fields, striving not to lose track of the broader geopolitical and domestic contexts in which they unfold.

Debates about race in the post-Soviet region are deeply entrenched in geopolitics, with highly charged meanings assigned to terms that are categorized as 'American,' seen as not 'Russian,' or 'Soviet.' As recent reactions to the 2020 BlackLivesMatter protests in the USA by Russian liberal opposition demonstrated (Djagalov 2021), the dismissal of US-style anti-racism is linked to its associations with Marxism, conceived as a shameful relic of the socialist past that mature Russia has overcome (Morozov 2020).⁸ Race is sometimes imagined as one of such foreign, 'American' 'things,' displaced externally, which may work to elide the non-existence of racism as a problem. Recent feminist scholarship on the region of Southern, Eastern Europe, and Eurasia has been concerned with the argument that not-naming race limits the possibilities of addressing racism in these contexts (Baker 2018; Suchland 2018; Yusupova 2021). Nevertheless, the idiom of race may circulate not only as foreign and displaced as alien but also as foreign and desired, offering possibilities to repair, invigorate, modernize, and innovate rather than to stigmatize and wound.

Aims and research questions

This thesis examines how race, along with gender and sexuality, travels into Russophone post-Soviet contexts through circulating US black cultural forms: hip-hop and intersectionality. Suggesting that race travels through translation, this thesis aims to *explore the role of translation* and analyzes the process of *racial translation* based on the empirical examination of two translation projects mediating the US idiom of 'race as resistance' into Russophone post-Soviet spaces. These two projects, the grassroots

⁸ [youtube.com/watch?v=pbyPuKYSovg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pbyPuKYSovg)

digital Russophone intersectional feminist page FIO and hip-hop entrepreneur Timati, introduced intersectionality and commercial hip-hop inspired by US Black aesthetics to invigorate and create new genres and idioms within the fields of Russophone feminisms and Russian hip-hop.

Methodologically and theoretically, I am interested in developing a translation-based approach for analyzing the circulations of US racial discourses and categories into Russophone contexts that would neither elide ‘the fact of translation’ nor overlook the transnational diversity of racializations. I am also interested in developing a multimodal approach to analyze racial translation beyond ethnoracial categories and across several semiotic modes. The following research questions guide this thesis:

1. What role does translation play in the travels of the US Anglophone idiom ‘race as resistance’ through intersectionality and hip-hop into Russophone post-Soviet contexts?
2. In what ways is racial translation generative? What does it generate?
3. How do the dynamics of gender and sexuality saturate the process of racial translation?
4. Which translation strategies are used when mediating the US Anglophone idiom ‘race as resistance’ into new contexts of reception informed by post-Soviet dynamics of ethnoracial marginalization and divergent legacies of colonialism, Empire, and Soviet socialist modernity? What are the effects of the translation strategies used?
5. If everyone translates (within Russophone grassroots feminisms and Russian hip-hop), why are some translation projects positioned as more foreign than others?
6. How do both racial translation projects negotiate the stigma of foreignness and imitation?

Summary of the framework and key concepts

In this thesis, I approach the circulating discourses of race as the idiom of ‘race as resistance,’ drawing on Michael Banton and Yasuko Takezawa (Banton 2020; Takezawa 2005). Takezawa defines ‘Race as Resistance’ as discourses of race linked to anti-discrimination, counterhegemonic and anti-racist purposes (Takezawa 2005:7). I consider intersectionality and hip-hop as two paradigmatic examples of the idiom of ‘race as resistance’ through which it enters post-Soviet Russophone contexts. The idiom of ‘race as resistance’ is Anglophone, traveling through English and requiring translation. My approach to the idiom of ‘race as resistance’ also explores racial

translation as operating across multiple semiotic modes, including visual and sonic. Those who mediate this idiom into post-Soviet contexts position it as ‘foreign and modern’ (Pereira 2017, 2017), linked to a different space and more advanced temporality. The idiom of ‘race as resistance’ is linked to the counter-hegemonic black politics but is also entangled with the USA’s global hegemony in complex ways (Bonnett 2006), associated with modernity and progress embodied by the USA and the English language. Brought into post-Soviet contexts to repair and innovate, the idiom of ‘race as resistance’ is invoked as a ‘symbol of modernity’ (Pereira 2017:50–51), which provides more modern models to follow. More broadly speaking, this idiom allows for forging a Russophone intersectional feminism, invested in anti-racism and Russian commercial hip-hop inspired by US black hip-hop aesthetics and business models of US hip-hop entrepreneurs. Still, despite the idiom being marked as ‘foreign and modern’ both translation projects I examine need to negotiate and repair the stigma of translation.

Drawing on translation studies and feminist approaches to translation, I look at translation as a precondition for the traveling theories, discourses, and cultural forms (Butler 2019; Said 1983, 1994). Ideas do not just move on their own; they are translated by local interpreters who actively seek foreign idiom of race. The idiom of ‘race as resistance’ requires translation which necessitates exploring two empirical cases that perform racial translation by adapting intersectional feminism and mainstream hip-hop to post-Soviet Russophone audiences. To move away from the frameworks that cast translation as an uncreative and secondary imitation or elide the fact of translation (Baer 2017a), I conceptualize translation, drawing on translation studies and feminist anthropology, as a generative process (Gal et al. 2015) and as a site of cultural encounter through which categories marked as ‘foreign’ are produced. More specifically, to explore racial translation’s generativeness, I draw on tools from the feminist theory and sociolinguistics and the concepts from translation studies, such as translation strategies, foreignization, literalism and others.

I look at the idiom of ‘race as resistance’ as involving the circulations of Anglophone racial categories or realia (Vlahov and Florin 1980) such as ‘black,’ ‘white,’ ‘non-white,’ ‘people of color,’ ‘woman of color’ which enter non-Anglophone contexts. I track translation strategies and practices of ascription and trace the multiplicity of their effects. I draw on the tools from sociolinguistics that allow me to track how new idioms emerge through translation and translation strategies. I explore the ongoing production of types associated with particular translation choices, which are then positioned chronotopically (Agha 2007; Bakhtin 1981; Koven 2013). Moreover, sociolinguistics and especially the idea of indexicality and Alaina Lemon’s approach to ‘race as discursive practice’ (Lemon 2002) informs my understanding of racial translation as operating across multiple modes and shapes my analysis of hip-hop videos. Finally, I approach racial translation as entangled in overlapping gender and sexuality dynamics which are specific to the contexts informed by Russian imperial and Soviet legacies (Tlostanova 2010), genre-specific politics such as hip-hop homophobia (Hill 2009; McLeod 1999), and

contemporary geopolitical East-West confrontations over sexual modernity (Davydova 2019; Gressgård and Husakouskaya 2020; Suchland 2018; Wiedlack 2018).

Positioning the research, contributions, and novelty

This research is positioned at the intersection of several academic fields: gender and sexuality studies, race and ethnicity studies, and post-Soviet cultural studies. I aim to contribute to the growing scholarship on Russophone grassroots feminist activism. Only recently, scholarly research that challenges the assumption of the aversion to feminism in post-Soviet Russia has started to emerge, mapping heterogeneous Russophone grassroots feminist scenes online and offline (Kirey-Sitnikova 2015, 2016, 2020; Perheentupa 2022; Solovey 2020, 2021, 2022; Zhaivoronok 2018; Senkova 2018). So far, dissertation-length studies have not been dedicated to post-Soviet adaptations of intersectionality. This research will illuminate how intersectional feminism (as well as hip-hop) travels eastwards.⁹ I also seek to contribute to the transnational feminist debates on the circulations of intersectionality that have approached its transatlantic travels to Western Europe through the frames of loss and appropriation. Scholars have criticized the erasure of the race category in its travels (Bilge 2013; Tomlinson 2013). The debate has centered Western European-North Atlantic circuit with its legacies and dynamics of racialization. What happens when intersectionality travels to non-Western and non-Anglophone contexts, such as the post-Soviet Russophone one shaped by different legacies of colonialism and empire? Equally, within these feminist discussions, the question of language, the fact that intersectionality travels through English and therefore *requires* translation, disappears, sustaining English-language monolingualism (Baril 2017) and US-centrism of gender studies as a field. The findings of this thesis indicate that intersectionality does not travel on its own, requiring both translations of its key concepts and localization of the US idiom of race. Throughout this research, I illuminate the central role of intersectionality's translations sustained by the labor of its Russophone feminist translators. By focusing more specifically on racial translation, I also seek to contribute to the growing scholarship on race and ethnicity in the post-Soviet region (Fikes and Lemon 2002; Lemon 1995, 2000, 2002; Sahadeo 2012, 2016, 2019; Shnirelman 2011), including feminist perspectives using intersectional and transnational approaches to race (Davydova 2019; Suchland 2018; Tlostanova 2010; Reznikova 2014), as well as to scholarship informed by transnational perspectives on racialization (Bonnett 2018, 2021; Law 2020; Law and Zakharov 2019; Zakharov 2015). The growing scholarship

⁹ For an account of the feminist project *Feminist Translocalities* that relies on decolonial, intersectional and anti-racist perspectives after 2018 see the recent contribution by Biktimirova and Kravtsova to the *Baltic Worlds* (Biktimirova and Kravtsova 2022). This article also includes a detailed overview of anti-racist, decolonial and intersectional feminist activist and scholarly initiatives in post-Soviet region that developed in the last 3-5 years that is in the period that succeeds my study.

on Russian hip-hop and post-Soviet popular music are two other fields this study seeks to contribute through a detailed engagement with Timati's project of racial translation (Biasioli 2021; Brock and Miazhevich 2021; Engström 2021) imbued in the dynamics of gender and sexuality and nation/empire.

2. Contexts, theoretical debates, and methodological framework

In order to examine how race travels into Russophone post-Soviet contexts through circulating US black cultural forms, hip-hop, and intersectionality, it is essential to address central debates related to their trajectories. In his seminal essay on traveling theories, Edward Said suggests a four-step model accounting for various stages involved in such travel. First, there is a distinct point of origin of ideas/theories, understood as a set of conditions of their emergence. Then, there is a 'distance traversed' – a passage of theory through the pressure of contexts. Third, distinct conditions of acceptance or resistance may confront traveling theories. Finally, the traveling theory is accommodated by new users in new times and places (Said 1983:227). In the following pages, I organize the discussions of relevant scholarship and debates around four groupings, heuristically building on this Saidian model.¹⁰ Firstly, in the section *Departures*, I introduce the debates on intersectionality and hip-hop and the narrations of their global circulations. Afterward, in the section *Arrivals*, I focus on the post-Soviet Russophone contexts of reception. I trace academic and activist debates on the role of incoming Western feminism and the parallel debates within Russian hip-hop. In the third section, *Race*, I draw on transnational perspectives on racialization to situate the growing scholarship on race in Russia within the context of transnational and relational exchanges. Finally, in the fourth section, *Translation*, I return to the Saidian model of traveling theory and other influential ways of conceptualizing translation to spell out their helpfulness and limitations for my project.

Departures Intersectionality

In this brief overview, I aim to locate intersectionality's emergence in the context of US black feminisms, describe its rise to the mainstream in gender studies and beyond,

¹⁰ The heuristic structuring of the sections under the headings 'Departures' and 'Arrivals' does not imply assumptions about the movement from A to B, as if it was unidirectional transfer process.

and sketch how intersectionality's transatlantic travels have been narrated in these scholarly accounts. I will introduce some of the critiques outlined in these debates. Finally, I will focus on the aspects that have been less prominent in the discussions tracking intersectionality's global travels, such as the geopolitics of feminist knowledge circulation, US-centrism, and Anglophoneness of intersectionality.

Intersectionality was coined in the 1980s by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw who examined work discrimination cases of Black women (Crenshaw 1989, 1990). Intersectionality is a framework informed by Black feminist thought (Collins 2002; Hooks 1981), challenging the mainstream understandings of feminism, gender, and racism within the US context. Intersectionality constituted a specific critical response that emerged in the US social movements context 'from the struggles of second-wave feminism as a crucial black feminist intervention challenging the hegemonic rubrics of race, class, and gender within predominantly white feminist frames' (Puar 2012). Originating as a metaphor in the works of Crenshaw and Collins to designate the interaction of power structures, intersectionality was underpinned by structuralist ontology (Carbin and Edenheim 2013:235). Intersectionality, enjoying spectacular transnational success, is described as superseding other global feminist concepts, such as patriarchy (Patil 2013). It came to be framed as the central contribution to women's and gender studies, 'filled with promise and emptied of specific meaning' (Nash 2019:2) and inaugurated the 'intersectional turn in feminist theory' (Carbin and Edenheim 2013). Engaged by feminist scholars, intersectionality moved into wider academia and beyond: 'becoming a buzzword in organizations wishing to "diversify," in NGOs, and in social movements where activists label themselves "intersectional"' (Davis 2020:115). As intersectionality traveled to Western European contexts, it became filled with different connotations and started to be referred to not only as a metaphor or category but also as a theory and methodology (Carbin and Edenheim 2013:235).

Transatlantic circulations of intersectionality have provoked concerns from North America-based scholars who argued that intersectionality's transnational travel displaced the questions of race central to its articulation (Bilge 2013; Tomlinson 2013). As Davis summarized, 'it was ultimately the issue of race and its denial that sparked heated and even acrimonious discussions on the other side of the Atlantic, culminating in the call to "rescue" intersectionality from its European interlocutors' (Davis 2020:116–17). A central part of this critique is that intersectionality became stripped of its original meanings, whitewashed, and depoliticized through its travel to Europe. The centrality of race and Black feminist scholarship got erased (Davis 2020; Lewis 2013; Salem 2018). In these discussions, race becomes a cornerstone for the scholars who frame intersectionality's travel to Europe pessimistically as a loss and accuse their European feminist counterparts of 'whitewashing' intersectionality, reproducing 'the chronic avoidance of race in European feminist debates on intersectionality' (Bilge 2013:412–15). Bilge argues that 'minimizing the importance of race in intersectional thought—for instance by declaring race an irrelevant category for Europe [...] reflects a dominant

tendency among European scholars: disallowing race as an analytic category, instead of framing problems through categories such as ethnicity, culture, and religion.’ (Bilge 2013:414). It seems fair to summarize that within this debate, intersectionality circulations have been approached through frameworks of loss, appropriation, and erasure of its roots in black feminism and the importance of race as a category and analytical concept.

Recent responses to the debates on intersectionality’s travels from US academia approached this debate by critiquing the notions of originalism and proprietary attachments to intersectionality framing the discussion (Nash 2016, 2019). Nash defines intersectional originalism as a ‘preoccupation with returning to intersectionality’s “inaugural” texts – namely Crenshaw’s two articles – and assessing later feminist work on intersectionality by its imagined fidelity to those texts’ (Nash 2016:4). Intersectional originalism is invested in fidelity to the original texts, ‘in the notion that these articles have a singular meaning that can be ascertained through sustained practices of close reading, and contends that later work “distorts” or “inverts” that true meaning through unfaithful or careless readings’ (Nash 2016:4). Proprietary attachments to intersectionality for Nash express black feminist defensiveness as an affect, which is ‘largely articulated by rendering intersectionality black feminist property, as terrain that has been gentrified, colonized, and appropriated, and as territory that must be guarded and protected through the requisite black feminist vigilance, care, and “stewardship”’ (Nash 2019:3). Nash argues that these attachments to intersectionality hinder black feminism’s ‘visionary world-making capacities’ and conscript it ‘into a largely protective posture, leaving black feminists mired in policing intersectionality’s usages, demanding that intersectionality remain located within black feminism, and reasserting intersectionality’s “true” origins in black feminist texts’ (Nash 2019:3).

In her intervention to the debate, Davis proposes that a mode of theorizing which tries to save intersectionality from its travels and calls for a return to the ‘origins’ is seriously flawed since it runs contrary to the project of critical inquiry. She identifies three main strands informing these highly charged discussions: ‘the failure to sufficiently acknowledge the original text’ written by Crenshaw, ‘whether women of colour should be the primary subjects of any intersectional analysis, both in terms of focus and as knowledge producers’ and ‘whether intersectionality should be viewed as a Black feminist theory’ (Davis 2020:118–20). Davis concludes:

These disagreements within intersectionality studies suggest that a focus on the experiences of Black women does not automatically ensure that an intersectional analysis will be critical. Nor does a case for analysing which differences make a difference in terms of power, how they make a difference, and which actions toward social change are possible in a specific context mean that the salience of race in general has been denied. Yet the concern about the displacement of Black women as the undisputed subjects of intersectionality and race as it’s the central axis mask a more general concern – namely, that intersectionality as a theory has been wrested from the hands of those authorized to speak in its name. (Davis 2020:119).

What is offered by Davis as an alternative frame to grasp intersectionality's circulations is a process of uprooting, displacement, and transformation in travel and translation of feminist ideas and theories, or 'faithless appropriation as a feminist strategy' inspired by the anthropologist Anna Tsing (Tsing 1997). Davis' critique suggests reflecting upon the processes of travel and translation of intersectionality and looking into how theories get taken up in particular contexts. I agree that focusing on the productive potential of translation is better than mourning what is lost. However, there is also a danger in celebrating these transformations as examples of inherent feminist subversiveness. Neither travel nor translation constitutes subversiveness per se. Rather than romanticizing feminist subversiveness as such, it seems more apt to examine to what extent situated translations of intersectionality might challenge or entrench some of the hierarchies in feminist knowledge production and global geopolitics of knowledge. Additionally, Davis does not engage with the criticism of Bilge and Tomlinson regarding the elision of race as an analytical category in the Western European contexts of reception.

The geopolitical and temporal economy of intersectionality's circulations features less prominently within the debate. Intersectionality as a theory/frame/concept challenged dominant paradigms within the US context. Still, it became a 'global export' moving fast across contexts due to the spread of English as the academic lingua franca and US hegemony. Indeed, the paradox of intersectionality's simultaneous particularity (coming from black feminism) and universalism (becoming institutionalized within US gender studies and spreading globally) has been stressed by US-based gender studies scholars (Nash 2014, 2016, 2019; Wiegman 2012:241). Puar highlights that 'Euro-American bias of women's studies and history of feminism is ironically reiterated via intersectionality' and 'the United States is reproduced as the dominant site of feminist inquiry through the use of intersectionality as a heuristic to teach difference' (Puar 2012:55). The lack of attention to the US-Americanness of intersectionality renders the category nation 'to be the least theorized and acknowledged of intersectional categories, transmitted through a form of globalizing transparency' (Puar 2012:55). Moreover, Patil, criticizing the US and global North centrality of analyses using intersectionality, stresses the near absence of geopolitical positioning in most intersectionality research (Patil 2013:853). Puar has stressed that intersectionality 'also functions as a method for European women's studies to "catch up institutionally" with U.S. women's studies' (Puar 2012:55), implying a distinct temporal framing of intersectionality as modern and advanced analytic. Moreover, the language of traveling intersectionality downplays the role of context in which such travel occurs, muting down 'institutionalisation as a force that governs, supports, constraints, and enables intersectionality's "travels" and 'the structures that facilitate - or fail to facilitate - these journeys' (Nash 2016:10). As she further elaborates, 'intersectionality's institutionalisation has been facilitated from its emergence from an American context, and that its "travels" have been enabled by American universities' hegemonic location in academia more generally.' (Nash 2016:10).

These considerations suggest the need to reflect on how US global hegemony propels the travels of theories and concepts globally, including counter-hegemonic analytics like intersectionality. Moreover, the English language's role in the politics of intersectionality's circulation remains at the margins of these feminist debates. Omitting the discussions of the role of the politics of the English language reproduces an idea, evoked by the metaphor of travel itself, that intersectionality crosses borders on its own and that the entire world is fluent in English, i.e., translation of feminist texts or theories is a non-issue. In one of the rare interventions exploring the role of the English language, Baril suggested that linguistic power relations have been hardly present within the Anglophone feminist intersectional analyses (Baril 2017:125). This omission is ironic since Crenshaw included language proficiency issues in one of her seminal articles on intersectionality (Baril 2017). The phenomenon of the 'institutio-anglicization of intersectionality' enabled intersectionality to get rooted in the academy and 'normalized it through a distinctly Anglophone understanding' (Baril 2017:125). He introduces the term Anglonormativity as a 'system of structures, institutions, and beliefs that marks English as the norm,' a standard of judgment for the non-Anglophone people, suggesting that the institutionalization of intersectionality in gender and feminist studies should be theorized together with its Anglicization, and it is crucial to address this missing dimension related to the language and the ubiquity of English (Baril 2017:128). Anglophone feminists rarely recognize Anglonormativity, stemming 'from the linguistic majority's systemic monolingualist perspective, norms, structures, and institutions' (Baril 2017:134). Especially useful in Baril's formulations is the detailed experience of transitioning in the Canadian context, where access to the relevant information in French was much more limited. Baril summarizes this as 'in this Anglonormative context, it is fair to say that my transition consisted not only of masculinizing my body but also, in a way, of Anglicizing my identity and language' (Baril 2017:133). One may extend this line of thinking to link the English language proficiency required to access intersectional feminist texts in English to class positionality, especially in non-Western non-Anglophone contexts where there is a strong link between the two.

As this brief review suggests, intersectionality's travels have been cast through frameworks of loss, appropriation, and erasure of race, while the question of geopolitics, US-centrism, and access to English seems less prominent. What other frameworks could possibly help account for intersectionality's travels without losing sight of the importance of race yet simultaneously paying attention to mutual imbrications of its geopolitical positionality and Anglophone-ness? I will return to these questions when developing my approach for analyzing intersectionality's arrivals into post-Soviet feminist scenes; for now, I want to sketch an account of hip-hop's beginnings and global circulations.

Hip-hop

In what follows, I will briefly introduce the context of hip-hop's emergence as the cultural expression of marginalized urban black US youth. I will then provide a selective overview of several points of contention from the extensive literature on hip-hop narrowed down for the purposes of my thesis. Firstly, I will focus on the tensions in scholarship between conceptualizing hip-hop as an African American cultural form and a black diasporic one. Secondly, I will outline the importance of authenticity for the genre, including the intersections between racial authenticity and politics of gender/sexuality and discursive links between racial authenticity and resistance. Finally, I will outline further challenges to authenticity discourses posed by hip-hop's rise to the mainstream, the genre's commercialization, global spread, and its localization worldwide.

Hip-hop, an expressive street art form composed of elements such as rap, breakdance, graffiti, and DJing, emerged in the post-civil rights context of the 1970s USA in the post-industrial New York City as part of the culture of marginalized Black, Latino, and Puerto-Rican youth (Rose 1994). In a canonical work on hip-hop, *Prophets of the Hood*, Imany Perry famously defines the genre as African American cultural form while simultaneously acknowledging its hybridity:

Hip hop music is black American music. Even with its hybridity: the consistent contributions from nonblack artists, and the borrowings from cultural forms of other communities, it is nevertheless black American music. It is constituted as such because of four central characteristics: (1) its primary language is African American Vernacular English (aave); (2) it has a political location in society distinctly ascribed to black people, music, and cultural forms; (3) it is derived from black American oral culture; and (4) it is derived from black American musical traditions. (Perry 2004:10)

In his pathbreaking work on the diasporic origins of Black cultures and the flow of ideas and cultural forms across the Black Atlantic, Paul Gilroy has questioned such framing, asking: 'What special analytical problems arise if a style, genre, or particular performance of music is identified as being expressive of the absolute essence of the group that produced it?' (Gilroy 1993:75). In turn, Perry, while praising Gilroy for the critique of originalism and racial authenticity, reads his framework as 'romantic Afro-Atlanticism,' characterizing it as a 'postcolonial critical fantasy of a united ideology in the Afro-Atlantic world manifest through fluid musical forms' (Perry 2004:19). Even if Gilroy's approach has explanatory power to grasp the planetary appeal of hip-hop to postcolonial global audiences, in Perry's view, it fails to address the specificities of 'black American double consciousness, whereby one is both American and black' as well as territorialism which limits the interactions between 'black Americans and other black Atlantic people' (Perry 2004:19–20). Perry's perspective, therefore, locates a tension between the centrality of local specificity, political location, and regional dynamics for

the genre of US hip-hop and the frameworks trying to theorize its transcultural genesis and global spread.

The discourse of authenticity is essential for the hip-hop genre in several aspects. As Kembrew McLeod put it more than twenty years ago: ‘claims of authenticity had become a significant part of the vernacular of hip-hop artists and fans, ‘spoken in terms of being “true,” “real,” or “keepin’ it real.”’ (McLeod 1999:136–37). In his influential mapping of US hip-hop artists’, fans’, and critics’ invocations of authenticity, McLeod has offered six key semantic dimensions relevant to this discourse: socio-psychological (staying true to oneself vs. following mass trends), racial (black vs. white), political-economic (underground vs. commercial), gender-sexual (hard vs. soft), social-locational (the streets vs. the suburbs), cultural (the old school vs. the mainstream) (McLeod 1999:139). Cutler adds a seventh semantic dimension to this typology, talent/skill, where inauthenticity is associated with biting and stealing from others and the ‘inability to battle and freestyle’ (Cutler 2010:301–2). Being ‘real’ within hip-hop discourse often means acting like a ‘true’ masculine man: ‘To claim one is a real man, one is defining himself not just in terms of gender, but also sexuality, that is, not being a “pussy” or a “faggot.”’ (McLeod 1999:142). McLeod’s typology links the discourse of US hip-hop authenticity to US Black masculinities. Jeffries comments on this connection: ‘despite hip-hop’s historical ethnoracial hybridity, the innumerable contributions of female practitioners and fans, and the discursive contestation between the sexes embedded in hip-hop texts, most commercially successful American hip-hop has had a black male face, body, and voice.’ (Jeffries 2011:9). The relationship between hip-hop and black US youth has been studied with a focus on how hip-hop culture is used to articulate and authenticate gendered Black identity (Clay 2003). Subsequently, scholarship has explored constructions of US Black masculinities in underground vs. mainstream hip-hop (Belle 2014), the intersections of gender, race, and sexuality in hip-hop from feminist standpoints (Durham, Cooper, and Morris 2013; Pough 2015) as well reconceptualizations and revisions of hip-hop authenticity in post-gangsta era (Forman 2021). At the same time, scholars have outlined the polarizing and sensationalist character of debates on hip-hop in the US context. They pointed out how sexism, homophobia, and violence in hip-hop are seen through the lens of moral panics about black youth and pathologizing constructions of black masculinities rather than understood as representing a broader problem characterizing US society as a whole (Rose 2008).

In a critical overview of the debates on racial authenticity in hip-hop scholarship, Anthony Kwame Harrison suggests that the field, to an extent, remains haunted by originalist arguments, tracing the genre’s beginning and claiming either hip-hop’s essential blackness and only occasionally acknowledging its hybrid origins through contributions of African American, Caribbean peoples, and Puerto Ricans (Harrison 2008:1786). According to him: ‘the field continues to be framed through notions of essential blackness, and critical interrogations of white hip-hop legitimacy’ (Harrison

2008). The central assumption underpinning the discourse of racial authenticity in US hip-hop is 'that black identity is, by default, legitimate, while white identity is either suspect or invalid' (Harrison 2008:1783). Scholarly examinations of the authenticity strategies of such US artists as Eminem and Vanilla Ice reflect this trend (Armstrong 2004). For example, Armstrong summarizes hip-hop authenticity's ethos as follows: 'rap is black cultural expression, not co-opted whiteness' where 'white rappers immediately generate questions of cultural property and appropriation' and 'rap is male dominated, misogynist, and homophobic, not the music of hoes, punks, faggots, and bitches of both genders' (Armstrong 2004:338). Mickey Hess similarly argues that 'hip-hop's imperatives of authenticity are tied to its representations of African-American identity, and white rap artists negotiate their place within hip-hop culture by responding to this African-American model of the authentic' (Hess 2005:372). Framing hip-hop as 'black American music,' Hess interrogates authenticating strategies of rappers Eminem and Vanilla Ice, interpreted by the scholar through the notions of 'white privilege' and 'white appropriation.' Critical of accounts epitomizing a 'framework of black legitimacy' and 'white illegitimacy,' Harrison concludes that such an approach ignores all the in-between people attached to hip-hop and reduces 'complex discussions of nuanced cultural processes to oversimplified oppositional stances' (Harrison 2008:1784). At the same time, within the US context, the issue of white-American appropriations of US black cultural forms has a long pedigree, constituting appropriation as a critical framework in African American cultural criticism (Schur 2011). Condry makes a similar point that the US critiques are tied to a 'long history of appropriation of black music by others without acknowledgment or recompense' (Condry 2007:648). As I will show later, the importance of racial authenticity for the genre will also have broader implications for the theorizations of hip-hop's planetary spread.

Another crucial aspect of the genre and discourses of authenticity that informs it is its association with protest. In scholarly and public discourses, both within the US context and globally, hip-hop is widely understood as a music of resistance (Rose 1994). The discourse of racial authenticity that positions hip-hop as African American cultural form is linked to its framing as an oppositional musical genre, protest music, critical of police violence and white supremacy in the USA, but also uniting marginalized global youth in a counter-hegemonic creative project of resisting power structures (Morgan and Bennett 2011). However, this discursive connection between hip-hop and resistance is not without its deadlocks and has been challenged by hip-hop's rise to the mainstream. The political ethos of underground or 'conscious' hip-hop and its commitment to the critique of racial oppression within the US stands in contradiction with the increasing commercialization of the genre from the 1990s to 2000s (see an overview of this commercialization in Polfuß 2022). To what extent does the discursive framing of hip-hop in terms of margins obscure grasping hip-hop's rise to the mainstream in the USA and globally? (Stapleton 1998). For some hip-hop scholars like Tricia Rose, that involves diagnosing this commercialization as follows: 'hip-hop is not

dead, but gravely ill. The beauty and life force of hip-hop have been squeezed out, wrung nearly dry by the compounding factors of commercialism, distorted racial and sexual fantasy, oppression, and alienation. It has been a sad thing to witness.’ (Rose 2008:ix). Similarly, Gilroy has calibrated his theorizations of the development of hip-hop in light of the genre’s increasing commercialization and conservative sexual politics and warned scholars against romanticizing it:

In what sense might hip-hop be described as marginal or revolutionary today? Anyone asserting continuing marginality of hip-hop should be pressed to say where he or she imagines the center might now be. I prefer to argue that hip-hop’s marginality is now as official and routinized as its over-blown defiance, even if music and its matching lifestyle are still being presented and - marketed - as outlaw forms. The music’s persistent association with transgression is racialological mystery that aches to be solved. Clues to its longevity may be furnished by delving into uncomfortable issues like hip-hop’s corporate developmental association with the commercially sponsored subcultures that have been shaped around television, advertising and cartoons, and computer games or by interrogating the revolutionary conservatism that constitutes its routine political focus but that is over-simplified, mystified, or, more usually, just ignored by its academic celebrants (Gilroy 2000:180)

With the global popularity of US hip-hop and the adaptations of the genre in different corners of the world, scholarship started finding a way to theorize this spread. As suggested by Pennycook, ‘hip-hop forces us to confront some of the conflictual discourses of authenticity and locality, from those that insist that African American hip-hop is the only real variety and that all other forms are inauthentic deviations, to those that insist that to be authentic one needs to stick to one’s “own” cultural and linguistic traditions.’ (Pennycook 2007:101). The emphasis on authenticity within the genre of hip-hop presents a specific problem for its global spread resulting in ‘the tension between a cultural dictate to keep it real and the processes that make this dependent on local contexts, languages, cultures, and understandings of the real’ (Pennycook 2007:101). Subsequent scholarship on hip-hop’s global travels developed a vast body of research illustrating the intricacies of this process. In one of the first edited volumes on hip-hop outside of the USA exploring hip-hop scenes throughout the world, Tony Mitchell argues that ‘hip-hop and rap cannot be viewed simply as an expression of African American culture: it has become a vehicle for global youth affiliations and a tool for reworking a local identity all over the world’ (Mitchell 2001:1–2). Hip-hop practitioners worldwide use US hip-hop as a model, appropriate it, and fuse it with elements connecting it to their cultural contexts but may also reject some of the aspects of US hip-hop. Hip-hop scholarship has stressed cultural hybridization and localization of hip-hop in diverse national contexts:

Though influenced by American hip-hop forms, these artists typically developed their own styles, drawing from local and national cultural art forms and addressing the social and political issues that affected their communities and nations. These scenes generated a widespread interest in hip-hop culture and the growth of commercial hip-hop music in national contexts; thus, hip-hop music was no longer accessible only as an American import. (Morgan and Bennett 2011:184)

One of the ways of localization for hip-hop has been by linking it to ethnic/racial marginality in various contexts around the globe. In a study on hip-hop in Japan, Ian Condry formulated this as a question: 'what happens to the cultural politics of race inherent in American hip-hop' when it goes global? (Condry 2007:637). In that regard, Gilroy's work has been central in exploring the discursive connection between cultural flows of hip-hop, resistance, marginalities, and post-colonial affinities. That work inaugurated the turn by subsequent scholars to produce studies that 'legitimize hip-hop's role as a form of post-colonial resistance among people of various racial backgrounds' (Harrison 2008:1790). Along the same lines, Osumare has theorized global hip-hop through the notion of 'connective marginalities,' that is, the genre allows connecting disenfranchised youth across the globe who find resonances between experiences of black marginalization and local struggles (Osumare 2001:172). For example, Bennett studied how ethnic minorities from Turkey and Morocco appropriate US hip-hop to criticize racism and national belonging in Germany, thereby localizing hip-hop (Bennett 1999). As Pennycook and Mitchell point out: 'for many Hip Hop artists around the world, there is an identification not only with aspects of the music, style, and language of U.S. Hip Hop, but also with the racial politics that surround it,' a process where linking occurs by connecting to 'local relations of race: For Wire MC, this is to be confronted not by the history of slavery that continues to define parts of African American identity, but by the colonial history of Australia' (Pennycook and Mitchell 2008:37). The intersections between hip-hop masculinities and race have been explored in the context of Brazil (Pardue 2004; Sansone 2003), South Africa (Morgan 2016), India (Dattatreya 2020), UK (Drissel 2011) and multiple other locations from Cuba to Japan (Kelley 2006; Terkourafi 2010).

If the first decade of hip-hop scholarship was preoccupied with the connection between hip-hop and US blackness, as well as questioning the place of rappers such as Eminem within it, the second decade has inaugurated the 'ethnographic' shift towards space and locality, identity, and culture away from racial authenticity (Harrison 2008:1791). There are many other ways of localizing or reterritorializing hip-hop, for example, through visual signifiers, sampling local sounds, expressing local concerns, and drawing on local languages, vernaculars, and dialects, as a study of rap's localization across Europe demonstrates (Androutsopoulos and Scholz 2003). Subsequent studies have further explored how hip-hop authenticity is localized worldwide, focusing on language, including the spread of English through hip-hop and translingual experimentation (Alim, Ibrahim, and Pennycook 2008; Terkourafi 2010). Pennycook proposed a 'localization of horizons of significance' framework to suggest how hip-hop may be opened to different local definitions of realness and relevance, such as linguistic and cultural authenticity (Pennycook 2006, 2007). Pennycook's framework importantly problematizes the discourses of authenticity and originalism within hip-hop that cast non-US varieties as uncreative and inauthentic imitations. This contribution has

launched a focus on authenticity as an achievement, attention to multiple conflicting authenticities within hip-hop, and the deconstruction of some of the defining binaries in scholarship. In this vein, Elafros studied the discursive processes of local and translocal authentication within Greek hip-hop for aesthetic legitimation (Elafros 2013). Whereas the first process seeks to authenticate hip-hop by incorporating local history and cultural elements, the second rejects localization and conceives of hip-hop as a foreign cultural form and gains legitimacy through appeal to global hip-hop. In her study of authenticity in Finnish hip-hop, Westinen offers an approach that conceptualizes it as scalar and translocal as well as polycentric (Westinen 2014).

That hip-hop may be localized through languages and local horizons of significance, redefining what is 'real' is a valuable contribution that inspired further research. A subset of scholarship has examined the intersections between the localizations of hip-hop, racialization, and language. Ibrahim has examined how Francophone Senegalese African youth in Canada 'becomes black' through taking up US hip-hop culture: 'the African youths were interpellated by Black popular cultural forms, rap, and hip-hop, as sites of identification' (Ibrahim 1999:365). Equally, Roth-Gordon (Roth-Gordon 2008, 2013, 2016) has interrogated similar processes in her studies of how Brazilian youth from Rio de Janeiro use linguistic resources to alter their positions in the local racialized hierarchy of citizens, drawing attention to the mutual co-constitution of racial readings of the body and language, the way others sound. However, racial authenticity continues to haunt hip-hop studies and is far from resolved (Harrison 2008:1793). To the hip-hop scholar Halifu Osumare, blackness 'remains a binding trope in both the Hip-Hop Nation and the Hip-Hop Globe,' while 'no investigation of hip-hop inside or outside the United States can be complete without the discussion of the issue of race, its place in America, and the resulting appropriation and exportation of "blackness."' (Osumare 2007:8-10). Some scholars argue that US hip-hop scholarship and commentary tend to be turned inwards, preoccupied with 'claims of realness,' while the battles over 'who is black enough' are fought even among Black rappers themselves (Condry 2007:642). When US scholars analyze overseas hip-hop, the analysis may remain locked into framing hip-hop as African American music and presenting foreign hip-hop artists as inauthentic imitators (Condry 2007:644). Similarly, Darling-Wolf has recently argued that a 'focus on U.S.-style race relations may not do justice to the global politics of race permeating the genre in a transnational context.' (Darling-Wolf 2015:78). Using a translocal approach to hip-hop across the three sites, US, Japan, and France, she suggests that 'defining hip-hop as solely or, at least, *most significantly*, a black American¹ (emphasis on both terms) genre (or even as a black American/Latina/o/Caribbean genre) becomes problematic, however, when applied to the study of hip-hop as a *global* phenomenon' (Darling-Wolf 2015:83). Judging foreign hip-hop in terms of how foreign artists contribute to black struggles in the USA is a somewhat limited perspective, Condry poses instead a provoking question as to why similar charges are not raised when US-Americans eat sushi or read manga or US rappers such as Wu-Tang Clan use *kung-fu*

aesthetics and samples in their music and iconography (Condry 2007:645-46). Importantly, Condry points out a double bind of foreign hip-hop artists; they are both expected to respect the Black roots of hip-hop while at the same time producing authentic and original pieces (Condry 2007:646). In his attempt to resolve the charge of imitation, Condry stresses the possibility of looking at the entire genre as constructed through imitation and appropriation of samples and looking at skill as a marker of the authenticity of hip-hop performers (Condry 2007:648). Condry's framework for analyzing Japanese hip-hop is driven by the desire to overcome the limitations of both hip-hop studies, tethering hip-hop to US blackness, and Japanese studies, looking at Japanese hip-hop as emerging from the local culture. His approach would investigate how Japanese rap participates in a 'transnational cultural politics of race' (Condry 2007:639).

As I showed above, there is a tension between hip-hop discourses of authenticity, including discourses of resistance, and the genre's commercialization. In the recent critical contribution to the above debates that link these discussions to hip-hop's localization in non-Western contexts, Moreno Almeida, in her work on Moroccan hip-hop, theorized how hip-hop scholarship often focuses on the fetishization of hip-hop as a music of resistance, framing the genre through a singular metaphor as giving the voice to the excluded. Describing this as a 'trap of conscious rap,' Moreno Almeida explains its genealogy: 'in the tendency to look for acts of resistance, commentators have shown a predilection to define "global" rap as the heir of US "political" or "conscious" rap since its prominence between 1987 and 1994' creating a binary expectation of global rap to focus on conscious issues opposed to commercial music (Moreno Almeida 2017:9). Miszczyński and Helbig express similar concerns when they identify a tendency within global hip-hop scholarship to romanticize hip-hop as social critique and 'voice of the marginalized': 'to simply state that people turn to hip hop to express discontent, anger, and social critique is to limit not only the genre's broader meanings but also the multivalent ways that people have engaged with hip hop on a global scale.' (Miszczyński and Helbig 2017:6). It follows that hip-hop instead may also be analyzed beyond dominant resistance narratives, placed within the context of culture industries, commodities, and the general political economy of culture (Moreno Almeida 2017:6). Hip-hop, in other words, is as much about expressing dissent as it is 'evidence of the triumph' of world capitalism (Moreno Almeida 2017:6).

Moreover, the enormous power US hip-hop and US cultural industries exert globally is sometimes left obscured through narrating US hip-hop exclusively as music of resistance. Within Eastern European contexts, US hip-hop figures as a 'genre of status' whose fans 'mark themselves as cosmopolitan, as being aware and able to engage with cultural products from the West that cost money to produce and consume' (Miszczyński and Helbig 2017:6). These fans 'separate themselves from those who do not understand or don't want to engage with hip hop, claiming a level of cultural capital in a society that in fact may dismiss them because they differ in physical appearance from the majority'

(Miszczyński and Helbig 2017:6). The US hip-hop industry sets the trends to follow, where US Black rappers are icons and aspirational models for the rest of the world (Darling-Wolf 2015:88). For Osumare, 'black American rappers dominate the genre in the global music industry. African Americans as a signifier of postmodern cool confer "authenticity" on the use of hip-hop in its global proliferation' (Osumare 2001:77). Morgan and Bennett note:

The global influence of African American culture has been inextricably linked with the rise of the American Empire [...] During the twentieth century, while Jim Crow segregation restricted African Americans' movement in their own country, African American music, including blues, jazz, and, later, rock and roll and soul, traveled the world, shaping world music in ways that have yet to be fully acknowledged' (Morgan and Bennett 2011:182).

Similarly, Perry comments critically both on the global power of hip-hop and how cultural exchange often works only in one direction:

Black American music, as a commercial American product, is exported globally. Its signifying creates a subaltern voice in the midst of the imperialist exportation of culture. But the imperialist relationship of a flow of import and export does not work neatly with the black American experience. Black Americans as a community do not consume imported music from other cultures in large numbers, although other countries import enormous amounts of black American music (Perry 2004:19).

Moreover, positioning hip-hop from non-Western countries as music of resistance may also reflect savvy marketing strategies of culture industries where 'being marketed as a dissident artist' generates profit 'from the appeal of listening in many European and North American cities "to young non-Westerners fighting against the evil powers of undemocratic barbaric regimes"' (Moreno Almeida 2017:13). Such positioning of hip-hop as music of resistance also omits the global efforts to instrumentalize hip-hop: not only non-Western but also Euro-American governments have increasingly deployed the genre in their cultural diplomacy efforts. As Hisham Aidi puts it, 'hip-hop has traveled to become, at once, a means of protest and a tool of public diplomacy, counter-terrorism, democracy promotion, and economic development' where, in the context of post 9-11 and the war on terror European governments used hip-hop to quell the threat of Muslim radicalism, and US government deploys it in the spirit of earlier jazz diplomacy during Cold War 'as part of its outreach to the Muslim world' (Aidi 2011:26).

In this brief overview, I have outlined how intersectionality and hip-hop rose from the margins to the mainstream and how their global spread has been described in the literature. As the overview shows, multiple tensions saturate accounts of the origins and stories of spread, grappling with the initial marginality and subsequent mainstreaming/commercialization, politics of race, gender, and sexuality, and planetary localization. Another fundamental tension is between counterhegemonic US black politics informing intersectionality and hip-hop and their global circulations, facilitated by the power of US cultural industries. I have also traced how intersectionality's and hip-hop's global circulations have sometimes invited commentary casting the circulations

through frameworks of appropriation, loss, and imitation. I introduced some alternative ways of framing travels of hip-hop through paradigms of localization and interrogations of the translocal and multiple authentication processes. The challenge remains in accounting for hip-hop and intersectionality's circulations beyond the frameworks of loss and imitation while retaining a dual focus on the vital role of the English language and transnational perspectives on racialization. Having outlined how intersectionality's and hip-hop's global travels are narrated in scholarly accounts, I now want to focus on the Russophone contexts of reception. I first examine the scholarly reflections about 'Western' feminism and gender studies' arrival to the post-Soviet Russophone spaces. Afterward, I address the parallel stories about Russian hip-hop trajectories. Translation figures centrally in these accounts, yet also provokes concerns and anxieties.

Arrivals

Translation anxiety in Russophone academic receptions of 'Western' feminisms

In this section, to provide the broader context for my later discussions on 2010s grassroots Russophone adaptations of intersectionality, I track some of the stories of Western feminism and gender studies arrivals to post-Soviet Russophone spaces in the wake of the Soviet collapse in the 1990s and 2000s. I do not aim to provide a detailed overview of this process but instead focus on several key points of contention central to my project, such as the centrality of translation.¹¹ I will also emphasize the importance of Western financial support in sustaining the infrastructures for these arrivals and the central role of Russophone gender studies scholars involved in mediating Western feminist knowledge and producing a new Russophone feminist language through translations. The scholars who engaged in the practice of feminist translation participated in the debates on cultural transfer and Western feminism's translatability to post-Soviet contexts. Translation emerges as both a post-Soviet feminist academic practice, a source of anxiety and irritation, and a language of meta-criticism providing reflections on the unequal exchange in the process of gender studies arrivals and articulating the specificities of the post-socialist situation.

During perestroika times, the feminist academic communities in Russia and other post-Soviet countries relied heavily on the translation of Western feminist concepts, theories, and texts, underpinned by the financial flows from the West (Zhaivoronok 2018:40). The coming of gender studies (and its accompanying conceptual apparatus) to the region has filled the gap left by the discredited Soviet Marxism. This new discipline in post-Soviet contexts represented a form of cultural capital allowing for the creation

¹¹ See more comprehensive overviews in, for example (Choi and Karen 2014b, 2014a; Davydova 2019; Solovey 2022; Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2014; Zimmermann 2008).

of distinctions between old Soviet academic elites and new public intellectuals, modeling themselves on Western civil society as an aspirational ideal, facilitated by the financial support of Western donors (Zimmermann 2008:142; Gapova 2006, 2009). The fact that gender studies did arrive in many post-Soviet countries through the 'shadow network' of Western foundations and NGOs, who were financing research centers, conferences, publications, and translations (Zimmermann 2008), understandably raised accusations of political partisanship (Kulawik 2019:11). Zimmerman suggests that in the 1990s, gender and gender studies 'received the role of a "symbolic marker" of compliant westernization' and 'liberal-democratic agenda' for the post-socialist region (Zimmermann 2008:141). Scholars involved in mediating gender studies and Western feminist theory were seen as selling out, producing impenetrable texts addressed first and foremost to Western sponsors and not the local readers (Savkina 2007). The new language of feminist theory carved out through the translation of Western feminist texts emerged as a marker of distinction in post-Soviet Russophone academia and the public sphere, introducing boundaries between initiated and non-initiated (Zvereva 2001). Seen as impenetrable and highly coded, the language of these translations predetermined the vexed reception of feminist criticism within Russophone public discourse in the 2000s (Savkina 2007). Peppered with the excessive use of non-translated, transliterated, and calqued terms from English and French, the language was hard to read and perceived as a sign of 'corporate insularity' and 'arrogance towards outsiders' by its critics (Savkina 2007). Perhaps it is this ubiquity and visibility of the post-Soviet academic practice of feminist translation that may account for why the idiom of translation provided the resources for the critical meta-commentary on the unfolding processes.

To name one of the most persistent features of post-Soviet feminist reflexivity in the region, I borrow a term introduced by the feminist researcher Daniil Zhaivoronok, *translation anxiety*, referring both to the problematization of feminist translation and broader questions of cultural translation (Zhaivoronok 2018:42). Post-Soviet feminist translation anxiety concerned with questions of the usability and cultural transfer of translated Western feminist concepts into Russophone gender studies in the 2000s for the analysis of local post-Soviet contexts and realities and their limits (see an overview in Liljeström 2016). One reflection on this process is that of Zdravomyslova and Temkina, who characterize the Russian theoretical feminist discourse of the early 2000s as marked by 'discursive omnivorousness' busy with 'digesting, appropriating, taking in, imbibing, translating, assimilating social theories' (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2000:18). This discursive openness concerns cultural translation at large, appropriating and revising texts written from various feminist locations, where Western feminist texts are entering the Russophone feminist academic scene as 'blocs', representing different feminist chronotopes, multiplying and contradicting each other, while starting 'rooting in' and pushing for new methodologies (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2000:19).

Another influential study dedicated to the cultural transmission of Western feminist concepts is that by Galina Zvereva, who offers a threefold typology to approach the

patterns of reception of foreign feminist knowledge into Russophone public discourse:¹² foreign as alien, foreign as one's own/ours/familiar and foreign as other/different (Liljeström 2016:151–52; Zvereva 2001). *Foreign as alien*, the first position, although not described in detail, attributes the rejection of the foreign feminist frames to a 'traditionalist ideological set-up' based on the concept of Russia's 'special spirituality vis-à-vis soulless Western culture' (Zvereva 2001). Based on a rigid binary opposition between foreign and one's own, acknowledged by the author, *foreign as alien* seems to function as a position attributed to general detractors of feminism and the broader Russian public, assumed to be marked by deep conservatism and hostility to gender. Several other scholars provide an analysis of the reception of Western feminism along the lines of Zvereva's *foreign as alien*. Irina Savkina, for example, in tracing how feminism gets perceived as foreign within Russia, lists the prevalent arguments of its detractors: it is imported, it is not Orthodox, it is neo-globalist, it ignores national traditions, it is about materiality, not spirituality, it is too abstract, torn away from reality (Savkina 2007). Olga Voronina's piece on the reception of gender studies in post-Soviet academia is peppered with cooking and organicist metaphors, comparing Western gender ideas to flowers managing to grow on hostile Russian soil. She wonders why certain assimilated words coming from English to Russian, like *тендер* (tender), are readily accepted, but *гендер* (gender) provokes unease, suggesting that this resistance might indicate resistance to new values and worldviews coming with the new vocabularies (Voronina 2007:176). Voronina, too, seems to read resistance to gender studies and concepts as a sign of backward parochialism and national conservatism.

Foreign as one's own is concerned with appropriating Western feminist frames, creating peculiar hybrids. Zvereva seems to be critical of such hybridization for the superficiality, simplification and flattening of the Western feminist theory they are said to produce, such as, for example, adopting new concepts while filling them up with new meanings (Zvereva 2001). Equally, in her assessment of post-Soviet gender studies, Almira Ousmanova highlights how buzzwords of Western academia, such as identity, gender, and diaspora, among others, circulate as empty signifiers and signs of prestige, often filled with multiple meanings as they are used (Ousmanova 2003:46). In a similar vein, Tatiana Barchunova, in her article on translations of feminist ideas from English to Russian, calls this practice dominant in the 1990s and 2000s 'naïve translations' of feminist classics such as Judith Butler. 'Naïve translations' are described as lacking professional skills, low in quality, and saturated by the shackles of the Marxist-Leninist economy of discourse, which precludes 'naïve translators' from grasping social constructionism informing Western feminist ideas (Barchunova 2020:281–83). In

¹² It is important to highlight that Zvereva uses the Russian word *чужое* as part of the organizing cultural opposition *свое-чужое*. *Чужое* is polysemic and broader than foreign. It can be translated depending on the context as: not one's own, alien, foreign, someone else's, wrong, unfamiliar, vicarious, strange, other people's. It seems fair to use the translation of *чужое* as foreign as Liljeström renders it in the sense that it is applied to Western feminist concepts in the article.

Barchunova's contribution, concern with the uncritical use of foreign concepts is haunted both by the vision of translation as distortion and loss, positioning Western feminist theory as a model of sophistication and aspiration, while conceiving of post-Soviet contexts and translators as underdeveloped, stuck in the anachronistic modes of thinking inherited from state socialist experience.

Foreign as other/different is the third position within Zvereva's taxonomy. It is concerned with preserving intellectual distance vis-à-vis the foreign, making the process of the incorporation of new concepts a matter of rigorous intellectual reflection. This third approach is attentive to the context of production, questions of translation and language, reconceptualizing translation practice as a process of interaction that produces new things. Zvereva concludes that investigating the limits of cultural translation of foreign concepts constitutes an integral part of the reflexivity of post-Soviet feminist intellectuals (Zvereva 2001).

In her critical overview of the Russophone gender studies debate about the translatability of Western feminist frames, Liljeström, criticizing both Voronina and Savkina, points out the implicit idealization of Western models. Appeals to Western feminism as a source of authority accompany the discursive production of the post-Soviet contexts as profoundly conservative, belated, and backward (Liljeström 2016).¹³ Liljeström describes the Russophone academic feminist debate on translatability as predominantly articulated through the frameworks of difference and authenticity. Critical of how the emphasis on local specificity is continuously reproduced within Russophone feminist scholarship, she summarizes the debate in the 2000s as follows: 'Among Russian feminist scholars, it has become commonplace to complain about the uncritical borrowing of the language and questions of Western feminism for the analysis of local cultural and social reality' (Liljeström 2016:150–51). Suggesting that post-Soviet Russophone gender studies scholars unproblematically reproduce and reify localities, she points out:

The irritation is noticeably connected to the linguistic discrepancies caused by what is characterized as imported terminology. This is the reason why many scholars, who underline the local perspective and reproduce the gap between some sort of taken-for-granted, unchangeable feminist theory as "general" and national distinctiveness as unique and "real," tend to understand key categories as empty signifiers (Liljeström 2016:151).

¹³ Although Liljeström's chapter examines gender studies arrivals into post-Soviet Russophone contexts and acknowledges the central role of research centers and scholars from Belarus and Ukraine together with centers and researchers from Russia, the terminology in the chapter sometimes slips, describing the former scholars and gender studies centers as Russian rather than Russophone. Such slippage is problematic because it undertheorizes power relations and hegemonies (including linguistic ones) within post-Soviet spaces. Lack of attention to such dynamics may contribute to the homogenization of intellectual conversations happening in the 'East' already constructed by Liljeström as uncritically preoccupied with and reifying 'locality.'

For Liljeström, Serguei Oushakine is the utmost representative of this position, reading the uncritical borrowing of Western feminist concepts as a sign of ‘colonial consciousness’ (Oushakine 2002:18) and famously criticizing Russophone gender studies as a ‘translation project’ (2005:197). For Oushakine, the concept of gender lost its radical potential when traveling to post-Soviet contexts and did not introduce any conceptual revolution beyond a small academic feminist community (Oushakine 2000). Importantly, this reflection puts the question of asymmetrical academic exchanges and translation at the center of discussions. Commenting on the history of the post-Soviet arrivals of the term gender, Oushakine critiques the inequalities inherent in East-West intellectual exchanges. Their potential dialogic nature mostly boiled down to one-sided ‘banal transliteration’ of English language terms into Russian (Oushakine 2002:12). The flux of transliterations of gender studies terms such as masculinity and femininity, rendered in Russian as *маскулинность* and *феминность*, was accompanied by a devaluation of Russian-language equivalents, fading in comparison to English ‘gender’:

Instead of using the already existing polyphony of meanings of such notions as *пол*, *род*, *мужественность*, *женственность*,¹⁴ instead of trying to trace the conditions of emergence of such semantic shifts and entanglements, it is proposed to introduce a one-dimensional “Western” standard, to conduct a kind of theoretical Euroremont (Oushakine 2002:19).

Almira Ousmanova makes a similar point when remarking on the academic prestige of the term gender: ‘for post-Soviet scholars, the reference to the term “gender” serves as an index, as evidence of being connected to the whole of a well-established research tradition; in a single (pass)word someone’s epistemological and methodological allegiances are revealed’ (Ousmanova 2003:46). She further elaborates on the process of uncritical transliterations as follows: ‘the use of Western vocabulary has more to do with a “calque-mania” syndrome than with the incorporation of the meanings and connotations that these words have acquired in the West’ (Ousmanova 2003:46). Both Oushakine and Ousmanova seem to be concerned with what gets elided in the post-Soviet Russophone borrowings of English language concepts like gender and other transliterated terms. What to do with terms that may be cognates but have a different history of usage in Russian vis-à-vis English? The trouble with ‘imported terminology’ also leads to the articulations of Western feminist hegemony expressed in post-colonial terms:

On its own, this terminological mimicry is hardly interesting. What is important is that mimicry is not a diagnosis; it is a symptom. Symptom of colonial consciousness, with a deeply rooted crisis of one’s own identity, with not believing in creative possibilities of one’s own language (*неверием в творческие способности собственного языка*), with mistrust of one’s own history and reference points’ [...] Can we talk about the non-commensurability of the imported conceptual vocabulary and the situation it is supposed to describe? Can we talk about the points of mismatch, about those semantic gaps and intervals

¹⁴ Sex, gender/kin/kind, masculinity and femininity.

between the 'Western' term and the 'local' meaning, thanks to which, in fact, the historical specificity arises and is preserved? Or is it a universal theoretical mold capable of 'embracing' any reality, regardless of its origin? (Oushakine 2002:18).

Although Oushakine's characterization of Russophone gender studies as a 'translation project' seems predicated on the pessimistic reading of travel and translation as loss, the analysis holds together the post-socialist economy of academic prestige, the issue of asymmetric exchanges in feminist knowledge production, and the focus on the role of distinct translation choices such as transliterations. At stake here is the embeddedness of terms and concepts such as 'gender' into their respective discursive traditions and historicity rather than a sense of reified locality, as Liljeström seems to read Oushakine. Additionally, the main concern is not with importing foreign categories per se but with the process of their 'digestion' or incorporation (Oushakine 2002:17), moving this critique closer to *foreign as other/different* in Zvereva's typology.

I hope my short overview clarifies the centrality of translation in the accounts of Western feminism and gender studies arrivals into post-Soviet contexts. In these accounts, translation is a situated post-Soviet Russophone academic feminist practice sustained by the actual labor of feminist translators ('naïve' and otherwise). The language of translation also provides the critical idiom of meta-reflection on the cultural transfer of Western feminist theory. At the same time, translation is saturated with affect. The practice of Russophone academic feminist translation generates anxieties over shifting meanings and intruding transliterations, animates concerns about intellectual dependency on the West, manifesting in 'calque-mania,' and propels the heated debates about translatability and applicability of foreign feminist concepts to post-Soviet contexts. As I will further show, within the narratives that trace hip-hop arrivals into post-Soviet contexts, translation, although used metaphorically as an idiom of criticism, emerges in somewhat similar ways.

Translation as imitation: the search for authenticity in Russian hip-hop

In her 2016 *Calvert Journal* piece on Russian hip-hop entitled *Russian rap needs to kick its addiction to America*, US commentator Valentina Michelotti warns against the often-repeated dismissive Western rhetoric on Russian music: 'forever in the shadow, Russian production is good only by virtue of its failure/success to adhere to a western original.'¹⁵ Nevertheless, the author quickly discloses her main argument, describing Russian hip-hop as an 'ugly imitation' revealing 'an uglier truth,' coming from the fact that 'Russia has never had an organic tradition of rap besides that which it has appropriated' (Michelotti 2016). Michelotti describes Russian rap as 'carelessly aped

¹⁵ calvertjournal.com/articles/show/6873/russian-rap-america-skriptonit

beats, gangster rap choreography, hollow-eyed women fluttering unconvincingly and the parade of sneering, skinny white dudes' (Michelotti 2016). The unoriginality of Russian hip-hop is emphasized by evoking the tropes of imitation, mimicry, and cultural appropriation. For Michelotti, Russian hip-hop fails to address US hip-hop's African American origins, Russian rappers are 'too white,' and 'for years the genre has been let down by its superficial appropriation of African-American tropes' (Michelotti 2016). Importantly the critique articulates the incommensurability of minority oppression in the US context and the experience of violence and collapse caused by the post-socialist transition to capitalism. Postulating that 'comparison of the post-Soviet condition and the reality of American minority oppression is misinformed,' Michelotti concludes that 'Russian rap isn't wholly unsalvageable: the malaise of the post-Soviet male, dissatisfaction with the state and exclusion from the mainstream deserves to be expressed' (Michelotti 2016). In the earlier section tracking the circulations of US hip-hop, I have outlined the central role of the discourses of authenticity for the genre, which present a barrier to its global spread (Pennycook 2007). I have also addressed the criticisms of scholars who try to move away from the appraisals of non-US hip-hop through the frameworks of imitation (Condry 2007; Darling-Wolf 2015). Michelotti's piece on Russian hip-hop illustrates well the central tensions I have mapped: the importance of racial authenticity, attachment to origins, and the use of the discourse of imitation as a criticism of non-US hip-hop varieties. However counterintuitive it may seem, anxieties about the genre's arrival into post-Soviet contexts animate the domestic commentary and scholarship on Russian hip-hop.

In what follows, I want to sketch some of the contours of this discourse. First, I situate hip-hop's arrivals into post-Soviet space and, more specifically, Russia as both a foreign and modern genre, exuding Western cosmopolitan cultural capital yet speaking well to the violence caused by the capitalist transition. Secondly, I aim to show that the stories of Russian hip-hop arrivals are saturated with the concern for authenticity and the search for originality, suffused with the anxiety of imitation expressed through the meta-language of translation. Finally, I aim to show that the alleged irrelevance of ethnoracial marginalization has been one of the structuring assumptions in the commentary on Russian hip-hop localization (both domestic and external), leading to attempts to locate Russian hip-hop's connective marginalities elsewhere, such as the nebulous search for a Russian ghetto in the post-Soviet sublime of panel houses.

In contextualizing hip-hop's arrivals into post-Soviet contexts, it is essential to place the genre's emergence in the socio-political frame of the dissolution of the USSR and Russia's transition to capitalism. The experience of capitalist transition heavily impacted the localization of the genre in Eastern European post-socialist contexts:

The generation growing up in the chaos of post-socialist transitions found footing and solace in experiences expressed by musicians in the United States giving voice to the marginalized. In a post-socialist society marred by violence, police corruption, poverty, and instability, hip hop offered not only a

language to voice these experiences, but also a sense of strength that such realities could, in some way, be transcended. (Miszczynski and Helbig 2017:2).

Simultaneously, the genre's provenance from the USA lent it an aura of prestige, marking 'listeners as cosmopolitan,' reconstituting 'power dynamics in social systems where Western cultural products were imbued with high degrees of social capital' (Miszczynski and Helbig 2017:2). This fundamental tension saturates Russian hip-hop, which, unlike its US counterpart, is described in the literature as a cultural form disconnected from the material struggles, complicit with an infatuation with Western cultural products and nascent idealization of consumption and hedonism, yet struggling to 'invent one's own ghetto' as a structuring trope of the genre (Kiselyov and Hanova 2020). Although the genre did speak well to the impoverishment generated by the transition to the market economy, Kiselyov and Hanova argue that the logic of cargo cult structured the beginnings of Russian rap marking in the 1990s an explicit orientation to 'the West' and fitting broader political trends in post-Soviet Russia under Yeltsin (Kiselyov and Hanova 2020:239). The idiom of *cargo cult*, widely used in post-Soviet vernacular cultural critique, condemns faithful borrowings from the West and superficial imitation. Thus, attempts to translate gangsta rap into Russian rap were often done by kids from intelligentsia families, the respected band Kasta (with solid hip-hop authenticity in the context of Russia) being a case in point (Kiselyov and Hanova 2020:240). Similarly, a scholar of Russian hip-hop, Artyom Rondaryov, argues that early Russian hip-hop culture, personified by such figures as Vlad Valov and Bad Balance, was emerging in the late USSR among fashion-oriented young English-speaking youth preoccupied with commerce and *fartsovka* trade or among rich kids (*mazhory*) such as rapper Detsl (Rondaryov 2015).¹⁶

Access to Western cultural goods was a marker of prestige accessible to *mazhory* youth. In a study of late-soviet and early post-Soviet youth subcultures, Hilary Pilkington defines *mazhory* as a 'group of elite youth who dress in Western, designer gear to which they have access due to the prestigious jobs of their parents' (Pilkington 1994:233). In her later book *Looking West? Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth subcultures* (Pilkington 2002) (for helpful summary, see Omelchenko 2021), the author emphasizes the logic of distinction and cultural capital that drove post-Soviet cultural consumption of Western musical styles. New demarcations were drawn through this consumption: youth who embraced Western musical and subcultural styles (rappers, ravers, and skinheads) positioned themselves as more progressive and alternative, self-defining against the so-called 'normals' consuming pop music and chanson genres and constituting a majority of Russian youth. Cultural consumption of Western musical styles was positioned as temporally more advanced. Osumare makes a similar point in the chapter overviewing the early localization of hip-hop in Russia: 'the youth signifier that hip-hop represents becomes an important indicator of young Russians' need to

¹⁶ sputnikpogrom.com/music/23766/russian-hiphop/#.VFamWYd_Gao

express a postmodern cool that separates them from the old-guard Communists' (Osumare 2007:75).

In the article tracing the conditions of the emergence of late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian hip-hop and its difference from the US counterpart, Tsarev stresses '*чуждость этнического, черного, связанного с жизнью в гетто, хип-хопа для СССР середины 1980-х*' (the foreignness/alienness of ethnic, black, ghetto-related hip-hop for USSR in the 1980s) (Tsarev 2019). The lack of 'hip-hop situations' for early Russian hip-hop and the difference in urban spaces of post-Soviet cities results in the impossibility of directly transferring Afro-American discourses to the 'Russian realia' as well as '*практической невозможностью овладения собственным и оригинальным хип-хоп дискурсом*' (practical impossibility of mastering one's own and original hip-hop discourse) (Tsarev 2019). Tsarev postulates that Russian hip-hop, not having an ethnic ghetto, had to form a cultural one and separate itself discursively from other subcultures (Tsarev 2019). He traces a trajectory of Russian hip-hop development through the narrative that starts with the wholesale adoption and imitation of USA hip-hop as a model to later move on to the attempts to 'actualize borrowed discourse' via hip-hop festivals creating the lacking local spaces for meetups and exchange of ideas. Strikingly, Tsarev's comparative analysis of urban and material infrastructures, which paved the way for the emergence of hip-hop in the USA and Russia, is filled with the translation studies terminology: 'realia,' 'calque,' 'borrowing,' 'equivalence.' I quote at length a translated excerpt from the article to illustrate this point:

The image of the trap city, used in early Russian hip-hop to describe space, was hardly resembling a normative stance determining specific Russian spatialization and was, in fact, a calque from the locus *trap city*, which emerged in Afro-American hip-hop and expressed a sense of being trapped in the inner city, abandoned by whites who were seeking to move to well-off suburbs. It is clear that such borrowings ignored the local specificity of Russian cities, which led to the metaphorization of the results of spatial production occurring in the American cities, which were taken as a model. This is why these imported cultural forms were used to establish such qualities of the city, which seemed eternal and universal or to claim the equivalence between Russian and American cities. A case in point is *Moskva-New York*, recorded by the band *Bad balance* in the studio in New York. It establishes direct equivalence between '*khrushevki*' and 'ghetto,' the rappers observe 'the same fights, the same district division' as in Moscow. Calquing forms related to hip-hop architecture, established in American rap, became an essential strategy for Russian hip-hop, in which these forms were used as established metaphors (Tsarev 2019).

What are the implications of the heavy metaphorical use of translation studies concepts such as calque, borrowing, equivalence, and realia in this piece not concerned with linguistic aspects of Russian hip-hop? These translation studies terms, saturating the article, appear to figure instead as terms of meta-criticism of Russian hip-hop localization. In Tsarev's piece, the borrowing of foreign cultural forms, such as US hip-hop, is problematized by evoking local cultural specificity. The process of Russian hip-hop localization is presented as an evolution: starting from imitation and gradually proceeding to maturation by finding its 'authentic' voice and becoming able to reflect its cultural specificity properly. The critique seems invested in the attachment to the

authenticity and originality of Russian hip-hop as an ideal. More importantly, the critique of this initial borrowing and imitation is expressed through the term calquing, a translation studies term referring to literal renderings of foreign words. In Tsarev's article calquing, a form of literalism in translation becomes a term for morally loaded criticism paralleling similar diagnoses of post-Soviet gender studies academia expressed through terms such as Ousmanova's 'calque-mania' or Oushakine's 'translation project.' Calquing, much like Kiselyov's and Hanova's logic of cargo-cult, which is said to be structuring the humble beginnings of Russian hip-hop, indicates disapproval of the early strategies of Russian hip-hop localization, casting them as a mechanistic and uncreative imitation, too faithfully copying US hip-hop, too thoughtlessly transposing things.

It is important to note that Tsarev's critique of Russian hip-hop localization focuses on borrowing and imitating US hip-hop's architectural, spatial, and urban tropes within Russian hip-hop. The argument's premise is that the impossibility of translating ethnoracial marginalization informing US hip-hop into post-Soviet contexts leads to the search for alternative pathways for localization. As evidenced in Michelotti's piece, which suggests that rather than parroting African Americans, Russian hip-hop could express 'dissatisfaction with the state' (Michelotti 2016), the assumption that the ethnoracial politics of US hip-hop was untranslatable in post-Soviet Russia is reproduced in the commentary and scholarship on Russian hip-hop. Construing Russia as a 'white' country (Ivanov 2013; Osumare 2007), seemingly devoid of ethnoracial tensions, results in failure to connect to the dimensions of racial marginalization inherent in US hip-hop. More specifically, Osumare argues: 'rap music's origins in poor, black and Latino Bronx ghettos cannot be replicated in countries like Russia that have no cultural frame of reference for it, and as a result, many geographic hip-hop sites such as this one reflect historic American racialized ambivalence toward black contributions to world culture.' (Osumare 2007:77). Equally, Ivanov, when emphasizing the importance of racial authenticity for US hip-hop, stresses that it cannot be used as a criterion for Russian hip-hop authenticity since 'in the context of Russia, where almost all hip-hopers are white, this cannot be a criterion of authenticity' (Ivanov 2013:94). Similarly, Pilkington's writing on early Russian hip-hop also highlights the problem with the 'transfer of the meanings' of Russian rap as a genre, not expressing a 'strategy of resistance to racial discrimination,' resulting from the 'non-racialized character of Russian urban space' (Pilkington 2002:191). In the following sections, I will challenge this assumption by reviewing the scholarship on ethnoracial dynamics in Russia's past and present. At the present moment, however, it is crucial to ask, what made the scholars of Russian rap overlook the figure of Timati?

Timati's first 2006 album and label's name is tellingly entitled (in English) *Black Star*, explicitly harnessing the imaginaries of foreign, cosmopolitan US blackness. Nevertheless, Timati's hip-hop almost escaped scholarly attention. Only recently, especially after Manizha's 2021 participation in Eurovision, scholarly work on marginalized ethnoracial identities in Russian popular music has emerged (see Simon

2020). Several reasons may explain why the figure of Timati has not figured in the narratives of Russian hip-hop localization. Discursive attachment to resistance and marginalization dominant within hip-hop scholarship ties the genre to counter-hegemonic politics, social critique, and contestation of power. The discourse of racial authenticity within US hip-hop links its oppositional stance to the experiences of black marginalization and racial oppression in the US. At the same time, US hip-hop scholarship grapples with the commercialization of hip-hop and its rise to the mainstream. Conceptualizing hip-hop as essentially tied to US black masculine authenticity delegitimizes global translations of hip-hop, resulting in appraisals of such endeavors as imitative and inauthentic. As has been argued recently, ‘hip hop in Eastern Europe has been stigmatized as inauthentic, due to its apparent lack of historical connection to the genre’s African American roots and alleged lack of connection to black identity’ (Miszczyński and Helbig 2017:1). At the same time, the tethering of global hip-hop proliferation to ‘conscious hip-hop’ critical of power structures and oppression globally through the framework of connective marginalities precludes attention to other types of hip-hop that travel, including more commercialized varieties. The figure of Timati is peculiarly well-positioned to examine the structuring assumptions in the global and local discourses of authenticity.

In this section, I have tracked the stories of feminism’s and hip-hop’s arrivals into post-Soviet Russophone contexts. By focusing on these reception sites, I demonstrated the centrality of translation and the accompanying anxieties associated with this process. Concerns with imitation and local specificity informed both contexts. A careful reader might have noticed that in my story, I have not focused on the arrivals of intersectional feminism into post-Soviet Russophone contexts. The reason is that in the 1990s and 2000s, with few exceptions (Tlostanova 2010), it was hardly debated. A parallel neglect of ethnoracial dynamics emerges from my juxtapositions of Russophone gender studies debates and discussions around Russian hip-hop. It seems pertinent to ask: what accounts for the transnational and domestic imaginaries of Russia as a homogenous country where ethnoracial politics matters little, as reproduced in hip-hop scholarship? In the next section, I turn to transnational perspectives on racialization, which may help explain this omission.

Race

Transnational perspectives on racialization

In the previous section, I asked what accounts for the perceptions of Russia as an ethnographically homogenous country. In this section, I juxtapose this perception with the transnational approaches to racialization, which help clarify how such framing might be linked to US-centric understandings of racialization and ethnoracial categorization.

Transnational approaches to racialization emphasize that what human diversity means worldwide may differ considerably. It is, therefore, essential to broaden the scope of race/ethnicity research to include non-Western, non-capitalist, and non-paradigmatic contexts. At the same time, there is a dual tension between context-specific accounts of racialization, which may reify local specificity and obstruct global connections, and unificationist frameworks, which might erase specificities in favor of a unified global ontology of racialization. Moreover, there are several competing accounts conceptualizing racialization of the globe. In this section, I briefly review these tensions and introduce transnational perspectives on racialization that emphasize the multiplicity of interacting modernities and racializations, foregrounding the relational mappings and connections between them.

Can race travel around the world? How do the ways in which ethnoracial marginalization operates in the US translate into other regions of the globe? How to address racialization from a transnational perspective? According to Ludwig, contextualism is a standard background assumption in contemporary USA discussions on the metaphysics of race. Contextualism presupposes that 'race does not travel' across national contexts (Ludwig 2019:2730). Contextualism suggests that the nature and reality of race are restricted to specific national contexts, and there is no transnationally valid ontology of race (Ludwig 2019:2730). Examples of contextualism are when scholars insist on the local specificity of conceptions of race. In a slightly different formulation, this question has been addressed by Goldberg, who suggests that discussions of race too often focus narrowly on distinct national contexts addressing their specific uniqueness, history, and sociopolitical background in which a specific understanding of race develops (Goldberg 2009a:1271–72). For Goldberg, one of the prevailing methodologies in the study of race has been cross-country comparisons, interrogating, for example, USA and Brazil, USA and South Africa. Although it seems that comparative approaches would overcome contextualism's biases, it nevertheless risks perpetuating the reifications of local specificity. The comparative methodology often presumes 'geographic discreteness' and 'incontrovertible and reductive cultural, socio-political, and legal uniqueness,' which precludes comprehending the global impact of racial thinking and its spread (Goldberg 2009a:1272). Both contextualism and comparative frameworks may fail to address the global nature and continuity of racialization processes and their travel across national, linguistic, and cultural borders.

Alternatively, anti-colonial, post-colonial, global race critical, feminist, and Marxist perspectives on racialization have emphasized the global implications of Western European colonialism, the circuit of the transatlantic slave trade and its central nature in the constitution of contemporary capitalism and the modern world system as we know it. This line of scholarship addresses race as a global phenomenon and examines it as rooted in the system of global white supremacy. Recently, Christian argued for developing a global critical race and racism framework that 'posits global white supremacy as shaping all geographies and national racialized social systems but in

different, nuanced and indirect forms,' suggesting that 'whiteness and white supremacy are the bedrock of all national racial systems' (Christian 2019:181). Global critical race and global white supremacy frameworks are often informed by a unificationist position on racialization (Ludwig 2019). While such frameworks go beyond contextualist interpretations and acknowledge the global character of racialization, they might elide the transnational specificities of and the possibility for the existence of multiple but related systems of racialization:

While the transnational heterogeneity of processes of racialization indeed requires some kind of contextualism, it is argued that a simple contextualism misses how many of these processes extend across (cultural, linguistic, geographic, social, and political) borders [...] the alternative to contextualism is not a unificationism that downplays transnational variation in the pursuit of one globally unified ontology of race. The insights and shortcomings of both contextualism and unificationism provide the foundation for an alternative and relational framework that addresses ontologies of race in terms of globally related but nonetheless distinct mappings between conceptions and property relations (Ludwig 2019:2734).

It has been argued that much research on race and ethnicity unfolds around US-centered understandings of racial categorization. Some scholars have called this tendency the 'western paradigm of race' (Takezawa 2005). In turn, it has prompted appeals to expand the analytical focus and examine the transnational racialization dynamics beyond 'the West' (Bonnett 2018; Brubaker 2009; Law 2012; Suzuki 2017). Within the USA, 'the black/white binary paradigm of race' has been framed as the central structuring paradigm in research on racialization, precluding the analysis of other racialized groups within the country (Perea 1997). This paradigm, however, may shape as well non-US contexts, as Bonnett has recently put it: 'since race and racism are so often conflated, it follows that discussion of racism is also framed in Black and White terms,' and 'because people outside of the USA look to the USA for ideas and ways of framing racism and anti-racism, this binary has an international impact' (Bonnett 2021:20). One example of such impact is the operation of the race/ethnicity distinction in the United States classified by scholars as quite particular (Loveman 1999:894). However, when it travels globally, forming the basis for the conceptual generalization in other contexts, it may contribute to the universalization of the 'ingrained North American bias in the sociology of "race"' (Loveman 1999:894). In a more radical vein, the dangers of universalization of 'the Western Race paradigm' may be read as constituting a form of intellectual imperialism when applied to the study of the entire world (Clelland and Dunaway 2021). According to Clelland and Dunaway, central assumptions that underlie this paradigm is positing white supremacy as an unnamed political system, structuring the world as a whole, predicated on the marginalization of people of color, characterized by a hierarchically with constructed dualism with whiteness on top and blackness at the bottom (Clelland and Dunaway 2021:488). The authors argue further that the very terminology of 'race and ethnicity' imposes an interpretative frame on the contexts and societies in which these categories might not be used. The researchers who

apply the theoretical vocabulary of race and ethnicity can thus be seen through this lens as partaking in the racializing or ethnicizing of their research contexts.

For the comparative research on race and ethnicity to move beyond the US and European paradigms, scholars need to analyze ‘the realities of racial and ethnic phenomena of the non-Western world without a presupposed white supremacy lens’ and rely on the models and theories that come from different parts of the world, without developing a single account of racism (Suzuki 2017:287–88). As research on the socio-historical constructedness of race and color-coded racial categories has demonstrated, they are malleable across time and space (Baum 2006; Brodtkin and Sacks 1998; Dikötter 2008; Hill 2009; Keevak 2011; Law 2012; Law and Zakharov 2019; Sadowski-Smith 2018; Tlostanova 2010). While a tiny minority of countries collect their statistics using racial categories, mostly formerly slaveholding societies, most countries use ethnic categories in their censuses (Bonnett 2021:18). At the same time, one does not necessarily need to use the word race itself to sustain the frames of racial thinking (Dikötter 2008:1479). Both ‘nation’ and ‘people’ were used historically in terms of biological units in Western Europe to ‘sustain racial frames of analysis’ (Dikötter 2008:1479). Ethnic categories are also prone to naturalizing, hierarchical ordering, and discrimination, which allows including ‘exclusionary forms of ethnic discrimination’ into definitions of racism (Bonnett 2021:18). Some scholars have been therefore proposing to treat race, ethnicity, and nation as interlinked ‘family of forms’ for a global analysis of racism, which would acknowledge the impact of global historical events and processes, including the diffusion of ideas about race, ethnicity and nation and their local articulations and incorporations into claim-making of local actors (Brubaker 2009:22–23). Instead of drawing sharp definitional distinctions between race and ethnicity, they can be viewed as ‘products of reiterative and cumulative processes of categorizing, coding, framing and interpreting’ (Brubaker 2004:87). This approach could account for the reconceptualized understandings of racisms of the past (Stoler 2016; Tolz 2019) but also encompass contextual variation within transnational racialization.

What other models to account for racialization beyond Euro-America have been used by scholars interested in their transnational character? Bonnett, building on Dikötter, provides a helpful overview of the main approaches, characterizing them as universalist, disseminationist or diffusionist, and interactionist models (Bonnett 2018:1202).¹⁷ The universalist position is grounded in the idea that ‘race is a real biological fact and, hence, racialization is a universal tendency and/or the notion that the psycho-social process of group “othering” is universal and, hence, we are likely to see racialization in every culture’ (Bonnett 2018:1202). Universalism, to Bonnett, operates with broad enough definitions to allow for the universality of the claims made yet lack geographical and historical specificity (Bonnett 2018:1202).

¹⁷ Bonnett speaks of disseminationist/diffusionist as one position, while Dikötter distinguishes them. I therefore introduce four approaches.

The second model is disseminationist, called by Dikötter an ‘imposition model,’ which construes global racism as ‘embedded in the ideologies and structures of global capitalism’ (Dikötter 2008:1481). Racialization within such a model is understood as an export from Europe to the rest of the World, introduced to non-European spaces. In other words, disseminationism promotes the outlook where ‘Europeans conquered the globe; they created unequal systems of social relations in which cheap labour was essential: racism ensured that colonized people were regarded as inferior and could be bought and sold like any other commodity rather than as people’ (Dikötter 2008:1481). If racialization is understood as inextricably linked to capitalism and Western modernity, an interpretative dilemma emerges when accounting for racialization dynamics in socialist societies.

The third model, diffusionism, presupposes that ‘Westernization’ propels the diffusion of racism to the non-European world, ‘as prejudice is copied and assimilated locally, displacing more traditional forms of discrimination’ (Dikötter 2008:1481). The diffusionist model shapes popular and academic accounts of racism and racialization (Bonnett 2018:1203). Dikötter describes the typical reasoning characterizing diffusionist models through the following example: ‘Negative attitudes about “blackness” are reproduced locally as global elites strive to identify with “whiteness”’ (Dikötter 2008:1481). Another case used by Dikötter is cosmetic surgery in Japan, where the desire to lighten the skin is interpreted as a desire to look ‘Western,’ linked to the internalization of the racial ideology of whiteness (Dikötter 2008:1481). Both disseminationist and diffusionist models inadvertently promote the idea of the derivativeness of non-Western forms of racialization. They also flatten the diversity of racism construed as a phenomenon uniform ‘in its origins, causes, meanings and effects’, thus ignoring how ‘historical agents around the globe interpreted, adapted, transformed and possibly even rejected racism in their own specific ways’ (Dikötter 2008:1482). Diffusionism accompanies the representation of racial thinking/racism as an alien virus from the West (Bonnett 2018:1202). Similar to the geographical othering of gender and feminism as Western and ‘foreign,’ geographical othering of racism as the Western problem has been used by the political elites in non-Western countries.

As an antidote to the above approaches, Dikötter, whose empirical work has focused on racialization in China, introduces the interactionist model to understand the racialization of the globe. Interactionism emphasizes contact between European and non-European models of racialization to create distinctly new forms, stressing the polyphony of racial ideas. Dikötter’s interactionist perspective stresses the processes of indigenization, appropriation, differential usage, and re-signification when discussing the spread of racial thinking globally (Dikötter 2008:1482). Within such a framework, it is essential to consider how local cognitive traditions, specific political agendas, languages of science, and transnational scientific exchanges facilitate or hinder the emergence of racial thinking in particular contexts and times. Bonnett wants to push the interactionism of Dikötter further, suggesting that it is still premised on the idea of

modernity as a creation of the West (Bonnett 2018:1204), formulating the contact through the lens of a 'premodern non-West interacting with a modern West' and therefore having an implicit assumption 'in-built and teleological tendency to assume an outcome of Westernization' (Bonnett 2018:1208). Instead, Bonnett suggests focusing on multiple modernities, including socialist ones, and multiple interwoven racializations (Bonnett 2018:1200).

Another scholar involved in the debate on the transnational scope and diversity of racialization is Goldberg. Earlier in this chapter, I introduced Goldberg's critical account of contextualism and comparativism, which he reads as an offshoot of contextualism. Goldberg, who is critical of Dikötter's interactionism, seems to interpret him as a case in point of contextualism/comparativism, said to be invested in 'recognizing the unique national traditions of racist articulation in areas of the world outside Europe, such as Japan, China and parts of West Africa' (Goldberg 2009a:1274). Goldberg proposes that racial conception and practice are relational (Goldberg 2009a:1273). That implies that 'local resonances' are never only local but are always linked to circulating 'trans-territorial' conceptions (Goldberg 2009a:1273). Local forms can thus affect and be affected by racial expressions or modes of thought elsewhere through media, commerce, and other discourses (Goldberg 2009a:1273). Racial discourses, ideas, and practices circulate with travelers, media and commerce. What distinguishes the relational framework of Goldberg vis-a-vis approaches he terms comparativist is that relationality is acknowledged as a constitutive condition of racial discourses:

Racial ideas, meanings, exclusionary and repressive practices in one place are influenced, shaped by and fuel those elsewhere. Racial ideas and arrangements circulate, cross borders, shore up existing or prompt new ones as they move between established political institutions. Ideas and practices emanating from elsewhere are made local; local practices that appear home-grown more often than not have a genealogy at least in part not simply limited to the local. (Goldberg 2009a:1274).

If the comparativist account operates through analogy and contrast, the relational one reveals historical, cultural, legal, and economic connections, tracing their implications and reproductions (Goldberg 2009a:1275-76). The comparative account invested in showcasing likeness through analogy may obstruct the specificities and distinctions. The relational account, on the other hand, pays attention to details and specificities, tracing, for example, 'how movement in one place ripples through impacts in another, and how structures at one time are taken up and put to work in another elsewhere' (Goldberg 2009a:1277). The emphasis is on how particular racializing structures/movements may provide a reference point, a model for identification or emulation. Relationality then is concerned with tracing 'reiterative impacts, of their transformations and redirections' (Goldberg 2009a:1279). However, Goldberg maybe too hastily dismisses parts of Dikötter's proposition by claiming that it ends up in a reification of 'discrete national configurations' of race. In his book *The Threat of Race Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*, Goldberg assembles results of the research program

of racial regionalization that introduces regional cases such as racial Americanization, racial Palestinization, racial Europeanization, racial Latinamericanization, and racial South Africanization (Goldberg 2009b), but Goldberg's racial Europeanization concerns mostly Western Europe 'effectuating inadvertently an erasure of Eastern Europe from Europe itself' (Ivasiuc 2017).

Similarly, Law and Zakharov suggest that looking at the experiences of socialist modernity can advance a fuller program of Goldberg's racial Europeanization, which explicitly ignores the experiences of the Second World (Law and Zakharov 2019). Inspired by Dikötter and Goldberg, Law and Zakharov advance a theoretical project of polyracism, which would trace multiple interconnected origins of racism and racialization across multiple racialized modernities, including post-communist and non-Western modernities (Law and Zakharov 2019:116). Polyracism is juxtaposed to the mono-racism argument characterizing the universalist model of racialization based on Western capitalist modernity. Polyracism, like interactionism and the relational method, stresses the importance of connections and crossings between systems of thought and operations of racialized regimes (Law and Zakharov 2019:133).

Bonnett's recent book, drawing on the works of Law and Zakharov, Dikötter, and Goldberg, emphasizes that 'racism has multiple roots and routes' and that the geography of racism and modernity needs to be rethought to grasp transnational, regional, national, and international variations of racisms and 'diversity of diversity':

What 'diversity' means – what it is called, what it looks like, and what its impacts are – is not the same everywhere. For example, people from the USA and, increasingly, Europe, who have become accustomed to thinking of diversity in terms of skin color, may have trouble seeing the kind of diversity that exists in Asian and African countries (Bonnett 2021:7).

The scholars mentioned above seem to converge around the need to examine the processes of connections, crossings, appropriations, and adaptations when looking at the transnational character of racialization. The interactionist approach allows tracing both continuities and discontinuities between various contextual racializations. Regardless of the program used (relational approach of Goldberg; polyracism suggested by Zakharov and Law, interactionism of Dikötter, Bonnett's multiracism), they assign importance to the complexity, transnational character, and the exchange and contact between multiple forms of racializations in different contexts.

Race in Russia

As transnational perspectives on racialization suggest, scholarly and lay discussions about race may be tied to some paradigmatic cases which may influence the understanding of how racialization operates in less familiar contexts. The recent edited by David Rainbow volume *Ideologies of Race: Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in*

Global Context emphasizes that race in Russia and the USSR ‘was understood very differently than in places like the United States, South Africa, and Nazi Germany, countries that rigidly codified phenotypic racial hierarchies and are often taken as “typical”’ (Rainbow 2019:4). These countries’ ‘racial regimes’ became paradigmatic in the field, constituting a benchmark, ‘an analytical norm’ against which other societies are evaluated and measured, complicating analyses of racisms and engagements with race in other locales (Rainbow 2019:9). Stressing the malleability of the concept of race, the introduction to the volume emphasizes that race was never used as an official or legal category in the Russian Empire, USSR, or Russia, and pinpoints ‘the lack of legally reinforced racial regime’ (Rainbow 2019:3-4). Moreover, there is no consensus on what the concept of race means in the region and that at a different point in time, it was understood ‘in terms of biology, inheritance, phenotype, civilization, culture, environment, geography, or some combination of these’ (Rainbow 2019:3-4). The book aims at treating race as an ideology, studying ‘ideas about human diversity articulated in racial terms’ (Rainbow 2019:3-4), thereby moving away from the question of how to define race and offering instead to explore ‘practices and vocabularies of race’ and the perspectives of historical actors who partook in these practices (Rainbow 2019:10).

Scholars are still far from unanimity about to what extent race is a helpful category to approach this field and how specific Russian racial discourses were (Hirsch 2002; Knight 2012, 2017, 2019; Lemon 2002; Tlostanova 2010; Weiner 2002; Weitz 2002). As I will elaborate on later in this section, various articulations of this debate in the case of the USSR led to such, at first glance, seemingly paradoxical appraisals such as ‘racial politics without the concept of race’ (Weitz 2002), ‘race without the practice of racial politics’ (Hirsch 2002), as well as ‘race without racism and racism without race’ (Shnirelman 2011). More recently, global post-2020 reverberations of the Black Lives Matter movement reanimated the scholarly conversations about race in Russian and Eurasian studies.¹⁸ Race is characterized as ubiquitous in Russian history (Mogilner 2021) yet argued to be elided and ignored as something external to the region, leading to the calls for bringing race in as a necessary category and analytic for tackling racism and exclusion instead of claiming that the region does not have race but only has ethnicity/nationality (Baker 2018; Suchland 2021; Yusupova 2021). As this scholarship’s growing impact suggests, it is no longer possible to imagine the region as disconnected from the global circulations of racial discourses. At the same time, important details and debates about ‘the peculiarities of Russian race culture’ (Avrutin 2007) have been outlined in recent research. The challenge remains, however, to ‘account for particularities without falling into exceptionalism’ (Rainbow 2019:20), producing relational accounts tracing racial discourses in the region without losing sight of their peculiar constellations and historical and contextual specificities. One of such peculiarities has been the absence of racialized slavery in Russian history and the

¹⁸ See, for example, a special 2021 issue of *Slavic Review*.

absence of the category of race in formal classifications and institutional usages (Zakharov 2015:14). Another peculiarity is the state socialist experience where Soviet society was ‘familiar with the concept of race and explicitly used it for anti-racist propaganda and scholarly research – not in classification practices concerning population or censuses’ (Zakharov 2015:17). The challenge also remains, to borrow Nataniel Knight’s expression, to specify ‘what do we mean about when we talk about race’ (Knight 2019) in Russian Empire, USSR, and contemporary Russia. Throughout this brief overview, I will map some of the diverse ways that race has been approached in the scholarship through a transnational relational lens on racialization, emphasizing the questions of contact and connectivity.

Transnational discussions about slavery in the US have been happening in the Russian Empire since the 18th century, with its intellectuals and academics actively engaging in these conversations. In the 19th century, Russian writers used translations of abolitionist writings, especially poetry, to critique serfdom, which they could not write about due to tsarist censorship. These intellectuals discussed slavery in the United States, but it was also interpreted as anti-serfdom writing. A tradition of reading works on anti-slavery in translation as anti-serfdom poetry is an example of how Russia participated in transnational conversations on race.¹⁹ Condemnations of slavery were widespread both within the Russian intelligentsia and the broader public, bridging the divide between liberals and conservatives. Moreover, radical writers such as Chernyshevsky ‘used the issue of Negro slavery to make indirect statements about serfdom that the tsarist censor would have considered far too radical in any other context’ (Blakely 1986:32). Blakely highlights that abolitionist sentiments of Russian intelligentsia were easily accompanied by acceptance of scientific racialism (Blakely 1986:34). However, ‘the historical affiliation between the Russian peasant and the American black as involuntary indentured servants who were emancipated from servitude at roughly contemporaneous moments’ sparked the interests of African American intellectuals in Russia’s history (Baldwin 2002:1).

Another instance of the Russian Empire’s involvement in the broader context of transnational conversations about race has been explored through the studies of the scientific concept of race, situating the processes of knowledge circulation in the late Russian Empire within the context of scientific exchanges with Western European racial theories. This scholarship has demonstrated the impact of traveling ideas about race on both sciences and humanities and their adaptations to the specific context of the Russian Empire and its human diversity (Hall 2012; Mogilner 2021; Tolz 2012, 2014, 2019; Могильнер 2008). Vera Tolz has studied the circulation of ideas about race among Russian intellectuals via heterogeneous Western European scientific discourses and their specific Russian Imperial adaptations (Tolz 2014, 2019). The word *paca* (race) entered the Russian language in the 1830s; in the 1850s-1860s, the concept increasingly

¹⁹ I am grateful to Brian James Baer for drawing my attention to this.

appeared in the press and scholarly literature; in the 1860s, it entered Russian language dictionaries, used interchangeably with *племя* (tribe) and *порода* (stock), which were already utilized in a racial sense since the late 18th century (Tolz 2019:44). Russian Empire thinkers distinguished themselves from their Western counterparts in that the former were sticking to the old environmentalist paradigm of race and monogenism much longer than the latter, who had drifted towards hardening biological determinism and polygenism already from the 1850s (Tolz 2014:134). The concept of race within the context of the Russian Empire was one of the essential tools ‘for analyzing Russia’s ethnocultural diversity, national specificity, and social and gender inequalities’ (Tolz 2014:141). Marina Mogilner, who in her pioneering scholarship explores different schools and rifts within the discipline of the physical anthropology of the 19th-early 20th century (in the context of the Russian empire), offers the following assessment on the role of the scientific language of race at that time:

“Race” served as one of the languages of imperial self-reflection and modernization. Various actors from above and from below embraced it and adapted to their specific imperial situations. “Race” as a language of imperial modernity relied on the authority of science. Racialization helped to anchor population groups in longue durée “objective” structures, nominally differentiated as cultural or biological but in practice always hybrid. Populations were mentally assembled into ontologized, objectified, and knowable groups, which could be further managed through scientific politics. (Mogilner 2021:208).

According to Tolz, Western European stages of development of racial thought do map quite well onto the Russian Imperial context, especially between 1860-1917, which also explains the specificities of this engagement: ‘the discourse of race became one of the ways for educated Russians to make sense of the world around them, sharing with the rest of Europe an analytical apparatus perceived as modern and scientific’ (Tolz 2014:141). Importantly, this scholarship acknowledges both the modernizing character of this idiom and the multiplicity of the uses to which the language of race could be put, more specifically, the utilization of this self-racializing language by various actors for different projects, including anticolonial and nationalist resistance to imperial policies:

The concept of race also unsurprisingly became a new tool of agency and self-representation in the hands of intellectuals from the empire’s peripheries in their articulation of counter-narratives that aimed at challenging Russian and European imperial hegemony. Georgian, Jewish, Polish, Tatar, Ukrainian, and other “minority” scholars and religious leaders started utilizing the concept of race and referring to racial studies of the cephalic index and anthropological type. These were perceived as providing a solid scientific basis to buttress narratives of national distinctiveness and to oppose influential anti-Semitic and anti-Islamic views of leading European and Russian intellectuals. (Tolz 2019:42-43)

Tolz, following Stoler (Stoler 1997, 2016), argues that race/ethnicity/nation in 19th century Europe, including the Russian Empire, constituted a ‘single conceptual field’ (Tolz 2019:33). Intertwined understandings of ethnicity, race, and nationhood or ‘relationship between physical features, innate moral and behavioral characteristics, and culture’ was in the 19th century Russian Empire, as elsewhere in Western Europe, causing

significant terminological confusion (Tolz 2019:49). Tolz emphasizes how ‘in imperial Russia, biological factors were often seen as directly relevant to defining *narodnosti*, *natsional’nosti*, *narody*, and *natsii*, whereas definitions of race included references to cultural attributes’, making the border between cultural and biological ‘in Russia’s imperial discourse of collective identities’ fuzzy and imprecise (Tolz 2019:30). Terms that are conceptualized as separate nowadays were often deployed interchangeably. Avrutin’s study of Jewish difference and racial categorization in late Imperial Russia emphasizes this point even more clearly:

In late imperial Russia, race had two broad meanings that could—but did not always—overlap. The first signified color and designated “races” as white, yellow, red, dark, and black. The second, more ambiguous meaning categorized groups such as Slavs, Semites, Caucasians, Greco-Romans, and Turko-Tatars as well as “smaller” ones such as Poles, Germans, Ukrainians, and Jews as distinct “races” (*rasy*), “types” (*tipy*), or “ethnicities” (*narody*) based on highly elaborate and often contradictory physical categories and ethnographic descriptions. While Jews could not be distinguished from Germans or Slavs by skin color, they could be identified as “Jews” by physical characteristics and ethno-cultural descriptions. In other words, as ethnicity (*narodnost’* and *natsional’nost’*) began to acquire popular and administrative-scholastic currency to classify peoples by a combination of factors such as language, cultural practices, and religion, so did the belief that these differences were racially fixed—that is, intrinsic, unchangeable, and permanent (Avrutin 2007:15).

Avrutin’s study helps clarify the reasons for the predominance of the scholarly narrative of historians about the insignificance of racial categories in imperial Russian culture. He ties it to ‘the reluctance to acknowledge the fluidity of race and racial thinking,’ which might be explained by the limiting conceptions of race with which they operate (Avrutin 2007:16). Peculiarities of ‘Russian race culture,’ it is argued, can be made better sense of if we move away from a ‘narrow, biologically based conception of race’ and at the same time abandon the ‘attachment to color-based conception of race’ (Avrutin 2007:16–39). Avrutin, following Frederickson, treats race and ethnicity as interlinked, conceptualizing race as essentialization and hierarchization of ethnicity leading to discrimination through the dynamic process of racialization, defined as ‘ways in which social attitudes and administrative practices constructed, validated, and justified a hierarchy of human difference’ (Avrutin 2007:16).

The Soviet Union has inherited the messy, contradictory, and entangled notions of race, ethnicity, and nationhood (Tolz 2019:49). It is, therefore, essential to acknowledge not only the processes of linkages and connections with circulating discourses of race from Western Europe but also account for both continuities and ruptures throughout the 20th century. Practices of categorization from the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire informed the processes of ethnoracial construction and scientific classification in the USSR. One example is the case of the Bolshevik’s reliance on former Imperial ethnographic experts and ‘selective borrowing’ of the elements from Western European Imperialisms (Law and Zakharov 2019:116), resulting in reconfiguring previous

ethnoracial hierarchies through sociological rather than racial-biological lens (Hirsch 2005).

After the revolution, USSR, as a state committed to the fight against colonialism and racism, attracted intellectuals such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Claude McKay, and Langston Hughes. Many other black activists, writers, and professionals from the USA and beyond flocked to the country, captivated by the promise of internationalist solidarity and anti-racism (Baldwin 2002; Blakely 1986; Matusevich 2008b). The Soviet indictment of US racism played a central role in the ideological struggle for the moral superiority of the USSR vis-à-vis the USA (Roman 2012, 2019). Racism was projected outside as a problem of the capitalist West. Race was also a central term later in the Cold War ideological confrontations between the USA and the Soviet Union: ‘rivals aligned with the respective super powers framed racialized events and violence – Soviet repression of Jews, American lynchings to political ends’, competing ‘to depict racial equality at home and to ascribe racism to the enemy: would capitalism or communism better furnish human “freedom” and “equality”?’ (Lemon 2019:60). Lemon suggests that practices of competitive contrast allowed to displace ‘inconvenient affinities’ between two contexts, necessitating the shift of scholarly focus on the processes that cross borders to see the effects of ‘comparative claims about race’ and counter exceptionalist thinking (Lemon 2019:60). In a similar vein, studying the context of East Germany, Quinn Slobodian analyzes the visual representations of internationalist solidarity and human diversity called ‘socialist chromatism’ or ‘racial rainbow’ as a part of broader socialist realist idiom which ‘relied on skin color and other markers of phenotypic difference to create (overly) neat divisions between social groups within a technically nonhierarchical logic of race’ (Slobodian 2015:24). The paradox of this mode of representation is that despite official denouncing of racial discourse, it relied on the ‘stereotypes of phenotypical and folkloric difference to illustrate themes of internationalist solidarity’ where ‘nineteenth-century racial typologies and ethnographic conventions underwrote repertoires of representing global diversity’ (Slobodian 2015:26). Moreover, socialist chromatism as a mode of visual representation ‘was an outward extrapolation of a model that was originally an imperial, and later Soviet, mode of representing a multiethnic territory under a single administration’ rooted in the Soviet visual vocabulary of ‘nineteenth-century techniques of ethnic exhibition [...] clothing, dance, and architecture’ (Slobodian 2015:30). Interestingly, this mode of representation is argued not to be so different from the USSR’s Cold War ‘cultural pluralism being promoted by liberals in the postwar United States’, which leads Slobodian to conclude, not unlike Lemon earlier, that ‘despite culturally pervasive and even institutionalized racism in the United States, the two blocs in the early years of the Cold War could be said to share a formal consensus on questions of race’ (Slobodian 2015:30).

An additional strain of research is concerned with applying race to analyze Soviet policies. One of the most prominent articulations of this debate unfolded in the special issue of *Slavic Review* in 2002, where Eric Weitz, discussing Stalinist deportations of

nationalities, argued that 'racial politics crept into Soviet nationalities policies, especially between 1937 and 1953'. Alluding to the apparent paradox mentioned earlier, he frames it as 'racial politics without the overt concept and ideology of race' (Weitz 2002:3). Treating race, ethnicity, and nation as 'modern forms of group identity,' Weitz stresses that the boundaries between them are porous, arguing that ethnic groups and nationalities can be racialized, while race is 'the hardest and most exclusive form of identity.' This is not so much about skin color but rather about the process of assigning 'indelible traits to particular groups' (Weitz 2002:6-7). Weitz's understanding of the distinction between race and ethnicity is that 'race always entails a hierarchical construction of difference,' and ethnicity *might* entail it (Weitz 2002:7). Responding to Weitz, Francine Hirsch suggests instead that there was an explicit concept of race in the USSR, but the state, while practicing the politics of discrimination and exclusion, did not practice 'racial politics' (Hirsch 2002:30). Highlighting scientific exchanges, borrowings, and cooperation around ideas about race between Soviet and western European scientists predominant throughout the 1920s, Hirsch highlights a radical break with German scholars in the 1930s with the ascent of National Socialism and Nordic racial biology, which the Soviet government firmly rejected as 'fascist' and 'bourgeois' (Hirsch 2002:33; see also Shnirelman 2011:223-32).

Hirsch argues that in his article, Weitz uses a concept of race underlying German nationalist socialist policies, which should be distinguished from the Marxist-Leninist non-hierarchical historical materialist definition of races crystallized in the discipline of *rasovedenie* (Hirsch 2002:33-34). Hirsch also insists on the need for the analytical separation between race and nationality, as these were studied in USSR by different disciplines, anthropology, and ethnography, where nationalities were understood as 'ethnohistorical units' and sociological forms, while race was conceived as 'physical types' (Hirsch 2002:35). Arguing that nationalities were persecuted not based on inherent, innate traits or biological inferiority, but rather as bourgeois nationalists and disloyal populations whose allegiance and loyalty to the Soviet state was questionable - Hirsch, therefore, concludes that what was at stake in the Stalinist ethnic deportations was the eradication of nationalism, rather than racial traits or races (Hirsch 2002:37-40).

Another essential but lesser-known in the Anglophone context works, linking three segments of Russia's history is *Порог толерантности (Threshold of Tolerance)* authored by Viktor Shnirelman (Shnirelman 2011). This two-book volume, positioned within the scholarship on cultural racism, introduces a sizeable overview of Western approaches to race and racism. Shnirelman explores the circulation of racial thinking among several (relatively marginal) intellectuals in the late Imperial context, such as Mikhail Menshikov, traces the changing trajectories of Soviet anthropology and ethnography, and charts the development and instrumentalization of xenophobia, anti-migrant, Neo-Nazi and racist ideas within post-Soviet Russia. Shnirelman stresses the paramount importance of ethnicity over race as a critical organizing category of difference defining the structure of social relations in the USSR, arguing that it occupied

the place of race within the discourse of new racism, operating very similarly to how race functioned within USA (Shnirelman 2011:58). He further argues that in Soviet times anti-racist internationalism and the anti-racist concept of race and denial of racist science coexisted with biologizing usage of ethnonational categories, such as *etnos* and the legal category *natsional'nost'* or the Stalin's definition of 'national character' imputing shared psychological characteristics to members of one ethnic collectivity. Stressing the constant interplay of contradictions between Marxist sociological understandings and essentializing constructions of Soviet nationalities, reified in public discourse as 'things in the world,' allows him to posit the coexistence of race without racism and racism without race within the Soviet experience (Shnirelman 2011:230). Law and Zakharov have eloquently commented on this duality:

The Soviet regime's conception of modernity as well as that of western European nations drew on the legacy of the European Enlightenment with its emphasis on the capacity of science and rationality, which combined with faith in unilinear social and economic progress, would lead towards the ideals of civilisation and the emancipation of humanity. The fundamental tensions inherent in these key ideas facilitated both the reproduction and development of racist/antiracist, colonial/anticolonial forms of governance, and the construction/destruction of ethnicities. Science, technology and rational bureaucracy provided the means for both Stalinist ethnic cleansing and the categorising and promotion of ethnic nationalisms. (Law and Zakharov 2019:117)

The period between the late 1930s to the early 1950s constituted an epochal shift within Soviet internal policy: internationalist rhetoric remained, but a reorientation from a class paradigm to an ethnonational one was launched (Shnirelman 2011:233). If the early view from the 1920s within Soviet policies on nationalities has understood *natsional'nost'* sociologically as a modern construct, the subsequent shift in the mid-1930s has framed it in terms of deep primordialism, echoing popular folk understandings of *natsional'nost'* as essential and inherited. As Terry Martin puts it, 'the Bolsheviks, it would seem, went from being students of nationalism to nationalists,' which was 'ironic, since the original Soviet nationalities policy was a strategy designed to accomplish the opposite process: to move the Soviet population from the popular nationalist understanding of nations to the Bolsheviks' won sociological concept' (Martin 2000:168). Subsequently, the Soviet category of *natsional'nost'* was reproduced in everyday life through a 'constant routine of ethnic labeling and so inadvertently indoctrinated the Soviet population in the belief that ethnicity was an inherent, fundamental, and crucially important characteristic of all individuals' (Martin 2000:168). Between the 1960s to 1980s, the tension between hardly compatible Marxist internationalism and Soviet ethnonationalism became even more acute (Shnirelman 2011:235-36). Shnirelman especially stresses antisemitic campaigns in the late 1940s-mid 1950s, with ethnic groups of Caucasus being primary targets of racialization and everyday racism. By the 1970s, the idea of 'ethnic psychology' and the 'unity of psychological make-up' of ethnic collectivity had entered the Soviet theory of *etnos* led by scholars like Bromley (Shnirelman 2011:268). Thus, for Shnirelman, within the USSR, racism existed in the latent shape of ethnicism, allowing him to interpret it through the lens of theories of 'cultural racism.'

Inherited from the Soviet era's 'ethnicized vision of the world' (Hutchings and Tolz 2015), the category *natsional'nost'* or institutionalized and territorialized ethnicity or nationality, which tends to be understood vernacularly in primordial terms, informs the vernacular ways of talking about human difference and still represents a legal category in the population census in contemporary Russia. In the context of post-Soviet Russia, which both inherited and resignified some of these trends, liberalization of ideological controls, the dismantling of discourses of Soviet internationalism, growing ethnonationalist trends, and the unrestrained flux of ideas from 'the West' all contributed to the development, adaptation, and use of xenophobic discourses. Especially during and in the wake of the post-Soviet Chechen wars, within Russian media and public discourse, *natsional'nost'* has been increasingly racialized, leading to the infamous post-Soviet career of the category ЛКН, *лицо кавказской национальности* (LKN – individual of 'Caucasian *national'nost'*'). The slipperiness and fuzziness between race, ethnicity, and nation continue to inform the region's vernacular understandings of human diversity.

Some scholars, like one of the most recent contributions to the study of race and racialization in contemporary post-Soviet Russia, Nikolay Zakharov's book *Race and racism in Russia* (2015), explicitly draw upon the analytical separation between the concepts of race and ethnicity based on the premise that the latter category *might* include references to phenotypical differences while the former is *exclusively* based on them and therefore more stigmatizing (Zakharov 2013:107). Others, like Alaina Lemon, are more interested in the entanglements between the two (Lemon 1995). Lemon contends that 'in the post-Soviet 1990s, terms such as *natsional'nost'* were often deployed to do the work of racial categories' (Lemon 2002:57). Similarly, Sahadeo stresses that 'the avoidance of the term "race" does not prevent national distinctions from containing, in the words of Kwame Appiah, "a racial essence"' (Sahadeo 2007a:560). Works of Adrienne Edgar demonstrate rather vividly how, despite the absence of race as an official category in Soviet censuses and the usage of *natsional'nost'* instead, primordialist thinking has underwritten the understanding of the latter and related categories since the 1930s. The materials built around interviews of individuals of 'mixed' *natsional'nost'* (that is, people born from parents classified as belonging to two different *natsional'nost'*) betray how specific *natsional'nost'* could be associated with particular phenotypical features, thus highlighting the slippage between categories and fuzziness of conceptual boundaries between race and ethnicity (Edgar 2019; Sahadeo 2007a:571). In contemporary folk understandings of human diversity in Russia, in the absence of racial categories in the everyday non-racist discourse, categories such as *ethnos*, *narod*, *natsiya*, or *natsional'nost'* are often imagined through tropes of blood, lineage, and ancestry (inherited through birth from the parents), associated with particular phenotypical features (hair, eye color, eye shape, nose shape, and size, skin shade) and essentialized character traits, such as predisposition to certain behaviors, talents, and impulses. Even if the thinking about categories like *natsional'nost'* may be imbued with

essentializing logic, which may be called racial, in the everyday social categorization through the Russian language, it is these categories that are used as categories of practice, not racial categories.

One way to illuminate this mismatch is by finding studies exploring juxtapositions or contacts between different vocabularies of human diversity. Olya Reznikova, in her work on (post)coloniality and Chechen feminism in Russia, questions the transposability and applicability of the English language category of race for analyzing oppression and exclusion dynamics within post-Soviet contexts. Paying critical attention to the questions of translation, Reznikova rejects the possibility of translating the analytical category race and related political identity 'black' into Russian as *paca*, stressing specific genealogies of race as an analytical tool rooted in Western European post-coloniality, different from genealogies of Russian post-coloniality (Reznikova 2014:24-30). In the article written in Russian, Reznikova preserves *race* and *gender* as untranslated from English to make her argument tangible and to emphasize the 'foreignness' of these terms through the deliberate use of Latin script in the body of Cyrillic text.

Another example illustrating the mismatches in the conceptual ethn racial vocabularies across English and Russian languages is Ludmila Isurin's sociolinguistic study on newly arrived migrants from Russia to the USA (Isurin 2014). She makes an argument about conceptual non-equivalence of race, ethnicity, and nationality categories in the Russophone and Anglophone US contexts by showing how speakers, socialized in USSR, defined themselves primarily through the category *natsional'nost'* and often asked for clarifications when questions about 'racial identities' were asked (Isurin 2014: 673-674). Isurin elaborates that although Russian-language terms like *natsional'nost'*, *ethnichnost'*, and *rasa* are cognates of the English language terms nationality, ethnicity, and race, there is a substantial semantic difference between the terms in the two respective contexts. In the USSR, the category of *natsional'nost'* was used in the state census, while in the USA, it was race that found reflections in Russian-speaking migrants' self-understandings and confusion around English-language racial identity categories:

The Russian concept of "nationality" translates into the American concept of "ethnicity," whereas the American concept of "nationality" translates into the Russian concept of "citizenship." [...] There was a clear tendency for ethnic Russians to offer "Russian" to the question of race- later reformulated as "nationality" by two main Russian-speaking enumerators-and to stress that they were "real" Russians. On the other hand, the majority of Jewish respondents showed a need to be identified as Jewish when they were directly asked about their nationality [...] The observed and reported confusion caused by the race question in the first study and immigrants' emotional reaction to the generalized term "Russian" in the second study provide evidence of conceptual non-equivalence between Russian words such as race and nationality and their English counterparts. The concepts that provided a strong base for immigrants' identity formation in their native country were transferred into the host country, where they did not have the same meaning. (Isurin 2014: 681-2)

Isurin's study demonstrates that for these Russophone migrants, identifying through racial categories strongly correlated with respondents' age and English-language proficiency. She emphasizes how the mismatch between conceptual vocabularies of human diversity at times generated confusion among recent migrants to the US:

A simple question on race in the U.S. census was found to be the most confusing for Russian-speaking immigrants. Having come from a society that provides very limited exposure to the concept of race, the majority of Russian respondents strongly identify themselves along their nationality/ethnicity lines. The lack of conceptual overlap between race and nationality and a different approach to the concept of Jewishness in the U.S. and in Russia resulted in much confusion when a question of race and self-identification was asked. (Isurin, 2014:676)

Isurin's take on conceptual non-equivalence between Russian and English language vocabularies of diversity, informed by the sociolinguistic and translanguing approach, may be a helpful way forward to rethink the vexed debate on race in Russia I sketched above. These insights also resonate with the Slavic Review debate between Hirsch and Weitz, where operating with different concepts of race (as used by historical actors) leads the scholars to entirely different conclusions. One may relate this debate to Ludwig's discussion on the limits of narrowly defined concepts of race vis-à-vis more loose conceptions of race to grasp the transnational character of racialization. These questions about terminology, including categories of practice, are not trivial for the scholars of race in contemporary Russia because they may help explain some of the situated resistances to the term race displaced as 'foreign' and illuminate the links between the linguistic and the conceptual. So how exactly can one incorporate the questions of language for analyzing the circulations of the idiom 'race as resistance'? In order to think through these issues, I now (re)turn to the literature on travel and translation.

Translation

In what follows, I revisit Said's formulation of traveling theory and introduce Bhabha's understanding of cultural translation. I will draw on criticism from translation studies for not mentioning translation in the case of Said and eliding translation in the case of Bhabha. Subsequently, I introduce some interventions and tools from translation studies, including feminist translation studies, for the alternative frameworks that emphasize the role of translation as a precondition of travel, foreground 'the fact of translation,' and conceptualize translation as a generative process.

Traveling theory without translation

Returning to Said's model of traveling theory that I have used to structure the debates outlined above, the problem of traveling ideas seems to concern the duality between fidelity (be that textual fidelity, fidelity to the 'original' meaning, fidelity to the

original theory/formulation) and subsequent misinterpretation via travel: 'we have been so accustomed to hearing that all borrowings, readings, and interpretations are misreadings and misinterpretations' (Said 1983:236). As a result, a false choice between either slavishly copying the original or misreading is created. Instead, for Said, misreadings are the intrinsic part of the travel of ideas from one location to another. Said's perspective on traveling theory has undergone some changes through time. In his first essay, his empirical examples focused on the pacification of theory through its travels. In a later 1994 essay, he acknowledges the bias inherent in his previous analysis, arguing that a traveling theory that 'developed away from its original formulation' does not necessarily always become domesticated, pacified, and canonized through travel. Can travel of theory also be transgressive? (Said 1994:438). Can it be reignited through the movement to another site and context? If early Said's perspective on travel can be grasped through the metaphor of loss of vitality and rebelliousness through travel, the latter acknowledges the potential of transgressiveness in unfaithful readings of theory. Travel is cast as either a loss or subversion.

However, to what extent does the metaphor of travel used by Said imply a particular understanding of the transnational circulation of theories and ideas? According to the conceptual metaphor theory, metaphors create links or mappings between different, unrelated domains (Lakoff and Johnson 2008). When one uses a particular metaphor, such mappings, and links are created. Metaphors work by highlighting some aspects of phenomena under study and hiding others, preventing us from focusing on the aspects of the phenomenon which are dissimilar (Lakoff and Johnson 2008:10). To return to Said, when theory is said to be traveling, it is compared to a person embarking on a journey and our expectations of what journey may entail (Neumann and Nünning 2012). The metaphor creates a mapping between a traveling human and a theory. Travelers are getting transformed by their journeys, and using the metaphor of travel for theories allows Said to highlight this transformative aspect: theories change as they move from context to context, as travelers do. Concentrating on the conditions of the emergence and contexts of theories' arrivals has been helpful for my project so far. However, the metaphor of travel, as Janet Wolff argues in her study of travel metaphors in cultural criticism, may also be read as a 'technology of gender' underpinned by a 'single notion of travel, which for the most part rests on a Western, middle-class idea of the chosen and leisured journey' (Wolff 1993:225-32). For Wolff, the metaphoric vocabulary of travel is underpinned by gendered visions of unrestricted mobility, which have historically excluded women from travel and may potentially reproduce androcentric theoretical bias. The metaphor of travel, one could extend in an intersectional vein, may also be read as a technology of race, looking back at the feminist debates on intersectionality's transatlantic travels I outlined earlier. As said before, the choice of a particular metaphor emphasizes some aspects of the phenomenon but hides others. My explorations of the feminism and hip-hop arrivals into post-Soviet Russophone contexts brought up the importance of translation as both a concrete practice and a meta-language of critique of

traveling theories and cultural forms, as well as of the translators who facilitate their arrivals. One may argue that the Saidian travel metaphor, centering mobility, precludes considerations of the questions of language and translation. Indeed, translation scholars have criticized Said for not accounting for the role of translation in his model of theory's travels (Susam-Sarajeva 2006:7). As a result, it may seem that theories cross linguistic-cultural borders on their own, traveling just as people do. Susam-Sarajeva's criticism of the erasure of translation in Said's model emphasizes the centrality of translation for the global spread of ideas:

In the lengthy discussions on various theoretical texts in languages other than that of their origin, is the 'translatedness' of these theories recognised and accounted for? How many critics, poets, scholars, writers, activists, or artists who use, refer to, discuss, and elaborate on these theories have access to them directly in the languages in which they were first written? How can theories travel, on their own, with no relationship to the multitude of the languages of the world, without being translated? (Susam-Sarajeva 2006:7)

Some of the other implications of omitting the role of translation include: 'if the travel accounts of theories keep on overlooking translation, travel will remain "an abstract idea" and it would still make "no difference in which direction theory travels (from West to East or vice versa) and for what purpose (cultural exchange, imperialism, or colonization?), or in which language' (Susam-Sarajeva 2006:210). This focus on the omission of the role of translation as a necessary condition for theories to travel resonates with the critiques of the one influential way of framing translation that has been popular in the humanities, the concept of cultural translation, especially as developed by postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha. In what follows, I will briefly outline the notion and focus on the criticism of this concept raised by translation studies theorists. Cultural translation has been critiqued for being vague and imprecise, for how it metaphorizes translation and reproduces English-language monolingualism, for ignoring class implications of English-language proficiency, and for omitting those who engage in the practice of translation.

Metaphorization of translation in cultural translation

The notion of cultural translation has most famously figured in anthropological (Asad 1986) and post-colonial scholarships (Bhabha 2012), although understood in quite distinct ways. Asad's approach to cultural translation encompasses the power-laden practices of anthropological descriptions of 'distant' societies, where the term cultural translation is understood as a representation or rewriting of a particular culture in a language intelligible for 'Western' academic audiences. In such a view, translation is approached metaphorically as a translation of culture. The central issue at stake regards questions of asymmetric representations and power relations between anthropologists

and those they study. Bhabha's approach to cultural translation concerns what he calls the 'borderline culture of hybridity' located within the transcultural migrant experience, characterized by in-betweenness, 'diasporic aesthetics' and liminality (Bhabha 2012:321-22). For Bhabha, 'the migrant culture of the "in-between," the minority position' oscillates between the imperatives of assimilation and nativism, tradition, and progress. Cultural translation, exemplified for Bhabha by the works of Salman Rushdie, is understood as a transgressive act that 'goes beyond the severance of tradition and replaces its claim to a purity of origins with a poetics of relocation and reinscription' (Bhabha 2012:323).

Bhabha's conceptualization of cultural translation has been highly influential and contributed to the conceptual expansion of cultural translation to several disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. In an overview article delineating multiple ways in which both 'culture' and 'translation' in 'cultural translation' have been understood, cultural translation is defined as a 'frequently messy collection of ideas that have captured the imagination of scholars in fields ranging from anthropology to translation studies to cultural studies' (Conway 2012:264). In more recent attempts to rethink cultural translation, Sarah Maitland remarked that 'despite this current of epistemological excitement, the notion of cultural translation remains as diffuse as it is tantalizing' (Maitland 2017:14). How did translation studies scholars react to the growing influence of the notion of cultural translation? The 2009-2010 debate in the *Translation Studies* journal, where a cycle of responses to the text authored by Boris Buden and Stefan Nowotny allows a fruitful glimpse into this debate (Baer 2020a; Buden et al. 2009; Pratt et al. 2010; Pym 2010; Trivedi 2007).²⁰ I will briefly outline this debate because it helps me clarify the approach to translation developed in this thesis.

In their text, Buden and Nowotny use an example of the German citizenship test as a 'translational device' in their approach to cultural translation, arguing that people can be culturally translated, i.e., placed from one socio-political context to another (Buden et al. 2009:196). Buden and Nowotny consider 'traditional translation theory' as 'binary' and draw on Benjamin and Bhabha for a post-originalist understanding of translation (Buden et al. 2009:200). The authors seem to be interested in how translation can challenge power relations, regimes of citizenship, and nationalism (Buden et al. 2009:206). However, as mentioned above, translation studies scholars have criticized Buden and Nowotny's use of cultural translation across several lines. Firstly, it has been argued that what is meant by cultural translation is vague and imprecise. Secondly, Buden and Nowotny's take on cultural translation stages a new opposition between alleged parochialism of 'traditional' translation approaches vis-à-vis more fluid and 'hybrid' cultural translation. The third line of critique traces how cultural translation metaphorizes translation and ignores the actual practice of translation and those who perform it. It reproduces English-language monolingualism, sidelining class

²⁰ Several of the critiques such as Trivedi's (Trivedi 2007) are written earlier than the debate in *Translation Studies* and are addressed exclusively to Bhabha's concept of cultural translation.

implications of English-language proficiency and allowing the notion of translation to circulate freely without connecting it to languages or textual translation. I will examine some of these criticisms to help justify the methodological approach to translation used throughout my thesis. I will start by addressing the objections raised against the metaphorization of translation in cultural translation approaches.

Harish Trivedi, critical of how cultural translation is taken up in a 'non-textual non-linguistic sense' in the works of Bhabha and other postcolonial writers, characterizes it as follows: 'such abuse or, in theoretical euphemism, such catachrestic use, of the term translation is, as it happens, mirrored and magnified through a semantic explosion or dilution in popular, non-theoretical usage as well' (Trivedi 2007:302). Similarly, it has been argued that the metaphorization of translation transforms it into a catchword that loosely describes any processes of transfer, movement, or transformation (Chestermann in Pratt et al. 2010:103). Some scholars argue that 'metaphoric expansion of translation transforms it into a buzzword,' resulting in it being overused and abused, raising the questions such as: 'What exactly can this tool really help us to analyze and understand?' (Wagner in Pratt et al. 2010:98). Conceptual dilution of translation exemplified by the notion of cultural translation and increasing circulations of the term of translation across disciplines makes translation scholars wary of its potentially inflationary use. The questions are raised to what extent translation-inspired terminology is helpful to study phenomena such as migration. Some argue that to what extent the metaphorical use of translation is justified in each concrete case needs to be demonstrated empirically (Chestermann in Pratt et al. 2010). In harsher terms, translation studies scholar Pym raises a poignant critique against the approaches to translation that metaphorize it and disconnect it from the actual practice of translation or the study of translations/translators. The oppositionality of Buden and Nowotny's approach, according to Pym, stages a binary of bad 'traditional' translation versus more complex approaches or a 'sharp ideological divide between good and bad concepts of translation':

On the good side we find: "deconstructionism" [...] hybridity, "the dynamic or processual aspects of translation", Jakobson's theory of semiosis as translation, "heterolingual address", subversion, "something politically new", Bhabha's third space, hybridity, immigrants involved in "emancipatory change", "change", "democracy". All that in an attractive menu of goodies, in which all items appear to be obligatory. Bad guys there; good guys here; and we the readers are being asked to say yes or no to each, in order to become members of the progressive intellectuals club, which appears to be no less exclusory, random and absurd than the German citizenship test that it ridicules. (Pym 2010:7)

Offering cultural translation as an alternative analytic capable of overcoming other approaches accused of binarism depends on flattening the latter by reducing the complexity of textual translation to simplified depictions. Some translation studies scholars have argued, for example, that textual translation is, by definition, also already a cultural one: 'There cannot be a clear-cut distinction between cultural translation and

the ordinary kind' (Simon in Buden et al. 2009:210). Even if the textual translation is involved in the construction of 'the borders between languages and cultures' in Pym words, 'the study of translators and the act of translating, on the other hand, can reveal tremendous variety and hybridity within the act of construction' (Pym 2010:7).

Other critical interventions have been examining conditions of possibility for metaphorization of translation. Amongst them, Trivedi has specified how the metaphorization of translation by Bhabha and the postcolonial writers he critiques involves non-translation and English-language fluency. Trivedi argues that metaphorization of translation and erasure of literary translation as an 'instrument of discovery and exchange' in cultural translation approaches exemplified by 'elite upper-class migrancy' leads to 'colonization of translation' by postcolonial theory and the reproduction of English-language monolingualism and a 'wholly translated, monolingual, monocultural, monolithic world' (Trivedi 2007:303). In a similar vein, Baer highlights that although Bhabha's approach to cultural translation does not entirely exclude the fact of translation (i.e., the actual practice of translation), it nevertheless elides it through the fact that metaphorization of translation is performed by scholars or writers who author their works in English. That raises the question of 'whether translation and translation as metaphor are interchangeable in these formulations, or was the metaphorical translation of these authors into international Anglophone culture so successful precisely because they did not depend on the fact of translation?' (Baer 2020a:6). For Baer, the metaphoric use of translation 'glosses over or mystifies, in the Marxian sense of the word, the class implications of fluency in English.' (Baer 2020a:6). Both Baer's and Trivedi's perspectives help to connect the metaphorization of translation in postcolonial scholarship and cultural studies to the global hegemony of English. Trivedi's pessimistic conclusion points towards some of the pernicious effects of this process: 'It occurs to me that no international agency may want to save the Royal Bengal Tiger if it actually roared in Bengali' (Trivedi 2007:304).

If Said's traveling theory does not include translation as its concern, then cultural translation metaphorizes translation, a position based on the precondition of English-language proficiency, contributing to the reproduction of English monolingualism and global hegemony of English. In search for the framework that would center translation in the accounts of traveling theories and would take 'the fact of translation' seriously without eliding it, I turn next to translation studies, including feminist perspectives on translation, which position translation as a precondition of the travel of ideas, concepts, and theories. As I hope to demonstrate in the following section, such perspectives may also offer resources to destabilize questions of authenticities and originalities.

Framework

Having outlined central debates relevant to my thesis, I now move on to tools that have helped me design my research and develop an approach capable of addressing some of the issues arising from the literature. Given the complex terrain I have outlined, how do I approach the question of race? How do I use a relational methodology which would go beyond exceptionalisms and reproduction of authenticities but would not lose sight of specificities in analyzing my cases? How do I hold race and translation together, which entails a concern with language? My dissatisfaction with the omission of translation has led me to search for alternative approaches in translation studies, including feminist theorizations around translation. These theoretical conceptualizations help me to move away from the frameworks that cast translation as a loss or secondary imitation and instead help me pay attention to the actual translation practice.

Out of the authenticity deadlock

My overview of the stories of hip-hop's and intersectionality's travels and post-Soviet Russophone contexts where they arrive revealed somewhat parallel investments in the frameworks of authenticity and specificity. In the US contexts of departures, travel was pessimistically framed as a loss, and the elision race was central, while translation questions were absent. At the same time, translation loomed large in the post-Soviet contexts of arrival, both as an actual practice, as a language of meta-critique, and as a source of anxiety over Western intellectual hegemonies and influence. When Russophone gender studies of the 2000s are called a 'translation project,' this vision, although informed by the attention to asymmetric exchange and newly emerging feminist academic hegemonies, may entail looking at translation as a secondary, uncreative activity. Within scholarship on Russian hip-hop, too, the use of tropes of translation as a secondary imitation to theorize hip-hop's arrivals reveals an investment in authenticity and originality while rendering translation uncreative and unproductive. How can one rethink travel without losing site of translation? How can one consider translation away from the imaginaries of loss and imitation without romanticizing the process as an exclusive example of subversive transformation and without throwing away the asymmetrical relations of unequal intellectual exchange? What to do with stubborn authenticities and localities reproduced in the scholarship as sites of cultural and political resistance? To think through these questions, I draw on feminist perspectives on translation and translation studies.

Translation and authenticity seem to be at odds with each other. In translation's relationship with the original, translation has been historically stigmatized as inauthentic and belated. Translation has been represented in secondary terms as a

derivative, a mere copy, artificial, and false (Chamberlain 1988:455). Translation could be framed as not bringing anything new, simply reproducing the existing meaning, a fading reflection of the original. Feminist scholars such as Lori Chamberlain, in her paradigmatic essay on gender and translation, argued that the gendered distinction between productive and unproductive work extends into the symbolic opposition between writing and translating, tying originality to paternity and authority and the low status of translation to femininity (Chamberlain 1988:455). Baer has similarly argued that translation and queer sexuality are two defining others, foreign to the modern heterosexual nation (Baer 2021:6). Imagining translation as a derivative and uncreative practice could be transposed on the labor of translators, delegitimizing, erasing, and casting translation as insignificant. A widespread outlook on translation as reproduction, where the latter is understood as uncreative and secondary, connects to the feminist attempts to reclaim reproductive labor as vital for the organization of life.

In his call to desacralize the original to facilitate the transnational turn in translation studies, Baer highlights ‘the enormous cultural investment so many have in the romantic concept of the original, and the attendant concepts of originality and origins’ (Baer 2017b:228). It is this romantic notion of the original, rooted in the translation of sacred texts, which ‘inevitably produced translations as imperfect copies’ and establishes the original text as ‘marked by a transcendent fullness of meaning, inevitably condemning translation, as its defining other, to a rhetoric of loss, distortion, and manipulation’ (Baer 2017b:229). Romantic and nationalist ontologies of the original facilitate the association of translation with ‘degraded imitation, hence secondariness, distortion, and loss’ (Baer 2017b:230). Additionally, there is a vision of translation informed by the so-called ‘communication model’ or ‘correspondence theory of communication,’ which also partakes in the devalorizing translation. Such views are informed by the assumption that the task of translation is an accurate transmission of messages, which may lead to the mistranslation of terms and concepts like ‘rights’ or ‘gender,’ resulting in ‘subverting political effects’ (Gal et al. 2015:612). On the receiving end, anxieties about translation are concerned less with the potential for loss and distortion but rather with the powers of ‘foreign influence.’

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, the question of ‘Western hegemony’ and power asymmetries in feminist knowledge production has attracted attention from scholars working within the field of gender and sexuality studies in the region of Eastern and Central Europe. As Teresa Kulawik points out, it is striking that the collapse of state socialism and the bipolar world order hardly figures in the meta-reflection of gender studies as a discipline (Kulawik 2019:2). Former socialist bloc countries became a ‘non-region’ and ‘in the context of a developmentalism converted into a discourse of globalization, the space once referred to as the Second World was consigned to a linear temporality of catching up as though Western liberal democracy and the market economy were simply replacing state socialism.’ (Kulawik 2019:3). The critique of newly emerged asymmetries targets the universalization of

Western feminist frames, omission of the experiences of Eastern European feminist researchers and particularities of their respective socio-political contexts, asymmetries within feminist knowledge production dominated by Anglophone theorists and unequal relations of exchange, relegating Eastern European scholars to the position of transmitters and often translators of Western feminist knowledge. More recent scholarship has also problematized the internalized discourses of lag (when compared to 'Western' activism's trajectories) employed to describe the belated temporalities of Eastern European LGBT and feminist movements, positioned as if to permanently catch up with 'the West' (Kulpa and Mizielinska 2011; Koobak and Marling 2014; Tlostanova et al. 2016). As Kulawik frames it, 'the perception of late arrival and lagging behind as a kind of wound is still today the most common description that scholars from non-Western Europe offer of their own positionality' (Kulawik 2019:14).

The emphasis on Eastern European feminist difference, particularity, and authenticity has been cast as a prominent answer to Western feminist hegemonies and lack of voice (Cerwonka 2008: 810-812). Cerwonka's influential article has mapped and criticized the frameworks of national/regional difference and authenticity and pleas of Eastern European inclusion into the norm as a specific case representing 'Eastern European difference.' Cerwonka argues that such terms of inclusion fail to provincialize the norm and expose its situatedness but also problematically reinstate the Cold War East/West binary. As an alternative, drawing on Pratt's framework of transculturation (Pratt 2007), Cerwonka proposes a feminist analytic that allows grasping the local negotiations of traveling Western feminist theories and ideas without losing focus on the socio-political circumstances and asymmetrical relations of power that inform them. Scholars are therefore invited to look at how global/Western feminist ideas enter local contexts and are actively transformed by local actors: 'the scholars who criticize Western feminist theory as hegemonic [...] treat theory as static and as something that is imported wholesale from outside by passive local recipients' (Cerwonka 2008:824). Cerwonka suggests instead that transculturation as a feminist analytic allows a better grasp of 'how feminist ideas develop in response to context' (Cerwonka 2008:824). Along similar lines, Rasa Navickaitė critically addresses how some of the more recent critiques of Western hegemony in Eastern European sexuality scholarship not only homogenize 'the West,' downplaying the effects of the collapse of socialism on 'Western' sexualities but also may implicitly reproduce what she calls 'scholarly sexual nationalism.' That may happen through the inversion of dualist nationalist discourse: 'The national post-communist sentiments, which require the representation of post-communist societies in a positive light, might have inspired also Kulpa's and Mizielinska's attempt to represent CEE as the victim of Western orientalisation and at the same time try to redeem its reputation, by privileging it as "more queer" than the "straight" Western reality' (2014: 176).

The debate on Western feminism's arrival and translatability into post-Soviet Russophone contexts that I outlined earlier can be seen as a subset of these broader post-Cold War feminist conversations happening in the context of the reconfiguration of

East/West divides. Liljeström's critical overview of this debate describes the discourse of Russophone gender studies scholars as locked into the frameworks of difference and authenticity (Liljeström 2016). Appeals to local specificity are said to be constantly reproduced as a remedy against the hegemony of Western feminist theory. Following Cerwonka, who criticizes similar Eastern European feminist responses to 'Western' feminist hegemony, Liljeström argues that emphasis on the local as a site of cultural and political resistance might not be profoundly transformative. She suggests instead reexamining and problematizing the divides between local and global, the reproduction of feminist localities, and the East/West binary (Liljeström 2016).

The sustained problematization of the frameworks of difference and local specificity has been offered in the introduction to the volume on the geopolitics of Nordic and Russian gender research, co-authored by Ulrika Dahl, Ulla Manns, and Marianne Liljeström (Dahl et al. 2016), where Liljeström's contribution was featured. Drawing on Clare Hemmings' approach to feminist storytelling, the authors suggest examining the very process of assigning categories, geopolitical belonging, and territorialities to the theories and ideas that are cast as dominating as an alternative to reifying local specificities and authenticities while also keeping track of material conditions shaping the politics of feminist knowledge production and circulation. Hemmings, in her influential book on feminist storytelling, criticizes the logic of geographic representativeness driven by the urge to construct another, more correct story achieved through 'fuller geographical reach' by inserting what has been omitted in juxtaposition to the 'Anglo-American' ones that remain static:

What such geographical correctives miss are the ways in which dominant stories (Anglo-American or Western) traverse boundaries and operate in relation [...] Thus, the geopolitical power of located publishing and English as the global lingua franca means that feminist theory produced in an Anglo-American context is always likely to exceed its geography [...] More importantly, conceptualizing of Anglo-American feminist theory's travels as direct dissemination fails to capture the transitions and translations that mark its movements back and forth and that highlight the nature of international engagement with its various forms (Hemmings 2011:15).

Instead, Hemmings suggests exploring the transnational circulations of such feminist stories. Building on Hemmings, Dahl, Manns, and Liljeström ask 'how geographical regions and nations are constituted in and through institutional feminist knowledge production as an ongoing process and practice' (Dahl et al., 2016:11). They wonder what exactly is performed by critiquing Western hegemony and Anglo-American dominance in Nordic gender studies academia, arguing that the Nordic difference emerges as an unmarked position when juxtaposed to this hegemony: 'In other words, the Nordic "we" inevitably emerges relationally and linguistically and thus appears as an investment.' (Dahl et al. 2016:14). A cohesive 'we' 'emerges through translation and in conversation with that very same English-speaking audience.' (Dahl et al. 2016:16). Simultaneously, the questions of differences *within* the local contexts reclaimed as a source of cultural or political resistance may escape discussion. The authors, therefore, suggest interrogating

‘how the processes, effects, and products of translation become central points of contestation and concern within the simultaneously national, regional and international construction of women’s and gender studies’, but also ‘how ideas and theorists are assigned geopolitical belonging, how ideas and scholars migrate, and how they both transcend and reproduce national borders and hierarchies’ (Dahl et al., 2016, p. 19).

This line of reasoning points to the need for interrogating the discursive production of national/regional/local specificities in feminist knowledge as emerging through relation and juxtaposition. One may see translation as a site of an encounter where negotiations and contestations of what is marked as ‘foreign’ are co-produced with and against what is rendered as ‘ours/native/one’s own.’ Perhaps, it is only possible to configure something called ‘Russian’ gender studies through comparative contrast to what is construed as ‘Western’ feminist theory. Russophone gender studies/feminism can be seen as emerging relationally in juxtaposition to the ‘Western’ feminist frames as much as Russian hip-hop does vis-à-vis its US-American counterpart. At the same time, drawing on Dahl, Manns, and Liljeström, one can ask how the difference *from* something constructed through translation and juxtaposition not only constitutes *one’s own* but also elides the questions of differences *within*. Feminist historian Yulia Gradskova raises this important question when she describes the process of the early cultural transfer of Western feminist texts into the Russian context in the following way:

After gender and women’s studies centers began to be established in Russia in the mid-1990s, researchers there strove for recognition on the part of their more experienced Western colleagues: translation (in terms of language and ideas) of “Western” feminist theory became a priority [...] and it was the similarities and differences with the “West” that had first to be uncovered and analyzed rather than hierarchies between women inside of Russia (Gradskova 2019:115).

Indeed, within this Russophone debate on translatability, the slippages between the categories *ruskii* and *rossiiskii* and the glaring absence of the category Russophone betray a certain insensitivity to ethnoracial hierarchization as it unfolds *within* Russia, as well as to power dynamics within post-Soviet contexts. For example, a famous 2005 round-table debate “*Doing gender*” на русском поле: круглый стол (“*Doing gender*” on the Russian field), although including scholars from various post-Soviet countries and published in a Ukrainian journal, formulates the discussion as centered on gender studies in Russia and calls the context in which gender circulates *ruskii kontekst*²¹ thereby inevitably reproducing a mono-ethnic vision of Russia and a Russia-centric vision of post-Soviet gender research. It is worth noting that Dahl, Manns, and Liljeström’s contribution seems to reproduce the same slippages, speaking about predominantly Russophone gender studies in post-Soviet countries, yet at times calling the object of the study ‘Russian gender research’ (see footnote 12).

²¹ kcgs.net.ua/gurnal/gurnal-13-13.pdf See especially Elena Gapova’s remark in the beginning.

Drawing on the ethnographies of feminist NGOs in India and Uganda that examine the circulation of discourses on women's rights and women's empowerment, Gal, Kowalski, and Moore make similar arguments to Dahl, Manns, and Liljeström, suggesting that it is the very process through which some things are understood as 'global' that merits analytical attention because it helps understand how exactly discourses circulate (Gal et al. 2015:612). They argue that 'the categorization or labeling of some practices or registers as global, universal or western' is itself an 'interactional achievement' and so is 'the labeling of practices as "ours"' (Gal et al. 2015:629). That also necessitates the interrogation of how things get construed as foreign. In that sense, one may unpack how, when, and for whom the boundaries *within* the category 'Russian' matter or how the slippages between Russian-speaking and Russian become unnoticed in some cases while intensely contested in others.

The above-mentioned feminist interventions allow reformulating the guiding research questions away from the frameworks that would look at 'foreign' as different from 'the local' and vice versa. Such perspective reproduces and reifies the distinction between the two, echoing what Liljeström criticized as positioning the local as a site of cultural resistance and authenticity. Instead, one may ask how and through what process some things are taken up and marked as foreign while others are not. How is something rejected because it is claimed as foreign? And at other times, how may some things be valorized because they are taken as foreign? As Gal and colleagues suggest: 'By marking texts or practices as "foreign," cultural conservatives can work to reject them. This has often happened to feminist writings and practices,' yet 'those same practices can be valued because foreign.' (Gal et al. 2015:617). It is thus possible to think of the situated processes of valorization or rejection of things marked as foreign or to think of foreignness as a claim.

This line of thinking can be linked to Cerwonka's feminist framework of transculturation and, inspired by Cerwonka, analyses of Portuguese gender studies by Maria do Mar Pereira. Pereira's work examines local and global chrono- and geopolitics of the epistemic status of nations and academic fields, such as gender studies. She interrogates 'how credibility travels' and how Western and Anglophone gender scholarship is invoked locally as a symbol of modernity (Pereira 2017:50–51). Pereira examines 'how feminist scholars invoke the figure(s) of the "modern foreign" as a truth-point and authorizing signature that can strengthen the credibility of their knowledge claims and the persuasiveness of their demands for resources' (Pereira 2014). Such perspective is helpful precisely because instead of reifying local differences and reproducing emphasis on specificities and authenticities, which has been a predominant approach in challenging Western epistemic and activist hegemonies in feminist knowledge production (Cerwonka 2008:816), it asks how the invocations of 'foreign modern' are deployed in local contexts. Seen from the perspective of Gal and colleagues, Pereira's invocations of 'foreign modern' could be conceived as 'generative effects of making a linkage to other texts, settings, and authorizations.' (Gal et al. 2015:617). Once

things are interpreted and taken up as ‘foreign,’ they are used to justify various projects where ‘participants attribute texts to powerful sources in order to strengthen their own claims or contest the claims of others’ (Gal et al. 2015:612). Pereira’s work specifies some of the effects of invoking ‘foreign modern’: ‘Framing their own contexts rhetorically as backward through invocations of “foreign modern” allows academics in semi-peripheral countries with European orientations to claim resources for their fields. In other locales, “foreign modern” might generate “moral panics about gender ideology”’ (Pereira 2017:167). If Zvereva, in her typology of the reception of Western feminist theory in Russia, approaches the foreign from the point of view of either rejection or critical incorporation, Pereira’s conceptualization introduces the question of power asymmetries and temporal hierarchies where ‘foreign modern’ ‘casts geolocation into chronological difference; its meanings generate differing effects worldwide’ (Pereira 2017:167). As already mentioned, ‘modern foreign’ may be valorized not only as ‘foreign’, that is, by making links to other contexts and settings in Gal’s framework, but also as a symbol of advanced time.

If one takes a perspective on translation as a relation that produces the same categories thought of as if existing prior to translation, it can no longer be seen as secondary. How, then, can one think of translation as fundamental for the transnational circulation of ideas? Feminist theorizations of translation stress the urgency of foregrounding the role of translation in the transnational circulations of feminist theories and ideas. It has been claimed that ‘the future of feminisms is in the transnational, and the transnational is made through translation.’ (Castro and Ergun 2017:1). Translation has been increasingly seen as vital within feminist discussions on traveling theories and concepts across diverse geopolitical locations and socio-cultural and linguistic borders. Both transnational feminist conversations and feminist translation studies draw attention to the centrality of translation for transnational feminist praxis. For example, Claudia de Lima Costa and Sonia E. Alvarez locate ‘an ever-growing need for feminists to engage in productive dialogue and negotiations across multiple geopolitical and theoretical borders’ (de Lima Costa and Alvarez 2014:557). They suggest considering translation ‘politically and theoretically indispensable to forging feminist, prosocial justice and antiracist, postcolonial, and anti-imperial political alliances and epistemologies’ (de Lima Costa and Alvarez 2014:558). Similarly, Olga Castro and Emek Ergun call for more ‘knowledge production on the feminist politics of translation,’ emphasizing that the central role of translation in the ‘trans/formation of feminist politics remains to be studied thoroughly’ (Castro and Ergun 2017:3). Such knowledge, in their view, should also include considerations of geopolitical hierarchies of translation and inequalities in the circulation of feminist knowledges globally. Including a broader range of locales and geopolitical contexts into the focus of feminist translation studies seems to be an urgent intervention if such a project is to succeed.

Reflecting on the global spread of gender as a traveling concept, Judith Butler argues that the problem of its translation is at the core of the gender theory project (Butler

2019:2). Gender only arrives in other languages due to translation and carries different meanings in different languages. She maintains that translation or translatability is a precondition for spreading and communicating theories across languages (Butler 2019:7). As a result, it is fundamental for scholars to understand the practice and limits of translation (Butler 2019:5). If translation is a condition of possibility for traveling theory, it follows that transnational feminist conversations are only possible because of translation. That allows thinking of translation as very far from being an uncreative imitation. Gal and colleagues suggest looking at translation, not as a replicative but as a deeply generative and performative process: 'Rather than seeking accuracy in the copy of a "message,"—or lamenting mistranslation—we analyze what is being produced as the active, performative work of translation across interactions and social locations' (Gal et al. 2015:613). Thinking about translation as performative means that translation is not just a representation but also an intervention that alters the world. It follows then that 'translation is not about accurate messages but rather a form of citation: it is a situated activity that repeatedly takes up, reframes, re-contextualizes, and re-purposes the agendas, ideologies, and positions of the people that translators and translations bring together' (Gal et al. 2015:612). What is it that translation generates? As discussed above, translation as a site of encounter generates demarcations of things read as 'foreign' and things perceived as 'ours.' One may grasp translation's generativeness as enabling effects of 'making a linkage to other texts, settings, and authorizations' (Gal et al. 2015:617) along the lines of what Pereira calls the invocations of 'foreign modern' (Pereira 2014, 2017). Translation's generativeness may also extend to the affective domain. As I showed in the Russophone gender studies case and the case of Russian hip-hop: translation generates anxieties; it figures as a language of meta-criticism but also produces novel genres and idioms.

How can one explore translation's generativeness? Gal's and colleagues' method is to do that by 'tracking translational chains and highlighting the attributions that speakers make about the purported origins of their communications.' (Gal et al. 2015:629). Looking at 'translational effects created in women's NGOs' allows for 'catching circulation as it happens, noting patterns of translation and their generative effects' (Gal et al. 2015:617). One of such effects is how 'in both ethnographies participants (re)made themselves as particular kinds of persons through their interactional and translational work' (Gal et al. 2015:629). Translational work may therefore be seen as generative of a type of personhood.

Butler's thinking around translation suggests another methodological insight that can be compared to Gal's and co-authors' 'tracking translational chains' method. For Butler, when gender enters, one may focus on the foreignness of the concept of gender and see what kind of 'disturbances' this entering of a foreign word/concept produce. When gender enters other contexts or languages, it remains foreign, 'it burrows into another language as a foreign incursion' (Butler 2019:6). Indeed, it is fundamental that the context of entering of gender is the context of cultural imperialism, where the

English language has been imposing itself for a long time (Butler 2019:6). When gender enters it may raise questions: 'What is the foreign doing here? Is it welcome? Has it been invited? Is gender the sign or instrument of an imperial takeover?' (Butler 2019:6). Tracking the disturbances generated by the 'foreign' words as they enter can offer one way of catching the generative effects of translation.

Additionally, it is essential to address how the focus on translation may simultaneously help problematize both English language monolingualism and protective attachments to authenticity and specificity. To question the reproduction of English-language monolingualism, Butler suggests, it is critical to interrogate the limits of translatability of Anglophone feminist concepts and their conceptual non-equivalence. When one assumes that translated 'gender' would function similarly in different languages, the unspoken assumption is the premise of English monolingualism. Such generalizability is based upon establishing the conceptual equivalence between what 'gender' means in English and translated words for gender in another language. Additionally, there is a presumption of translatability of gender across contexts: 'we rarely ask whether the terms we are using are translatable even though the generalizability of our claims presumes that they are' (Butler 2019:6). Butler's invitation to question English-language monolingualism, however, does not necessitate the return to protective national monolingualisms or reified localities. Instead, feminist translation can be seen as a precondition for feminist theory in the global frame, and 'telling the story of how gender enters' 'gives us a new itinerary for gender studies' (Butler 2019:19). Translation has the potential to challenge monolingualist assumptions and destabilizing attachment to authenticities, feminist or otherwise. As Butler further elaborates, 'experiments with grammar, riddled with foreign words, produce an impure language, potentially disrupting national identity at the level of language use' (Butler 2019:18). Gal's and colleagues' understanding of translation's generativeness can therefore be connected to Butler's approach to translation with the emphasis on coinages which emerge through translation and contact. That allows us 'to affirm the contingency of the language we speak' and 'to be affected and transformed by those with whom we are in some kind of exchange based on translation' (Butler 2019:18).

To summarize, my approach to translation is informed by feminist theoretical conceptualizations that consider translation a precondition for the travel of ideas, cultural forms, and theories. I approach translation as both a site of relational encounter through which ascriptions are generated and as a 'site of complex negotiation, deployment, and reworking of Western symbols and images to suit the needs of a target readership' (Baer 2017a:42), as well as a profoundly generative practice. So far, in developing my framework, I have mainly focused on discussing translation. In the next section, I introduce how I frame the approach to racial translation.

Racial translation

In the section on race in Russia, I outlined various ways race has been explored in previous scholarships: as a scientific racist category in the Russian Empire and an analytic frame for analyzing Soviet policies and contemporary Russia. I propose to look at circulating discourses of race from a different angle that has remained relatively underexplored in the research on racialization in contemporary Russia. This study focuses on the idiom of 'race as resistance' that is both 'foreign and modern' and Anglophone, circulating through routes such as popular culture and feminist activism. I will unpack different aspects of this conceptualization below by linking it to the literatures on race and racialization and debates on translation.

I borrow the expression 'the idiom of race' from Michael Banton, who introduced it to critique the tendency towards presentism in contemporary appraisals of scientific racialism. Banton interrogates the shifting meanings of the word race in popular and scientific usages and underlined implicit conceptualizations underlying various historical articulations of 'the idiom of race' such as 'race as descent,' 'race as type,' 'race as subspecies' and current political usages of race as racial categories in census taking (Banton 2020). What 'the idiom of race' allows for is diverse, shifting, and often overlapping conceptualizations to which race has been put historically. Similarly, attending to the issue of fuzziness and multiplicity of meanings of race, Yasuko Takezawa proposes a threefold typology of what she calls dimensions of 'the idea of race' distinguished through spelling: race, Race, and RR (Race as Resistance). The first relates to the processes of social categorization and exclusionary treatment, similar to the concept of racialization, the second to the scientific racist concept of race, and the third, 'Race as Resistance' is defined as the discourses of race, linked to anti-discrimination, counterhegemonic and anti-racist purposes (Takezawa 2005:7). Takezawa uses examples of Negritude and Afrocentrism movements as examples of 'race as resistance.' I consider intersectionality and hip-hop as two paradigmatic examples of the idiom 'race as resistance.' Thinking of 'race as resistance' as an idiom rather than 'dimension of the idea of race' also allows me to go beyond linguistic categories and include different semiotic modes through which the idiom may be circulating, such as visual, musical and expressive genres and styles (such as hip-hop).

In my approach to the idiom of 'race as resistance,' I am also inspired by Marina Mogilner's scholarship and especially her formulations in the article 'When Race Is a Language and Empire Is a Context', where race is conceptualized as a globalizing language of imperial modernity embraced and adapted by various actors within Russian imperial context (Mogilner 2021:208). She points out how, within that context, race figures as a 'language of social critique of the "archaic" empire' and frames 'the calls for both the empire's modernization' and 'anticolonial resistance through collective self-racializing' (Mogilner 2021:208). According to Mogilner, due to the 'dynastic regime's reluctance to embrace race as an official idiom of empire, instead relying on categories

such as mother tongue, social estate, or regional belonging,' self-racializing could be used as a 'subaltern strategy for disentangling one's national body from the imperial mix and resisting empire as an "unnatural" formation that hampered the "authentic" development of "natural" nations"' (Mogilner 2021:208). The language of race in the Russian imperial context revealed a 'rhetorical repertoire' aiming at 'denaturalization and delegitimization of empire' (Mogilner 2021:208). Approaching race as a language and 'narrative in need of deciphering rather than a self-evident framework' allows seeing how it 'can be a weapon of the weak or an instrument of oppression and exclusion, or both at the same time' (Mogilner 2021:208). I find Mogilner's thinking about race as a modernizing and globalizing language helpful in its emphasis on how various historical actors deploy it to advance distinct projects, including critiques of the Russian empire's backwardness. Linking the discourses of race related to the authority of science and modernization in this way resonates with feminist approaches to transculturation I have outlined earlier, such as Cerwonka's and Pereira's focus on the invocations of 'foreign and modern' to advance particular projects in peripheral spaces. It also resonates with Mogilner's approach to Eurasia as 'an imperial space—irregularly hierarchical and heterogeneous, characterized by the politics of exceptionalism and a constant renegotiation of differences' (Mogilner 2021:212). If race is a language, or in my approach, an idiom, and Empire is a context, then we could examine racial translation across imperial formations. The idiom of 'race as resistance' circulates through US black cultural forms such as intersectionality and hip-hop into Eurasian post-Soviet contexts informed by Russian imperial legacies of managing human diversity.

I further specify my take on the idiom of 'race as resistance' in two ways. Firstly, I link this idiom to the English language: the idiom of 'race as resistance' is Anglophone; it travels through English and requires translation. That helps me integrate feminist thinking about translation as a condition of possibility for global travels of concepts and ideas into the center of my conceptualization of racial translation. Secondly, building on Pereira, I approach the circulating Anglophone US idiom of 'race as resistance' as a foreign and modern idiom, indexing 'different spaces' and 'more advanced time' linked to local and global chrono- and geopolitics of the epistemic status of nations and academic fields and, I would add, of cultural forms. The Anglophone idiom of 'race as resistance' signals an alternative temporality; it is positioned by those who mediate it as more modern and advanced, or in Pereira's terms, it figures as a 'symbol of modernity' (Pereira 2017:50–51). I expand on these two points below.

Firstly, in thinking about the centrality of translation for the circulating idiom of 'race as resistance,' I draw inspiration from Stam's and Shohat's book *Race in Translation*, which analyzes 'race/colonial debates' across three 'divergent yet historically linked colonial/national zones' such as France, Brazil, and the USA, or what they also call 'multiple chromatic Atlantics' (Stam and Shohat 2012:298). In their approach, they foreground the paradigmatic importance of language where translation within and between languages is seen as a 'site of cultural (mis)encounter' (Stam and

Shohat 2012:60) and where 'translation is not merely a trope; it is entangled in the concrete arena of language conflict and dissonance' (Stam and Shohat 2012:57). Within this translinguistics inspired framework, the focus on language and translation, rather than on national units of comparison, is seen as a remedy against parochialism, methodological nationalism, the reification of ethnocultural authenticities and exceptionalisms. As Stam and Shohat argue: 'Language crosses borders and refracts the traffic of ideas; terminological clashes lurk in the background of the culture wars. National languages in postcolonial spaces are especially syncretic and polyvocal. The same words, due to different histories, carry very different connotations and intonations.' (Stam and Shohat 2012:58). In their approach, Stam and Shohat stress the interconnectedness of ideas, processes of borrowings and exchanges, and multidirectional flows of ideas. Notably, the translinguistic view on translation and circulation of ideas is also committed to destabilizing the idioms of fidelity/betrayal that conceive of translation as secondary or imitative: 'Rather than conceive of adequate or inadequate copies of "original ideas," translinguistics stresses dialogism, interlocution, reinvoicing, and mediation.' (Stam and Shohat 2012:299). This approach can be linked to relational and interactionist perspectives on racialization that I outlined in one of the previous sections, but it is also in dialogue with my effort to move away from the appraisals of translation as a secondary imitation and reifications of authenticity.

Secondly, I see the 'foreign and modern' idiom of 'race as resistance' as linked to the counter-hegemonic US black politics associated with hip-hop and intersectionality but also entangled with the post-Cold War US global hegemony, the dominance of English and processes of neoliberal globalization. Both hip-hop and intersectionality, through their linkages to US black politics and cultures, circulate globally as counter-authority projects while also figuring as symbols of modernity due to the cultural and economic power of the USA. I am interested in transnational imaginaries, which envision them simultaneously as oppositional and rebellious and as more modern models for non-US music scenes and social movements to follow. In that regard, I link my thinking about these processes to Bonnett's reflections on the global US influence in the debates on anti-racism, who argues that one of the reasons it has been so hard for scholars to theorize may be partly linked to the fact that 'the influence of the US appears not as a form of dominant authority but of counter-authority, a challenge to traditional hierarchies' (Bonnett 2006:1084). Bonnett's main argument is that in trying to understand the US-Americanization of anti-racism, one should move beyond the accounts of direct imposition and US agency and look at the autonomous, transnational, and contradictory nature of this process, entangled with neoliberal globalization and deployment of the US as a model of modernization for the minoritized populations globally:

In sum, what is required is not another attempt to track US imperial intent but, rather, an engagement with the international deployment of the US as a social and economic role model. The terrain we enter, then, is one of paradoxes. Those forms of racialised minority agency and resistance that have provoked

anti-racist initiatives in so many countries, do so *within and against* an overarching (if always vulnerable) global system that is simultaneously 'US-Americanising' and truly international. Moreover, whilst the institutions within this system provide space for the voices of the marginalized, they also shape, interpret and give economic sanction to the 'voices that are heard' within non-dominant social movements and ideologies. (Bonnett 2006:1086–87)

Bonnett's work allows me to analyze how counter-hegemony associated with US black cultural forms exists in ambivalent relations with US hegemony. Tracing these complicated entanglements, such as the dissemination of the 'US model of racial categorization and racism' and 'dual globalization of neoliberalism and black symbols' (Bonnett 2021:21–22), allows for a novel engagement with Mogilner's formulation of 'race is a language, and empire is a context' (Mogilner 2021). In that light, I place the circulations of the idiom of 'race as resistance' into the context of the post-Soviet capitalist transition, where translations and adaptations of US black cultural forms are envisioned as modernization projects. The idiom of 'race as resistance' in this usage exudes the cosmopolitan prestige of the USA coupled with the radicalism of black thought and cultural forms. I focus on two translation projects that mediate and translate the idiom of 'race as resistance' to explore the generative effects of the invocations of the idiom as 'modern and foreign' in non-Anglophone contexts. This modernizing idiom provides resources for the racialized subjects in post-Soviet space who find inspiration in US black party hip-hop and forms of hip-hop entrepreneurship and Russophone feminist activists invested in anti-racism searching for new templates for fighting racism, transphobia, and homophobia.

Translation studies and sociolinguistics

To analyze my empirical cases, I draw on additional tools from translation studies and sociolinguistics that help concretize the theoretical approach to translation sketched earlier. More specifically, I draw on notions such as translation strategies, foreignization, literalism, *realia*, and others from translation studies. From sociolinguistics and related approaches, I draw on the concept of language ideologies, indexicality, and reworkings of the Bakhtinian chronotope to develop the notion of feminist chronotopes. I introduce these tools in more detail below.

Translation studies tools

When translating, one may choose between various solutions structured around two opposing visions. According to various translation theorists, these visions have been described as free vs. literal, source-oriented vs. target-language-oriented, foreignizing vs. domesticating, semantic vs. communicative, and overt vs. covert translations (Pym

2017:24–32). Terms such as foreignization, foreignizing translation, and domestication, domesticating translation have been associated with the works of translation scholar Lawrence Venuti. They were developed ‘to describe two extremes of how a translator positions a translated text in the target language and the textual environment of the target culture’ (Myskja 2013:3). Domesticating translation strategies assimilate the foreign text to cultural values and canons of the target language, and foreignizing translation strategies, challenging domestic values, prioritize the foreign forms and source-language text (Venuti 1998:240). If foreignization and domestication are two extremes on the spectrum, there are multiple positions in-between, resulting in various translation choices or strategies from which the translator chooses. Translation can be seen as a decision-making practice where the strategies chosen will have implications for the readers. The implications of translation strategies need to be positioned in the broader context of translation norms and expectations of target contexts, as well as power relations and hierarchies between languages. In that regard, it is crucial to note that Venuti works against what he calls the dominant regime of fluency and the illusion of transparency when foreign texts get translated into English (Venuti 1995:1–2). He sees the ‘insidious domestication of foreign texts, rewriting them in the transparent discourse that prevails in English’ as a function of ‘global domination of Anglo-American culture, of English’ (Venuti 1995:17). Venuti, therefore, suggests that ‘foreignizing translation in English can be a form of resistance against ethnocentrism and racism, cultural narcissism and imperialism.’ (Venuti 1995:20). Foreignizing translation for Venuti answers to the unique political situations in diverse contexts. It might assume an ‘oppositional stance towards the domestic, challenging literary canons, professional standards, and ethical norms in the target language’ (Venuti 1998:242). Foreignizing translations can be considered an instrument of cultural innovation or risk creating difficulty in comprehending the text.

If a foreignizing translation is a counter-weight to the tendency to domesticate the foreign in translations into English, how does this theory work in languages other than English? Indeed, one of the critiques of Venuti’s conceptualization of foreignization, conceptualized as resistance when foreign texts are translated into English, has been that foreignization may not be emancipatory for other contexts, provided the global hegemony of English. One such critique was articulated by Michael Cronin, who remarks on the ubiquity of the English language online and its effect on other languages arguing that English renders all other languages minority languages in comparison. Cronin suggests looking at the minority language through the relational lens; something is a minority in relation to something else (Cronin 1998:151). Foreignization strategies might as well be detrimental to minoritized languages: ‘Advocacy of non-fluent, refractory, exoticizing strategies, for example, can be seen as a bold act of cultural revolt and epistemological generosity in a major language, but for a minority language, fluent strategies may represent the progressive key to their very survival’ (Cronin 1998:147). Cronin’s reasoning points out that translation has a double, deeply contradictory role

and is far from being a benign act. It plays an ambiguous role in many languages, resulting in the production of multiple calques through the influence of the dominant language (what he calls 'translation as reflection'), pushing him to distinguish between types of translation from the standpoint of minority languages: 'translation-as-assimilation' and 'translation-as-diversification' (Cronin 1998:148).

Venuti and Cronin seem to recognize the contingent nature of relations between foreignizing and domesticating strategies, pointing to the importance of situating translation in respective socio-historical contexts and cultural values underpinning translation strategies at any given time and place. Whether foreignization or domestication will appear hegemonic, depends on the relationship between the two languages, the translation norms characterizing specific translation contexts, as well as the agenda and goals of the translators. The meaning of translation also shifts within the changing landscape of receiving culture, characterized by the dynamic interplay between source and target cultures (Baer 2017a:45).

It is then vital to locate the role of translation in Eastern European and Russophone contexts. Eastern European and Russian translation contexts have been described as 'cultures of translation' where the 'notion of a communal identity retrieved through translation served as a heroic metaphor representing a triumph over perceived backwardness and as a way to survive the onslaught – or flood – of foreign influences' (Baer 2011a:10). These translation contexts were informed by legacies of contiguous multi-ethnic Empires and elite multilingualism and in their approach to translation prioritized the target text, that is, the norms and expectations of the context where foreign texts arrive or, to use Venuti's terms, favoring domesticating strategies. Interestingly, within these translation contexts, 'the target text was expected to stand on its own and compete with – or even surpass – the source text' (Baer 2011a:10). Later on, Soviet translation studies, aware of Western translation scholarship developed a vibrant tradition which remained virtually unknown in the Western canon due to cultural effects of the Cold War, which has been recently called 'the case of missing Russian translation theories' (Pym and Ayzvazyan 2015). In the anthologies of Western translation studies, the birth of the discipline is situated in post-WW2 Europe, thereby reproducing 'the mythistory of translation studies' (Baer 2020b). The practice of translation was crucial for the Soviet period, resulting in the state's active promotion of the field and the establishment of ambitious translation initiatives such as the World Literature publishing house (1918-1927), aiming to translate and adapt into Russian best works of foreign literature (Wachtel 1999:67–68). Translation helped 'sew up' the Soviet system of diverse nations and national literatures into a unified whole, forming the Soviet canon of literature (Tyulenev and Nuriev 2019:166). In the USSR, the Russian language not only played the role of the lingua franca, framed as a 'non-national, supra-national, and transnational language,' but also as a vital 'translation medium,' 'from and into which the bulk of Soviet translation was being carried out' (Tyulenev and Nuriev 2019:165–66).

Where do Soviet and Russian translation studies stand concerning Western translation theories' foreignization and domestication terminology? The terms foreignization and domestication have never been rooted in Soviet translation tradition; instead, the primary debate between the 1930s and 1960s revolved around juxtaposing formalism and literalism (*буквализм*) to free translation, where the first term was loaded with negative connotations. Literalism, characterized by closely following the original, and bringing in foreign idioms and calques, was subject to ideological critique in the USSR (Borisenko 2017:139). In contrast, the socialist-realist translation, oriented to the reader, was considered the golden middle between two extremes (Borisenko 2017:136–37). Some translation studies scholars interpret realist translation of the 1950s as a dogmatic legacy of the Soviet past and a form of extreme domestication strategy, leaving no place for adherents of other translation methods (Azov 2012). Nevertheless, even after the collapse of the USSR, literalism is somewhat frowned upon in contemporary Russian translation studies (Achkasov 2018; Chironova 2014; Borisenko 2017).

One central term that emerges from my materials and that is central to Soviet translation studies tradition is the term *realia*. The problem of translating *realia* was investigated by Bulgarian translation studies scholars Vlahov and Florin in their 1980 book-length study *Untranslatable in translation*. As a translation studies concept, *realia* refer to culture-specific words and phenomena that present difficulty in translation. Many other translation theorists have reflected upon *realia*, and there are multiple synonyms for the term: non-equivalent vocabulary, culture-specific words, and others. *Realia* as a translation studies concept is linked to a referent that the *realia* describe, such as ethnographic artifacts, clothing, culture, customs, historical epoch and social organization, folklore, ethnoracial terminology, ethnoracial slurs, and other contextually specific things (Vlahov and Florin 1980:VI).

The distinguishing feature of *realia* compared to other words is the nature of its subject content, i.e., a close relationship of the referent - the object, concept, phenomenon denoted by the *realia* - with a people (country), tribe or, more rarely, with another social community, on the one hand, and a historical time interval, on the other; hence the corresponding national (local) and/or historical flavor (Vlahov and Florin 1980:30).

The crucial distinguishing feature of *realia* is their ubiquity, immediate intelligibility for those inhabiting certain lingua-culture, and foreignness for those who do not. A translator may choose between multiple translation strategies when translating *realia*. Transliteration allows retaining essential features of contextual specificity, while translation proper can proceed across multiple transformations, such as attempts to find a substitution, explain *realia* in the footnote, and calque it. When Vlahov and Florin discuss the difficulties of translating *realia*, they emphasize two main ones: the lack of equivalent or analog in the target language linked to the absence of a referent that the *realia* describe and the need to not only transmit the semantic aspect of *realia* but also

its historic-cultural specificity and connotations (Vlahov and Florin 1980:80). Some realia may spread globally and become familiar beyond their context of origination. Realia are also dynamic: once foreign realia may seep into local use, after a time, becoming ubiquitous, assimilated into language with time via shifting relations between socio-political contexts.

Sociolinguistic tools

In this thesis, I draw on concepts from sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology that provide invaluable resources for analyzing translation as a site through which categorizations, juxtapositions, and attributions are produced and evaluative positionings towards categories and language performed. Since translation in Stam and Shohat's formulation is 'entangled in the concrete arena of language conflict and dissonance' (Stam and Shohat 2012:57), the notion of language ideologies as developed in the field of linguistic anthropology offers a way to theorize these tensions. Language ideologies or linguistic ideologies, as used in sociolinguistics, refer to any sets of beliefs, ways of talking, and thinking about language, its structure, development, and use (Silverstein 1979; Woolard and Schieffelin 1994). One of the most omnipresent language ideologies structuring contemporary thought today is the 'identification of a language with a people' or 'equation of language and nation' (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994:60), inspired by both Enlightenment and German Romanticism. In earlier sections, I mentioned how romanticist attachment to originality and authenticity undergird conceptualizations of translation as a loss, distortion, and imitation. Getting 'exported through colonialism to become a dominant model around the world today, the nationalist ideology of language structures state politics, challenges multilingual states, and underpins ethnic struggles to such an extent that the absence of a distinct language can cast doubt on the legitimacy of claims to nationhood' (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994:60). Moreover, the same nationalist language ideology may underpin the counter-hegemonic minoritized language activism as well saturate scholarly analyses:

The equation of one language/one people, the Western insistence on the authenticity and moral significance of the mother tongue, and associated assumptions about the importance of purist language loyalty for the maintenance of minority languages have all been criticized as ideological red herrings, particularly in settings where multilingualism is more typical and where a fluid or complex linguistic repertoire is valued (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994:61).

Nationalist language ideologies and beliefs about the relative prestige of some languages over others may stigmatize variation over standard and demonize language mixing, non-standard forms, and code-switching. Within such framings, 'language mixing, codeswitching, and creoles are often evaluated as indicating less than full linguistic capabilities, revealing assumptions about the nature of language implicitly based in

literate standards and a pervasive tenet that equates change with decay' (Woolard and Schieffelin 1994:63). In my theoretical approach, which looks at translation as a site of encounter where demarcations are generated, valuations of particular translation strategies may be informed by various language ideologies, including affectively loaded propositions and statements about language and language contact.

Moreover, language ideologies may be analyzed with another, central to sociolinguistics concept, indexicality. The notion of indexicality has been explored in sociolinguistics, semiotics, discourse analysis, and linguistic anthropology. Index as a type of sign originates in Peircean semiotics. An index is distinguished from other signs, such as symbols and icons, by having a relation (often causal) to the signified. A human trace is a typical example of an indexical sign. In turn, the indexical function of language describes its non-referential, contextual use, that is, how language/utterances/words point to things in context. The notion of indexicality allows connecting language to social meanings arising in interactions; signs gain meanings by pointing to other signs. Perhaps the most often used examples of indexicality in language are deictics or referential indexes such as personal pronouns and adverbs: *you, they, here, there, yesterday, now, this, that*, which may be interpreted differently depending on the context and positioning of the speakers vis-à-vis each other and in relation to time and space.

Indexical order, a term introduced by Silverstein (Silverstein 2003), is a metapragmatic principle that organizes the language, stabilizes links between language form and social meanings, and 'produces social categories, recognizable semiotic emblems for groups and individuals' (Blommaert 2007:117). Orders of indexicality allow participants in the interaction to contextualize the use of language as indexing a particular speaker identity or group affiliation (gender, region, ethnoracial group, political affiliation). More broadly, indexicality is a principle through which 'linguistic forms are used to construct identity positions' involving 'the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:594). The orders of indexicality help understand the performative/interpretative work of participants involved in the interaction (Johnstone, Andrus, and Danielson 2006:81).

Through indexicality, every utterance tells something about the person who utters it – man, woman, young, old, educated, from a particular region, or belonging to a particular group, etc. – and about the kind of person we encounter – we make character judgements all the time, and labels such as 'arrogant', 'serious', 'funny', 'self-conscious', or 'businesslike' are based almost exclusively on how people communicate with us. Every utterance also tells us something about the utterance itself. Is it serious or banter? Is this an anecdote, a joke, an order, a request? Is the speaker sure/sincere/ content of what s/he says? What kind of relationship between the speaker and the hearer is articulated in this utterance – is this a friendly or a hostile utterance? And every utterance tells us something about the social context in which it is being produced: is this a formal or an informal occasion? Are things such as social class, gender, ethnicity, or professional status played out in the utterance? Are social roles reinforced or put up for negotiation? Are social rules being followed or broken? And so on. Indexical meaning is what anchors language usage firmly into social and cultural patterns." (Blommaert 2005:11–12).

The notion of indexicality provides a way for examining the process of categorization and circulation of categories within discourse, 'their explicit or implicit juxtaposition with other categories, and the linguistic elaborations and qualifications they attract (predicates, modifiers, and so on) all provide important information about identity construction' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:594). Among such elaborations is the notion of stance, which includes 'the display of evaluative, affective, and epistemic orientations in discourse' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:595). Bucholtz and Hall further specify that 'indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values – that is, ideologies – about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language.' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:594). One could therefore link the notion of language ideologies with the concept of indexicality when linguistic forms and phenomena index social groups on a larger scale, such as processes of globalization. As Irvine and Gal put it: 'participants' ideologies about language locate linguistic phenomena as part of, and evidence for, what they believe to be systematic behavioural, aesthetic, affective and moral contrasts among the social groups indexed' (Irvine and Gal 2000:37). Additionally, sociolinguistics offers tools that help analyze discursive production of authenticities by looking instead at the processes of authentication involving constructions of 'claims to realness and artifice' as a 'social process played out in discourse' (Bucholtz and Hall 2005:601).

One influential work in sociolinguistics that brings together the concept of language ideologies and accounts of racialization is Jane Hill, who analyzes 'folk theories of racism' in the US. Within the folk theories she studies, racism is conceptualized as a 'matter of individual beliefs, intentions and actions' where racists are 'anachronisms, who are ignorant, vicious, and remote from mainstream' but can be 'cured' through education (Hill 2009:7). Such individualizing and psychologizing accounts of racism are linked to the dominant linguistic ideologies, which 'shape and constrain discourse, and thus shape and constrain the reproduction of other kinds of ideologies, such as ideologies of gender, race, and class' (Hill 2009:33). Linguistic ideologies 'rationalize and justify the forms and functions of text and talk' and structure the way people think about language (Hill 2009:34). Several language ideologies, shape everyday and scholarly assumptions about language: personalism, referentialism, baptismalism, and performative language ideologies. I shall briefly outline their significance below since they help approach the metadiscursive work around the translations of ethnoracial categories in my empirical materials.

The language ideology of personalism is based on the assumption that 'the meanings of utterances are determined by the intentions of speakers' where 'speakers believe something and intend to communicate about it,' choosing 'words that match their beliefs and that will therefore best fulfill their intentions' (Hill 2009:64). Personalism is intricately linked with modernist ideas about personhood, based on the assumption that 'each individual has an invisible interior self' which is the site of beliefs and intentions

and emotional states such as love and hatred,' permitting 'to say that when a speaker speaks, he or she "means" something' (Hill 2009:88–89). Referentialist ideology is based on the assumption 'of the stability of reference' and that 'language exists in order to communicate information, and that it uses words to do this job,' insisting 'that words must be used properly' (Hill 2009:39). Referentialist language ideology is concerned with 'whether or not statements are "true"', leading to the assumption that if 'we merely "educate," revealing the racist errors in stereotypes, they will be discredited' (Hill 2009:40). Baptismal ideology fixes the meanings of the words as stable, 'determined in a baptismal moment by an authoritative source,' positing that 'speakers do not reshape the meanings of words, they choose them in order to correctly represent the world' (Hill 2009:64). Performative language ideology, underlying dominant understandings of 'hate speech' and speech acts theory, suggests that 'words have an active force, that they can soothe or wound' (Hill 2009:40). Performative language ideology takes some words as being 'assaultive, rather than true or false' (Hill 2009:40), making 'racial epithets and slurs visible as racist' (Hill 2009:41).

Linguistic ideologies of personalism and referentialism are much deployed 'in popular rationalizations and justifications' determining 'whether discourse is "racist" or "not racist"' (Hill 2009:39). Hill makes it clear that in US debates on racism: 'in recognizing a "racist" or in identifying "racism," a White person shows herself to be a good person' (Hill 2009:45). Building on these theorizations, Jennifer Delfino studies the discourse of 'white allyship' in an anti-racist Facebook group, describing how it is constructed through 'raciolinguistic chronotopes' 'of regression and progress' and 'how discourses of allyship locate racism and anti-racism in the practices and beliefs of particular individuals who are constructed within chronotopic narratives as idealized embodiments of racism, such as backward conservatives, or anti-racism, embodied contrastively in the figure of the woke ally' (Delfino 2021:240). These conceptualizations from sociolinguistic research provide me with tools that help explore the circulations of the idiom of 'race as resistance' as 'foreign and modern.' They also help trace the processes of negotiations around translations of ethnoracial categories involving the production of social types associated with particular translation strategies or positionings towards them.

Chronotope is a concept developed by Mikhail Bakhtin for the study of literary genres, who defined it as follows: 'We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "time-space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature [...] What counts for us is the fact that it expresses the inseparability of space and time (time as the fourth dimension of space)' (Bakhtin 1981:84). The concept of chronotope has been developed further in linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and other fields studying narratives, identities, and language ideologies to theorize the use of temporality in discourse (Agha 2007; De Fina and Perrino 2020; Delfino 2021; Dick 2010; Koven 2013). Asif Agha has extended the Bakhtinian notion of chronotope for cultural analysis to include

‘depictions of place-time-and-personhood to which social interactants orient when they engage each other through discursive signs of any kind.’ (Agha 2007:320). Agha’s central contribution to the analysis of chronotopes was introducing the notion of a ‘participation framework’ of representation through which chronotopes are enacted and circulate. Participation frameworks may vary from a face-to-face conversation to a mediated spectacle. As Agha argues:

Chronotopic representations enlarge the ‘historical present’ of their audiences by creating chronotopic displacements and cross-chronotope alignments between persons here-and-now and persons altogether elsewhere, transposing selves across discrete zones of cultural spacetime through communicative practices that have immediate consequences for how social actors in the public sphere are mobilized to think, feel and act. (Agha 2007:324)

One example of scholarship that combines the conceptual tools of raciolinguistic chronotopes and indexicality is Michele Koven’s research that explores metadiscursive work and multifocal indexicality in Lusophone-descendants race-talk (Koven 2013). Koven traces how her participants’ race talk, especially the use of Lusophone and Francophone ethnoracial categories, at times was read to index the interviewees’ stance towards the referent (ethnoracialized others) and at others, informed by personalist language ideologies (Hill 2009), how they are shifted to imply the speaker’s identity as racist. Importantly for my research, Koven highlights how linguistic ideologies intersect with chronotopic ones, envisioning France as modern and progressive and Portugal as more backward. In other words, when the indexicality of race talk is interpreted as to locate the speaker as a type, this type is chronotopically positioned, ‘the French, modern “antiracist,” vs the Portuguese, nonmodern, “racist.”’ (Koven 2013:544). Koven’s work demonstrates how race talk becomes a site not only for displaying, decoding, and assigning racist/antiracist stances to self and others but also figures as a ‘site of struggle over participants’ relationships to national belonging, modernity, and youthfulness’ (Koven 2013:546). In sum, sociolinguistic tools help me analyze how the situated translations of the idiom of ‘race as resistance,’ positioned by those who mediate as ‘foreign and modern,’ involve multiple negotiations and layering of language and chronotopic ideologies.

Methodological approach, data collection, and ethics

The methodological approach of this study, which seeks to explore the process of racial translation, tracks the circulating idiom of ‘race as resistance’ as it enters two post-Soviet Russophone translation projects through hip-hop and intersectionality. In light of the theoretical approaches to translation I use, my framing of the empirical cases I investigate - Russophone grassroots intersectional feminist community and Timati’s mainstream hip-hop - as ‘translation projects’ is not meant as a pejorative. More

specifically, in constructing my methodological approach, I am inspired by Gal's et al. suggestions to track translational chains, the processes of attributions and generative effects of making links to other texts and contexts and marking things as 'foreign,' as well as Butler's suggestions to trace the disturbances produced by the foreign terms as they enter (Butler 2019; Gal et al. 2015). In this regard, I see an opening where other scholars may see a lack. Because the everyday ways of talking about human diversity in Russian often do not explicitly rely on racial categories as in US English (Isurin 2014), one can explore the Russophone translations of intersectionality and hip-hop as sites of encounter with the idiom of 'race as resistance.' Throughout the empirical chapters of this thesis, I track the processes of categorization, demarcation, and attribution of things as 'foreign,' which unfold through translations of these cultural forms. More specifically, drawing on translation studies approaches, I conceptualize the idiom 'race as resistance' as involving circulations of English-language racial identity categories or ethnoracial realia (English words such as 'black,' 'white,' 'non-white,' 'people of color,' 'woman of color') which enter non-Anglophone contexts through translation. This formulation allows me to focus on the strategies chosen when translating these categories and analyze their multiple generative effects. Drawing on the insights from the sociolinguistic scholarship, I explore how various translation strategies may generate particular types of personhood, appraisals of translation projects as 'foreign,' and necessitate attempts to repair the stigma associated with translation.

At the same time, my use of the translation of Anglophone ethnoracial categories as entry points into exploring racial translation's generative effects is not without its limits. Taking the multimodal nature of the music video genre, in my second empirical case, I use a different approach to racial translation that includes the outlined methodology but also goes beyond the limits of semantic categories. This approach is inspired by Alaina Lemon's thinking about race as discursive practice informed by sociolinguistics and attention to the indexical functions of language, as well as Mogilner's thinking about race as a language and empire as a context (Lemon 2002; Mogilner 2021). Lemon specifies that 'racial logic lives not only in terms that refer to things but in the various ways people use language to index relations in specific contexts' (Lemon 2002:58). This line of thinking guides my inquiry into racial translation not only on the semantic level that 'describe or delimit racial categories' but also by interrogating 'who points to whom' and under what circumstances and where (Lemon 2002:60). My understanding of 'race as resistance' as an idiom that also includes visual and musical styles allow for looking at racial translation as operating through various modes such as audio, gestures, visuals, accents as well as written texts. I develop the notion of racial/sexual metonymy to theorize racial translation across Timati's hip-hop videos.

This study investigates two specific cases of racial translation, one primarily text-based and another multimodal. I, therefore, generate, delimit and approach my materials in different ways. The first empirical case of the Russophone feminist intersectional page is based on several years of digital ethnographic study and qualitative

content and discourse analysis. After I formulated the focus of my study on racial translation, it became easier to navigate the tremendous amount of textual output generated by FIO's moderators and users in the comment threads. A single post could include 200-300 comments or more. I searched the posts and comment threads for terms such as *race, translation, ethnicity, nationality, racism, PoC, WoC, white, black, English, Russian*, and their Russian counterparts, including conjugations. For subsequent analysis, I selected 50-60 relevant posts to delimit my corpus. Each post included strings of comments with up to 300 comments per post. To ensure that I had not excluded anything relevant, I manually reviewed every post in the community and comment sections, which helped me find several other posts that did not use the mentioned keywords but were still related to my interest in racial translation. The resulting textual data was transferred to *Atlas.ti* software, where I carried out coding and content analysis, expanding my understanding of emerging themes in comment threads. From 276 codes, several central areas of discursive contestation emerged, which I grouped under headings such as local context, whiteness, pedagogy, race and racism, *natsional'nost'*, translation troubles, local xenophobia and racism, PoC, ethnic Russianness, loan words politics, reflexivity across contexts, USA context, accusations of foreignness, and many others. Thereafter, I worked with each theme or their intersections more closely. By laying out the selection of FIO's texts informing my corpus, I acknowledge that this thesis is, of course, only one partial reading among many possible stories that can be told about this feminist community/page. The story I tell is informed by a particular analytical focus on racial translation. Moreover, as I worked more with the materials and themes, my understanding changed along with the literature, debates, and concepts I discovered.

I started assembling the data for Part III after having discovered the video *Ты такой* (2015) in 2017. The video captivated my attention and led me to gradually construct a central corpus of material for studying what I eventually came to understand as the project of racial translation in Timati's hip-hop. I selected seven central videos that ground my interpretation of this project (in chronological order of their release): *#ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ* (2012); *Что видишь ты (What do you see)* (2013); *Понты (Swag)* (2014); *Борода (Beard)* (2014); *Баклажан (Eggplant)* (2015); *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* (2015); *Мага (Maga)* (2016). Occasionally in the text, I briefly analyze other artistic works. I have also relied on an extensive number of secondary data to ground my analysis and interpretation:

- 1) A compilation of 20 text-based and video interviews with Timati in English and Russian from secondary sources
- 2) A host of video interviews with Black Star label-affiliated persons (such as Viktor Abramov, Pashu, Yuriy Levitas, Walter Tschassem, former Black Star label artists, and others)

- 3) Music reviews and criticism on Russian hip-hop (colta.ru, flow.ru, rap.ru, Telegram channels)
- 4) Russian hip-hop YouTube channels
- 5) Participant observation of hip-hop.ru and the flow.ru and YouTube comment sections commenting on the videos of Timati and Black Star
- 6) Social media accounts of Timati, especially Instagram

When it comes to the music video analysis I conduct in Part III, I rely heavily on the methodology suggested by Carol Vernallis in her work *Experiencing Music Video* (Vernallis 2004), paying attention to the narrative structure and the function of the narrative in the music videos, to the use of editing and settings with its genre-specific conventions, to the mise-en-scène (props, costumes, colors), and the interplay between video, lyrics, and music. The dynamic screenshot presentation technique in the rows of three allowed me to foreground the central role of the narrative in most of the videos I analyzed while illustrating the operations of multimodal racial metonymy on which the process of racial translation in the videos is built.

My reflections around the first empirical case, a community of feminist translators of intersectionality engaging in English-to-Russian textual translation, made me aware of the immense complexity of ‘the fact of translation.’ I felt that I could not simply omit the actual practice of English-to-Russian translation in which FIO moderators were engaging from my methodological approach. Taking translation seriously and examining the translation strategies used by both projects also motivates my presentation of empirical materials, side by side, in Russian and translated into English. Throughout part II, I present the empirical materials in both languages. In contrast, the more visually oriented part III requires such juxtaposition only in some cases, such as translations of lyrics and occasional pithy phrases from the interviews. However, visual materials central to part II are extensively represented. Several considerations underpin my choice of such an extensive presentation of the empirical materials in part I.

I consider FIO an important site of Russophone feminist knowledge production, and my research engages extensively with FIO’s translational praxis. Additionally, I foreground the role of FIO’s readers in generating new knowledge through their involvement with translated texts in the comment threads. FIO’s heterogenous audiences welcomed, approved, and amplified frames and terms offered by the moderators participating in the emergent Russophone intersectional discursivity. They also contested and challenged some of the aspects of the incoming frames, pointing out their limits and sometimes explicitly rejecting them entirely. I foreground and visibilize translation in the presentation of my empirical materials to intervene in ‘the invisibility of translation’ and instrumentalist approach to translation within global sexuality studies and academic research in social sciences in general (Baer 2017a:40). The ‘inattention on the part of Anglophone scholars to questions of language and languaging’ remains the norm, lending ‘tacit support to the assumption that today “everyone speaks

English” (Baer 2017a:40). The elision of translation partakes in the ‘academe’s participation or collusion in the homogenization of cultures by glossing over linguistic difference’ (Baer 2017a:42). More critical reflection is needed on the role of translation in researching non-Anglophone contexts, on the role of presenting empirical materials as if they already existed in English, as well as on our role as researchers who also translate and therefore transform the materials.

More pragmatically, presenting materials already translated into English would have made it harder for me to showcase the translation strategies used when presenting the Anglophone racial categories. Some words stay untranslated from English on the FIO pages; some appear as transliterations and calques. If I had presented my research materials already ‘packaged’ in English as if they were not translated, engagements with language, creative transformations in translation, and co-occurrence of different translation strategies would be hard to analyze. I also deliberately choose to foreignize my translations of particular words from Russian into English, especially regarding cognates with different meanings across languages and instances of linguistic play in the comment threads. While such extensive engagement with translation might introduce a difficulty for a reader unfamiliar with the Russian language, I encourage the reader to stay with this unease and interrogate the assumptions underpinning the expectations of uninterrupted textual experience in English and the presentation of materials as if they were already written in English.

Moreover, presenting materials in both languages valorizes the translation labor of FIO moderators. It makes visible my interventions as a researcher who translates and reshapes materials written in Russian into English. I open my imperfect translations to scrutiny by making my translation choices visible. Finally, presenting empirical materials in such a way opens multiple ways of reading the dissertation, offering variegated experiences for both Anglophone and Russophone-Anglophone readers. Bilingual readers may choose to read empirical materials only in Russian or both languages or even examine my translation choices.

The first empirical part of the thesis is built on a digital ethnographic study involving several years of participant observations of FIO: first as an ordinary feminist reader and later as a feminist researcher. I have followed the community as a reader since around 2014. I actively enjoyed and liked FIO’s posts but never engaged in the comment threads or chats. Translated articles and posts from this community were essential to my variegated grassroots feminist diet. At the time, I followed and read many other Russophone feminist social media pages. Several years later, I reconceptualized my interest in FIO in scholarly terms, refocusing my attention on negotiations and translations of intersectionality and other emergent feminist idioms inspired by Anglophone digital feminist projects. I started observing FIO with a scholarly focus from around 2015 when the page was highly active. The entire FIO’s textual output was public when I gathered the textual materials forming the corpus for my analysis. That means that even unregistered users without an account on this platform could access FIO’s

posts and comment threads. Such openness corresponded to the flourishing of grassroots Russophone feminist online pages at the time and FIO's interest in spreading intersectional feminist discourse as widely as possible. Around 2016, there was a moderatorial split in the collective announced publicly. Some moderators left and found a new intersectional page on the same social media platform, which could not approximate the fame and readership of FIO. There may be other reasons for the split, but my project's analytical scope does not involve a focus on activist relationships. Around 2017/2018, however, the page switched its privacy settings from public and available to even unregistered users to open to followers only. 'Following' in the context of the social media platform I studied does not necessitate payments for reading; it implies a possibility of moderators to pre-screen who will be granted access to the page or not letting new users in.

I was never part of the private chats of FIO moderators and have not interviewed them for this study. I am also unaware of who they are; they moderated the page under pseudonyms, although one of them has befriended me on my anonymous social media profile. The switch in the community's privacy settings could possibly be (partially) motivated by a high-profile case of criminal persecution of a radical feminist blogger from Russia active on the same social media platform but not being a part of this community. It could also be motivated by increasing governmental control around online expressions. Contemporary feminist activism in Russia remains haunted by the possibilities of persecution. All these factors could have contributed to FIO freezing its activity in 2018. Other factors could also influence 'the freeze' of the page. For all the above reasons, I decided to preserve the anonymity of the page by giving it the nickname FIO. I do not retain moderators' or users' names or pseudonyms or give links to the community in the references. It must be pointed out that this decision to anonymize the page is somewhat contradictory since it challenges the FIO moderators' preferences regarding the authorship and valorization of their work. On the pages of FIO, moderators repeatedly stressed their appreciation for being cited when reposted elsewhere on other feminist grassroots pages. Nevertheless, in the present-day context, marked by the persecution of individual feminist and LGBTQ activists and gender studies research in Russia, it can be dangerous, and I prefer to anonymize all these references.

Outline of the empirical chapters

The section below is meant as a guide to help navigate the empirical chapters of this thesis. Part II introduces FIO, the Russophone intersectional feminist community engaging in translations of intersectionality between 2013-2017. Motivated by the double goal of translating English-language intersectional feminist texts and creating Russophone feminist intersectional idiom from translations, its translation praxis relies on a range of strategies. I track these translation strategies and their effects across five empirical chapters, paying particular attention to the translation of racial categories.

In Chapter 3, I map out the general stakes in the emergence of the Russophone intersectional feminist idiom, navigating between the power and stigma of translation. I trace how FIO's central definition depends on dis-identifications within the Russophone feminist field: against radical feminism, which is positioned as anachronistic, homophobic, and racist, and against an ongoing 'conservative turn' and Russian patriotic state rhetoric arising in 2013-2015. I center my analysis on hypervisible translators of intersectionality, framing them as figures of intersectional authority. They gain this authority by meditating the modern and foreign feminist frames, such as intersectionality, and paradoxically constitute translations as new originals, overturning relations of canonicity. Nevertheless, translation's belatedness and the stigma of translation as an imitation haunt the FIO project. I introduce the concept of feminist chronotope to show how intersectionality is by FIO moderators envisioned as feminist future, a remedy against exclusion. Circulating feminist chronotopes are redeployed in contestations around translation and get harnessed on local chronotopic imaginaries. I demonstrate how chronotopic and language ideologies in these discussions assign Russophone intersectionality and Russian-English bilingualism to the feminist future and Russophone radical feminism and Russian monolingualism to the past.

In Chapter 4, I examine the politics of transliterated English-language feminist concepts. Concern with the foreignness of transliterations extends to imagining both intersectionality and its mediators as foreign. Transliterations as an example of foreignizing translation strategies provoke visceral unease, accusations of unintelligibility, anxieties about language mixing, and the role of multilingual translators who emerge as cosmopolitan feminist elites distant from 'ordinary readers.' I trace how different language and chronotopic ideologies undergird moderatorial preference for transliterations. This, in turn, leads the moderators to associate the critique of translation strategy with a particular type of personhood and as a proxy for suspicious political positions. In their reactions, the moderators evoke the imaginaries of anachronistic *radfem* compared both to 'backward US feminism of the 60s', ignorant Russian peasants, and Slavophile concern with the purity of the Russian language.

In Chapter 5, I turn to racial categories in translation. I trace FIO's engagement with literal translations of the racial category 'white' informing many US intersectional feminist texts and examine the limits of its translatability for situated Russophone

feminist anti-racism. I argue that FIO's translation praxis is generative by showing how translated categories such as *белая женщина* (white woman) enter local use as presumed useful tools for situated activist praxis. I look at the production of moderatorial anti-racist whiteness-in-translation, which relies on the chronotopic figures of backward racist others who are yet to master the foreign and modern anti-racist idiom. I turn to the discussions in the comment threads where FIO users try to understand who may count as *белые* (whites) in Russia and other post-Soviet contexts and thereby probing the limits of translatability of the racial category 'white' for the situated anti-racist praxis. I also interrogate the peculiar translingual category *кавказцы*/Caucasians, which bears opposing meanings in English and Russian when it comes to racialization dynamics.

In Chapter 6, I sketch the journey of the categories 'people of color' and 'women of color,' which are left untranslated from English. In my material, although untranslated and conspicuously foreign, these categories paradoxically contribute to the proliferation of categories through footnoting and raw translation. I trace the FIO moderators' chronotopic rhetoric of lag, based on the presumed absence of the domestic legacies of anti-racist struggles, which casts Anglophone intersectional feminist anti-racism as a modern model to emulate. This imaginary lag, in turn, informs the preference for foreignizing translation strategies, where foreignization is conceived as modernization. I examine the implications of the decision not to translate the categories 'PoC' and 'WoC,' including attempts to find local equivalents for the US 'women of color,' inaugurating the search for a post-Soviet intersectional feminist subject. For FIO moderators, the 'foreign WoC' figure becomes a litmus test for detecting racism among the readers. In contrast, within Russophone *radfem* discourses, the foreign 'trans woman of color' figure is seen as emblematic of Russophone intersectionality's presumed obsession with mimicking US feminism. Through transphobic rhetoric, this figure is mobilized as a sign of Russophone intersectionality's complete foreignness and irrelevance of its concerns for local feminists.

In Chapter 7, I analyze the quest for localizing the US idiom of race, informing intersectionality, by examining domesticating translation strategies. The term *realia* emerged in the materials as a demand for intersectionality's contextualization, sensitive to the specificities of post-Soviet ethnoracial power dynamics. If understood as a translation studies concept, attentive to extra-semantic dimensions, then conceiving ethnoracial categories as *realia* could serve to probe the limits of literalism in racial translation. Finally, I examine some of the discussions in the comment threads evoking post-Soviet ethnoracial *realia* and narrating the practices of ethnoracial discernment, which allows insight into the operations of localized racial logics and the fuzzy boundaries between race, ethnicity, and nation.

Part III is concerned with the project of racial translation within Timati's hip-hop. Much like FIO translators of intersectionality, where foreignization figured as a tool of Russophone feminisms' modernization, Timati wanted to bring the imagined foreign

and modern US hip-hop idiom to post-Soviet Russia. He, too, had to navigate the stigma of translation resulting in accusations of chronic inauthenticity and mimicking US hip-hop too zealously. I track his multimodal racial translation strategies through five empirical chapters.

In Chapter 8, I examine how Timati brought commercial US black hip-hop aesthetics to 2000s Russia and successfully married it to Russian glamour. Using racial translation as a tool that allows tracing how English 'black' and Russian 'чёрный' are only partially equivalent, I argue that Timati deploys foreign US blackness as a cosmopolitan cultural capital to alleviate the violence of post-Soviet racialization. I show how his time in the USA as a teenager provided an immersive learning experience regarding music and the business models of hip-hop moguls. Timati's integration of US hip-hop and R&B aesthetics into Russia and his later transnational success relied on his ability to approximate US black aesthetics through his direct experience of 'the source,' ethnoracial malleability, and capacity to mediate between post-Soviet markets, local economic elites, US racial authenticity, and US hip-hop celebrities.

However, Timati's dazzling transnational success did not alleviate the struggle with domestic hip-hop authenticity, and he remained perceived by Russian audiences as too foreign, imitating US hip-hop too closely. In Chapter 9, I track the translation strategies deployed to negotiate this stigma of imitation: hip-hop homophobia, virality, vicarious realness, and regional originals. These strategies are linked to the pursuit of originality and the search for racial translation, manifest in Timati's attempts to find a localized equivalent to US black masculinities North and South of Caucasus. I offer the analysis of two videos that are vital for this turn: the 2012 hip-hop-*meykhana* #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ, a homophobic diss outing the Russian celebrity Phillip Kirkorov, and the 2013 video *Что видишь ты* shot in Argun Gorge, Chechnya, built on Russian Imperial tropes of the Caucasian sublime.

In chapter 10, I examine the racial and sexual metonymy of the beard as a strategy of racial translation developed in Timati's and MC Doni's memetic videos in 2014-2015. By engaging with the literatures on East-West sexual geopolitics and Russian masculinities, I analyze two videos: Timati's and MC Doni's *Борода* (2014) and MC Doni's and Natali's *Ты такой* (2015). I show how *Борода* (2014), through imbrication in East-West sexual geopolitics and hip-hop modernity, performs a revalorization of non-Russian racialized masculinities away from the image of Russia's security threat (bearded terrorist) towards modern, sexy and cool, able to protect Russia's multi-ethnic organic future against sexually perverse Europe. In MC Doni's and Natali's *Ты такой* (2015), revalorized non-Russian masculinities are elevated from post-Soviet abject into the realm of cool through hip-hop modernity and entrepreneurialism, interpellated through the promise of Central Asian migrant economic uplift in Russia and the translated sexual fantasy of ethnoracial mixing.

In chapter 11, I examine the pinnacle of Timati's project of racial translation that resulted in the invention of a deliberately memetic character Teymuraz enacting

racialized clichés of Caucasian and Central Asian masculinities. I situate the invention of Teymuraz as part of Russia's hybrid cultural trend of aesthetic populism amid the 'conservative turn,' which recycles elements of the New East *gopnik* style, Soviet and post-Soviet comedies about men from the Caucasus and Central Asia, combined with elements of social critique, and appropriation of subaltern voices. I analyze three videos with Teymuraz: 2014 *Понты (Swag)*, 2015 *Баклажан (Eggplant)*, and 2016 *Мага (Maga)*, and unpack the work of racial signification and multimodal racial metonymy within them. I also trace broader implications of Teymuraz as a strategy of racial translation by placing the figure in the context of Timati's chronic hip-hop inauthenticity and stigma of imitation and a peculiar patriotic anti-racist project with contradictory implications that both Timati and Teymuraz perform.

In Chapter 12, I engage with Cold War-inflected taxonomies of Russian hip-hop that construe the genre as music of resistance able to democratize the authoritarian East. Timati's 2015 patriotic turn in these readings emerges as a perverse emblem of everything wrong with Russia. In contrast, I read this patriotic turn as a strategy of hip-hop localization that includes both ludic and serious disidentification with the USA as a source and origin of hip-hop in changing geopolitical context. This strategy results in performances of patriotism and ludic rebellions against the US hegemon and US hip-hop in Timati's video and on social media. I also engage with Russian discourses of hip-hop authenticity, preoccupied with detecting and exposing plagiarism in Timati's work. By building on the anthropology of fakes and literature that links post-Soviet imaginaries of race, market, and immorality, I suggest that the genre of the Russian hip-hop commentary on Timati works in peculiar ways to discern between 'real' hip-hop and 'fake' hip-hop ending up placing him both outside of the borders of the genre and outside of the Russian nation. It exposes how a Russian ethnonational bias informs the discourses of Russian hip-hop authenticity. I end the chapter with an interesting case where homophobic rhetoric, once used by Timati as a strategy of hip-hop authentication in 2018, boomerangs back to the Black Star label artist Egor Kreed. Paradoxically, moral panics now accuse Black Star artists of 'LGBT propaganda' and involves confrontations with even harder masculine Caucasian realness from the North Caucasian republics of Dagestan, showcasing the relationality of the hierarchies of masculine realness.

In the Afterword, I round off the dissertation by reflecting on the research questions and design. I also outline the significant changes in the research context since 2018, especially after February 2022.

PART II: TRANSLATING INTERSECTIONALITY

3. The politics of Russophone translations of intersectionality

Introduction: Buzzing digital feminisms in times of a ‘conservative turn.’

The period between 2013 and 2016/2017 was a time of buzzing proliferation of Russophone grassroots digital feminist media. Together with the so-called ‘conservative turn,’ marking Russia’s shift to the rhetoric of ‘traditional values,’ which would frame feminism as Western and foreign, a significant grassroots feminist ferment was generated online. Within Western commentaries on feminist movements in post-Soviet contexts, including Russia, feminism is characterized as frail or even nonexistent (Solovey 2022:12). The region’s only widely known manifestations of feminism remain high-profile cases of activist persecution, such as Pussy Riot (Wiedlack 2016; Wiedlack and Neufeld 2014), at the expense of smaller and less visible Russophone digital feminist scenes. Building on earlier digital Russophone feminist communities in Runet,²² this feminist buzz that emerged at the time defies gloomy narratives about the scarcity and alleged unpopularity of feminism in post-Soviet spaces, but its stories remain yet to be written.²³

Grassroots digital feminist pages during the time period in question were a central part of the broader intellectual current, making feminism in Russia and beyond less of a swearword and an oddity than it used to be only ten years ago. The work of numerous online media outlets, public figures, feminist activists, and scholars also contributed to the relative centering of feminism and LGBT problematics within a broader Russophone public discourse. Despite or perhaps also partly because of the notorious ‘conservative turn’ that marked recent years in Russia, feminist discourses thrived online during the same period.

In the mid-2010s, grassroots digital feminist spaces became central arenas for carving out the Russian-speaking intersectional feminist idiom this thesis sets to examine. Operating on social network platforms prevalent in the post-Soviet region, such feminist pages attracted tens of thousands of readers. Inspired by foreign feminist projects, some pages posted anonymous stories of sexism shared by subscribers, forming archives

²² Russophone segment of the internet.

²³ For notable exceptions see the works of Vanya Mark Solovey (Solovey 2020, 2021, 2022), whose upcoming dissertation is dedicated to mapping of Russophone grassroots feminist movement. On transfeminism see the works of Yana Kirey-Sitnikova (Kirey-Sitnikova 2016, 2020; 2015).

documenting the re-articulation of everyday experiences through newly emerging feminist idioms. Others provided access to translated feminist texts.

My central research focus is a Russophone intersectional feminist translation-based online page and community called Feminist Intersectionality against Oppression (FIO), whose peak activity years spanned from 2013 to 2017.²⁴ It defined itself as an intersectional, anti-transphobic, anti-racist, LGBTQ-friendly, body-positive feminist public page run by a small collective of moderators-translators. FIO was a feminist project built explicitly around translation, readership, and discussions of intersectional feminist texts. It was the most prominent intersectional feminist page among other Russophone intersectional communities, having tens of thousands of readers. FIO was crucial in bringing new intersectional discourses into the Russian-language feminist online spaces. Introduced through FIO and facilitated by the rise of social media, intersectional feminist concepts and frames traveled across epistemic, linguistic, and cultural borders, propelling the emergence of new feminist knowledges and identifications. Many Russophone users first learned about intersectionality through reading FIO. Others flocked to the page, dissatisfied with more exclusionary articulations of Russophone feminisms online that reproduced homophobia or racism.

The principal aim of telling FIO's story is to shift the focus away from the scholarly narratives, which often position Russophone feminisms exclusively through the lens of resistance to the Russian state, in whose conservative political rhetoric feminist activism often appears foreign and Western. As important as this story is, it still obscures the fractured polyphony of digital Russophone feminisms, crisscrossed by multiple conflicts and debates, including the role of Western feminist discourses. I suggest that a careful examination of these feminist discourses allows us to grasp what kind of disturbances feminist frames, such as US-originating intersectionality, produce within Russophone feminist scenes when they enter them through translation.

In this chapter, I sketch out the central characteristics of FIO. I first describe how dis-identification with Russophone radical feminism provided both the reasons for its emergence and structured its self-positioning. I argue that one of the constitutive tensions within the community is the tension between stigma and the power of translation. FIO moderators/translators continuously negotiate the stigma of translation, a prejudice that frames their translations of intersectionality as unoriginal copying and imitating US feminism. However, simultaneously, they become hyper-visible figures of intersectional authority by mediating intersectionality to Russophone audiences. These mediations reverse the relations of canonicity vis-à-vis original texts and transfigure Russophone translations of intersectionality as new originals. Then, building on scholarship on language ideologies and feminist storytelling, I track how traveling Western feminist chronotopes and local chronotopic constructs from the Russian past are deployed in FIO moderators' discussions over translations to legitimate

²⁴ I have changed the name of the page and won't reveal the name of the social network for the safety of activists. See the section on ethical concerns for more details.

foreignizing translation strategies. I examine how chronotopic ideologies in these discussions assign Russophone intersectionality and Russian-English bilingualism to the feminist future and Russophone radical feminism and Russian monolingualism to the past.

Translating intersectionality to fight exclusion: dis-identifying with Russophone *radfem*

FIO represented a unique project: visibilizing and positioning itself explicitly as a translation-based feminist online page/community. Multiple grassroots Russophone feminist communities translated texts from English to Russian, yet translation rarely featured as central to their self-positioning. In this section, I describe the core features of FIO: the goals it pursued, the kind of texts it translated, the type of identifications it helped produce, the visions of moderatorial politics it espoused, and the kinds of norms it wanted to challenge.

FIO was a feminist project built around translation, readership, and discussions of intersectional feminist texts. Initially starting with translations of feminist memes from English-language Tumblr blogs, it later shifted to longer textual forms. FIO translated English-language feminist texts, mostly from English-language intersectional feminist media, such as everydayfeminism.com.²⁵ German-language sources, articles from the Guardian, and transcripts based on YouTube videos could also occasionally serve as sources. The moderators also translated excerpts from scholarly feminist texts authored by such US feminist scholars as bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and Peggy McIntosh. FIO actively engaged with the community of its readers: each post had a comment thread where readers exchanged thoughts, posed questions about the content, and chatted with moderators.

Along with new terms, new identifications emerged: ‘intersectional feminist’ quickly became an orientation-like marker in grassroots Russian-speaking digital feminist scenes. This identity was often positioned against other feminist orientations, culminating in the prolonged conflict between Russophone radical feminists and intersectional feminists over the issue of transphobia in the movement. From the very start of the project in 2013, FIO admins were quite explicit about their goals – creating a safe platform that would become an alternative to the features of radical feminism argued to be problematic and permeating Russian-speaking online feminist spaces. FIO strived to overcome perceived racist, homophobic, and transphobic tendencies within the broader Russophone online feminist discourse. Below is how the need to create such a space was articulated on the page’s guidelines:

²⁵ everydayfeminism.com

Почему вы решили создать эту страницу?

Для того, чтобы создать противовес доминирующему в русскоязычном пространстве феминистскому дискурсу, выдержанному в стиле второй волны феминизма. Такой дискурс, как правило, наполнен расизмом, трансфобией, квирфобией, тяжел для восприятия из-за обилия триггеров и псевдонаучной лексики, а также ориентирован в основном на "сферическую в вакууме" цис-гетеросексуальную женщину титульной национальности.

Why did you decide to create this page?

To counter the dominating Russophone feminist discourse rendered in the second-wave feminist style. This type of discourse is full of racism, transphobia, and queerphobia, and it is difficult to grasp due to triggers and pseudo-scientific vocabulary. It centers on the "spherical cis-heterosexual woman of titular *natsional'nost'* in a vacuum."

Intersectional feminist discourse was seen as a remedy against exclusionary tendencies within online Russian-language feminist pages. The faults this dominant feminist discourse is accused of were expressed through the usage of transliterated terms such as *расизм* (racism), *трансфобия* (transphobia), *квирфобия* (queerphobia). Due to the abundance of triggering terminology, the radical feminist discourse was also cast as pretentious and full of pseudoscientific language, making it hard to understand. At the same time, the default addressee of this discourse is marked through a peculiar term 'spherical cis-heterosexual woman of titular *natsional'nost'* in a vacuum.' This category is one of the many ways FIO moderators attempted to adapt and translate racial categories, informing Anglophone intersectional feminist discourse by rendering them into concepts more familiar in post-Soviet space, such as titular *natsional'nost'* (nationality/ethnicity) as well as idiomatic expressions from Russophone internet.

Another example of adaptations of intersectional categories comes from a moderatorial post published in September 2014 called *Некоторые редко упоминаемые виды дискриминаций внутри феминистских объединений* (*Some rarely mentioned types of discriminations within feminist groupings*). This short preface, quoted below, stressed that feminists do not operate outside of their respective socio-cultural contexts and might as well reproduce particular problematic views or assumptions through their activism. Ageism, ableism, discrimination against mothers, xenophobia, racism, and nationalism were mentioned among such most common feminist vices characterizing grassroots Russophone feminisms:

Большинство феминисток не разделяют откровенно ксенофобные идеи. Но, к сожалению, очень распространенными в феминистской среде являются неосознанные и неотрефлексированные ксенофобные, расистские и националистские установки. Как наиболее ярый пример можно привести обсуждения проблем мусульманок, в которых многие западные нерелигиозные феминистки высказываются с позиции превосходства, дегуманизируя верующих, отрицая факт наличия у них свободы воли, и в целом низводя их до беспомощных жертв. Примерно такое же отношение иногда наблюдается у граждан_ок России к гражданам_кам бывших республик СССР. Мигрант_ки, плохо владеющие русским языком или даже просто говорящие с акцентом, особенно часто подвергаются данному виду дискриминации.

Most feminists do not share blatantly xenophobic ideas. Unfortunately, unconscious and unreflected xenophobic, racist, and nationalist attitudes are widespread among feminists. One salient example is when Western secular feminists discuss the problems of Muslim women from the position of superiority, dehumanizing the believers, denying their free will, and reducing them to the position of helpless victims. Russian (female) citizens sometimes exhibit approximately the same attitudes toward the (female) citizens of ex-USSR republics. (Female) migrants who do not speak Russian well or even those speaking with an accent are particularly exposed to this type of discrimination.

In this preface, FIO moderators explicitly draw translocal parallels between the positionalities of Western secular feminists and feminist citizens of Russia in terms of their position of superiority vis-à-vis minoritized positionalities of Muslim women in the West and female migrants who may not speak fluent Russian.

Explicit dis-identification with the Russophone radical feminist discourse, known colloquially as *радфем* (radfem) and firmly associated with transphobia within intersectional feminist communities, has set the stage for the mutual antagonism between these two online grassroots feminist orientations. This confrontation is also known as *intersek vs. radfem* wars, where the moniker *интерсек* (intersek) would serve as a slur of sorts to mark the disapproval of intersectional feminist leanings.²⁶ Russophone intersectional feminists rarely called themselves *intersek*. Instead, Russophone intersectionality is mainly referred to as *интерсекциональность*, also known under a more localized albeit less popular name as *теория пересечений* (theory of crossings/intersections).

One of the characteristic features of FIO was a strict and often preventative ban policy, envisioned to create a space where the rules of conduct would be opposite to the mainstream online environments permeated by sexism and homophobia. An excerpt from the ban policies of the page included the following reasons for receiving a ban:

Мизогиния, сексизм, расизм и имперство, лесбофобия, бифобия, гомофобия, фэтфобия, критика внешности других женщин, трансфобия и трансфобная лексика, квирфобия, пролайферство, слатшейминг, виктимблейминг, эйблизм, эйджизм, спам, демагогия ("а какие у меня привилегии?", "а кто более угнетен – белая бизнес-леди или темнокожий садовник?"), вопросы, которых у вас не возникло бы, если бы вы ознакомились с FAQ и страницей навигации, агрессивный отказ редактировать комментарии, содержащие сексистскую, расистскую, эйблистскую, класистскую и т.д. лексику, и попытки доказать свое священное право на использование такой лексики, хамство и споры с админками, переход на личности, реблоги в издательских целях, воровство контента без указания авторства.

Misogyny, sexism, racism and imperialism, lesbophobia, biphobia, homophobia, fatphobia, critiquing other women's appearance, transphobia, and transphobic terms, queerphobia, pro-life positions, slut-shaming, victim-blaming, ableism, ageism, spam, demagoguery ("what privileges do I have?", "who is more oppressed, a white businesswoman or a dark-skinned gardener?"), questions you wouldn't have if you'd read the FAQ and the navigation, aggressive refusal to edit comments which contain sexist, racist, ableist, classist, and similar language, attempts to defend one's sacred right to use such language, rudeness, and arguments with admins, personal attacks, reblogging to mock us, stealing content without attribution.

FIO textual output comprised several genres: translations of Tumblr memes, translatorials (translations of mostly English-language intersectional feminist texts), moderatorials, comment thread discussions, and chats. Moderatorial pages articulate the community's guidelines to new readers and allow reconstruction of basic tenets of how FIO conceived Russophone intersectionality it helped carve out through translations. Identifications are taken up within moderatorials as a genre, and demarcation lines are drawn, which delimit the rules of conduct and FIO's basic intellectual positions. I focus on this genre in detail to better transmit the authorizing

²⁶ It bears resemblance to the Russian-language homophobic vernacular slur *гомосек* (*gomosek*) and inherits its affective force. Often Russophone *radfem* call intersectional feminists *intersek* to signal disapproval of intersectional feminist politics.

discourse of such moderatorial texts. Introducing intersectionality into Russophone feminist spaces involved developing a set of ground rules, marking the boundaries separating intersectional feminist positionality from other feminist orientations (especially *radfem*), and making Russophone intersectionality legible and identifiable through word choices and discursive conventions. Equally stringent requirements are applied to moderators themselves. When in May 2015, FIO, not managing the workload related to translating and editing, was searching for new members of the team; the desired profile of the moderator-translator was described in the following way:

Чтобы дружно работать в нашем коллективе, тебе нужно иметь: твердые интерсекционально-феминистские позиции; хорошее знание русского языка, умение находить и исправлять речевые и грамматические ошибки; энтузиазм и свободное время; лояльность и психологическую устойчивость; чувствительность в вопросах этничной лексики и формулировок; готовность бесплатно работать в коллективе за идею. Приветствуются: знание иностранных языков; умение дипломатически разрешать конфликты; погруженность в материал и способность находить интересные темы для переводов и постов.

To fit well in our team, you need to have: a firm intersectional feminist stance; good knowledge of the Russian language, the ability to find and correct speech and grammatical errors; enthusiasm and free time; loyalty and psychological stability; sensitivity in matters of ethical vocabulary and wording; willingness to work for free for a good cause. We welcome knowledge of foreign languages; the ability to resolve conflicts diplomatically; immersion in the material, and the ability to find interesting topics for translations and posts.

FIO's translational intersectional feminist praxis is an example of activist translation dedicated to bringing about social change. The relationship between translation and activism has been a focus of increasing scholarly attention in translation studies (Tymoczko 2010; Gould and Tahmasebian 2020) and feminist translation studies (Castro and Ergun 2017). Resistance is one of the ubiquitous metaphors through which activist translation is understood (Tymoczko 2010:9). Resistance to dominant norms or societal power structures motivates the translation strategies of activist translators who envision this practice as capable of bringing the desired social change. Below is the list of non-negotiable theses mentioned in FIO's community guidelines. These are points that should be obvious for the adherents of intersectional feminism and FIO readers, a common-sense intersectional feminist understanding of sorts, which also allows insight into what kind of norms are resisted by the translatorial praxis of FIO:

Кратко во избежание дальнейших споров:

1. Сексизма против мужчин не существует.
2. Расизма против белых людей не существует.
3. Феминизм, который исключает не белых, транс* или гомосексуальных женщин – не феминизм.
4. Транс* женщины = женщины.
5. Транс* мужчины = мужчины.
6. Человеческое отношение к женщинам, цветным людям и ЛБТКИАП – обязанность, а не одолжение.

Briefly, to avoid further argument:

1. Sexism against men does not exist.
2. Racism against white people does not exist.
3. Feminism that excludes non-white, trans*, or homosexual women is not feminism.
4. Trans* women = women.
5. Trans*men = men.
6. Treating women, *tsvetnye lyudi*, and LGBTQIAP well is a duty, not a favor.²⁷

²⁷ Literal Russian translation of the English-language term 'people of color'. I choose to deliberately foreignize this translation to preserve the transformative aspects of FIO's intersectional Russophone idiom. See more in Chapter 6.

7. Феминизм создан для безопасности угнетенных групп, а не для комфорта цис-мужчин.

8. Узнавать подробности о чужой дискриминации – твоя обязанность как привилегированного человека. Не стоит ждать, что мы будем отвечать на все твои вопросы.

9. Нижние подчеркивания в словах ("автор_ка", "учительни_цы" и т.д.) называются "гендерным разрывом" и обозначают, что речь идет обо всех людях, независимо от их гендерной идентичности и местоимений.

10. Говори о человеке только в том грамматическом роде и используя только те местоимения, которыми пользуется он_а сама.

11. Никого не интересуют твои мысли о внешности других людей.

12. Не используй патологизирующую гомофобную и трансфобную лексику ("гомосексуальность", а не "гомосексуализм", "транссексуальность", а не "транссексуализм" и т.д.)

13. Не используй в качестве оскорблений или ругательств медицинские диагнозы, возраст, особенности развития или внешности человека (д*ун, "ид*от", "шк*лота", "ур*д" и т.д.).

7. Feminism was created for the safety of oppressed groups, not for the comfort of cis men.

8. Finding out details about other people's discrimination is your responsibility as a privileged person. You shouldn't expect us to answer all your questions.

9. Lower underscores in words "avtor_ka," "uchitelni_cy" are called "the gender gap" mean that we talk about everyone, regardless of their gender identity and pronouns.

10. Speak of a person only in the grammatical gender and using only the pronouns s/he uses.

11. No one is interested in your thoughts about other people's appearance.

12. Do not use pathological homophobic and transphobic language ("homosexuality," not "homosexuality," "transsexuality," not "transsexualism," etc.)

13. Do not use medical diagnoses, age, developmental or physical characteristics as insults or swear words (d*un, "id*ot," "shk*lot," "ur*d," etc.).

As observed in the above guidelines, some of FIO's discursive innovations, modeled on German language solutions, included lower underlining to gender-bend the generic masculine of some Russian professions, using asterisks to mark trans allyship and 'silencing' exclusionary slurs in Russian with asterisks. Another defining feature visible to a bilingual reader in the passages above is an abundance of transliterated terms entering Russophone intersectional feminist idiom through English to Russian activist translations. Most often, the preferred solution for rendering such feminist concepts would be transliterating them into Cyrillic. As I will show later, such politics of translation, favoring transliterations of English-language feminist terms into Russian, became a characteristic feature of Russophone intersectional feminist idiom and an important site of contestation between FIO readers and moderators in the comment threads. At the same time, translating intersectionality into Russian also meant becoming an intersectional authority by mediating this foreign and modern feminist discourse to Russophone readers. In the next section, I will address the tensions between translation, authorship, and authority as they played out on the pages of FIO.

Between power and stigma of translation: translators as figures of intersectional authority

In his famous essay *What is an Author?*, Michel Foucault defines the emergence of the notion of 'author function,' which classifies and establishes relations between texts, in the 18th-19th century: 'once the system of ownership for texts came into being, once strict rules concerning author's rights, author-publisher relations, rights of

reproduction, and related matters were enacted' (Foucault and Rabinow 1997:212). This period constituted 'the privileged moment of individualization in the history of ideas, knowledge, literature, philosophy, and the sciences' (Foucault and Rabinow 1997:205). Foucault distinguishes Marx and Freud as examples of types of authors he calls 'founders of discursivity,' arguing that they are not just authors, but instead 'they have produced something else: the possibilities and the rules for the formation of other texts,' 'establishing an endless possibility of discourse' (Foucault and Rabinow 1997:217). Such discursivity is 'heterogeneous to its subsequent transformations,' opening it up 'to a certain number of possible applications,' including reexaminations and further transformations (Foucault and Rabinow 1997:219). In such framing, the 'return to the origin' is an 'inevitable necessity' within 'these fields of discursivity' since 'this return, which is part of the discursive field itself, never stops modifying it [...] it constitutes an effective and necessary task of transforming the discursive practice itself' (Foucault and Rabinow 1997:219). Following this line of thought, Kimberlé Crenshaw, who coined the concept of intersectionality in 1989, can be considered a founder of intersectional feminist discursivity, evident from the sole fact that her inaugural article introduces the notion of intersectionality is currently nearing 25000 citations (Crenshaw 1989).

In their editorial introduction to the volume of Western feminist theory translated into Russian in the early 2000s, Russian gender studies scholars Elena Zdravomyslova and Anna Temkina suggest looking at feminist translators as co-authors of feminist discursivity, building on the Foucauldian concept of 'author of discursivity,' where discursivity includes subsequent criticism and interpretation of texts by others, who, in turn, become co-authors of discursivity. This multiplied conception of authorship allows them to include not only 'the authors of discursivity' but also those authors working within a specific tradition, authors of translations, and finally, readers engaging with these translations (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2000:24-25). I find this capacious conception of feminist authorship valuable to problematize the visions of translation as uncreative imitation and contest the hierarchical power relations between the original texts in English and their Russian translations, which may prioritize the former and stigmatize the latter as secondary. As I noted elsewhere, FIO's translations of intersectionality did not just include excerpts from inaugural feminist texts, such as Crenshaw's and hooks'. Instead, the main corpus of texts came from English-language feminist activist websites like everydayfeminism.com, Tumblr blogs, and other sources shaping intersectional feminist discursivity. FIO translators, as co-authors of intersectional feminist discursivity, have taken an active part in the selections of texts and decision-making inherent in translation. Throughout this thesis, I prioritize translators of intersectionality and FIO readers as co-authors of Russophone intersectional feminist discursivity while acknowledging that it was mostly the former that emerged as figures of Russophone intersectional feminist authority. I thereby contest the vision of feminist translation as a practice that is described through

predominant tropes of subversion of authority and resistance.²⁸ Instead, I am interested in how feminist activist translation, as a non-innocent and partial praxis, may simultaneously challenge power relations and be implicated in the emergence of new hierarchies.

As a feminist community/media built around activist translation, FIO foregrounded its translation practice and made it an essential part of its positioning vis-à-vis other Russophone feminist grassroots pages. FIO represents an intriguing terrain for analysis since one of its central contradictions is the tension between hyper-visibility and significant power wielded by its moderators-translators and, at the same time, persistent devaluation of translation haunting FIO and, by extension, Russophone intersectional feminism framed by many users and other feminists as translated, imitative and unoriginal discourse.

From the beginning, FIO's project of translating intersectional feminism into Russian was besieged by the stigma of translation. Since intersectional feminism was coming into Russian through translations from English, discursive devaluation of translation was closely tied to looking at intersectional feminism as foreign, Anglophone, US-American, and sometimes Western. At times, the devaluation of translation took the shape of the argument that intersectionality poorly fits the local context because it is a translated and unadapted discourse. The temporality of translation, the fact that it always comes after the original, makes it inevitably already lag behind, activating concerns about belatedness and inauthenticity. Such devaluations of translation manifested most actively within Russophone *radfem* discourse but were also expressed by a fraction of FIO readers, by diverse detractors of feminism, and sometimes paradoxically even by moderators themselves. Looking at translation as a derivative and uncreative practice renders the labor of feminist activists performing translations insignificant. The (il)legitimacy of intersectional feminist activism within the Russophone contexts is thus closely tied to its imaginary as translated knowledge.

This discussion is by no means new: when gender and feminism came to post-Soviet countries, propelled by financial streams of Western donors and NGOs after the collapse of the USSR, many scholars from the region tried to theorize the role of foreign feminism and its imported conceptual apparatus, offering meta-reflexivity over translated Western feminist frames and anxiety over their applicability to post-Soviet contexts (Oushakine 2012; Gapova 2006, 2009; Zhaivoronok 2018; Zvereva 2001; Oushakine 1998, 1999, 2000; Oushakine 2002). More recently, in her 2015 book on transfeminism, Yana Kirey-Sitnikova commented on trans-exclusionary and trans-friendly Russophone online grassroots feminisms as follows: 'both sides engage in translation of English-language texts and borrowing of arguments with minimal input from our original ideas.

²⁸ This thesis too partakes in intersectional feminist discursivity by translating the translations and narrating discussions about Russophone translations of intersectionality back to the 'center' or its margins. However, I doubt that it will produce any significant ripple effects due to the geopolitical asymmetries and hegemonies within the discipline of gender studies that affects the patterns of readership and citation practices.

Virtually never in the process of such transfer is there any discussion of differences between cultural contexts.’ (Kirey-Sitnikova 2015:79). Indeed, despite mutual antagonisms, both online grassroots Russophone *radfem* and Russophone intersectional feminists heavily relied on translations of English-language texts in the 2010s. What is striking and drives my inquiry is why, within grassroots, Russophone feminist scenes where everyone translates Western feminist texts, are some feminist orientations discursively rendered as more foreign than others? Why does, within these antagonistic debates, only Russophone intersectional feminism emerge as foreign? Does it have something to do with what is translated, i.e., intersectionality? Is it the matter of the categories it mobilizes? Or could it be that it is affected by the translation strategies the activists choose?

Despite persistent critiques that devalued the practice and labor of translation and, by extension, FIO’s project, it would be a mistake to position its translators-moderators as powerless. Although doing unremunerated, activist translation, FIO moderators wielded substantial power on multiple interrelated levels: selecting the texts for translation and translating them, setting the rules of conduct, moderating the discourse, punishing the wrongdoers and expelling the trolls, re-educating the stray readers into using the correct terminology, and exercising intersectional feminist authority more broadly. FIO moderators could be seen as far from what translation scholar Lawrence Venuti has famously called ‘the invisibility of translator’ (Venuti 2017). Quite the contrary, on FIO pages, they were hyper-visible translators of intersectional feminism.

Russophone translations of intersectionality, in some ways, reverse the relationships of canonicity and the quest for the return to the original formulations characterizing the North American-Western European debates on intersectionality’s travels to Western Europe (Davis 2020; Nash 2016, 2019). Through FIO’s Russophone translations of intersectionality, ‘intersectional feminism’ becomes much less about the figure of one primary author or main coiner of intersectionality. Russophone intersectionality is composed of a much broader group of texts: some authored by activists, others by feminist scholars; the array of themes it touches is more comprehensive, explicitly centering not only racism but also transphobia and homophobia. The debates about the fidelity to the foundational texts of Crenshaw, which often take such a central stage in the Euro-Atlantic academic discussions on intersectionality (Davis 2020), called by Nash ‘intersectional originalism’ (Nash 2016:4), do not occupy any place at all in the reception of intersectionality in the Russophone feminist activist spaces. Instead, Russophone activist debates around translations of intersectionality concern whether it is an applicable theory for situated post-Soviet feminist activism and whether it can do the work it promises.

In the case of FIO, ‘intersectional feminism’ operates as a discourse of authority as such. While intersectionality gains prestige through the authorizing signature of English and the power of the USA combined with the emancipatory counter-hegemonic promise of Black feminism, the local translators-moderators become the figures of intersectional

authority through mediating intersectional feminist discourse in the Russophone contexts. In that sense, it might be possible to argue that the work of translation performed by FIO moderators in a certain way displaces the issues of authorship and coinage, transforming the translations into new originals. I want to illustrate this with a snippet from the community guidelines, showcasing the way translations are conceptualized here as original materials:

Откуда вы берете материал?

Мы переводим статьи с нескольких феминистских англоязычных площадок, например everydayfeminism.com и mic.com. Ранние посты по большей части были основаны на блогах с Tumblr. Тексты не всегда представляют собой прямой перевод – иногда они являются компиляцией наших собственных мыслей и сторонних идей, либо адаптированы под российские реалии (в этом случае при указании источника мы пишем "по мотивам" или "на основе"). Кроме того, мы используем и другие англоязычные феминистские блоги, сайты, статьи, книги и публикации, а иногда пишем собственные статьи. В нашем паблике нет и не будет репостов из других групп, потому что оригинальный контент является частью нашей концепции.

Where do you get your material from?

We translate articles from several English-language feminist spaces, for example, everydayfeminism.com and mic.com. Early posts were primarily based on Tumblr blogs. Our texts are not always direct translations – sometimes they are compilations of our own thoughts and random ideas or adapted to Russian realia (in such cases, we mark it “adapted from” or “based on the source”). Moreover, we use other Anglophone feminist blogs, websites, books, and articles and sometimes write our own articles. We do not and will not repost from other groups because original content is part of our concept.

In the excerpt, moderators introduce the English-language sources on which the subsequent translations are based. At first glance, translated texts are juxtaposed with original materials (*иногда пишем собственные статьи*). However, towards the end of the paragraph, the page positions itself as committed to ‘the original content’ as part of the authorial conception of the page. The focus on the transformative aspects of translation and recombination of materials from different sources allows for reframing the translated texts as the new originals despite the constant charges of copying and parroting of US intersectional feminists, a general devaluation of translation haunting the FIO project. At the same time, the pursuit of originality entails a preoccupation with authorship and ownership, manifesting in the warnings against ‘stealing the content without attribution,’ the advice always to mention the names of translators when reposting the content from the page, and the refusal to repost the materials from other Russophone feminist pages. Translated intersectional texts thus become transfigured as new originals through translation. Participating in intersectional feminist discursivity and shaping it through translation, Russophone translators of intersectionality emerge as figures of intersectional authority.

In understanding moderators-translators as figures of intersectional authority, I draw on several interlinked meanings of the word ‘authority.’ According to Merriam-Webster dictionary definitions, ‘authority’ relates both to the ‘the source from which the citation is drawn,’ persons ‘cited or appealed to as an expert,’ ‘convincing force,’ ‘power to influence or command thought opinion, or behavior’ and ‘quality that makes

something seem true or real.²⁹ Authority pulls power, knowledge, expertise, source, origin, author, authenticity, translation, and citation into a single domain. FIO translators, as figures of intersectional authority, rely on the authority of intersectionality and participate in the creation of Russophone intersectional feminist discursivity. Authority of intersectionality relates to what others have called the paradigmization of intersectionality (Hoffart 2021), its incorporation into the feminist and gender studies canon, the sheer amount of literature it has generated, and the citational work around intersectionality (Nash 2014, 2016, 2019). The authority of intersectionality in non-Anglophone contexts may also be linked to Pereira's analysis of the invocation of 'foreign modern' seen as an 'authorizing signature' that allows for accomplishing different goals within local feminist projects (Pereira 2014, 2017). The authority of intersectionality is also tied to its associations with the counter-hegemonic politics of Black feminism (Nash 2019).

I conceptualize FIO translators as figures of intersectional authority because of how such framing emphasizes the attention to the emergent power dynamics involved in the chains of mediation: both between the original texts and their Anglophone activist appropriations, Russophone translations of primary and secondary texts and, finally, between the translators and ordinary feminist readers. Drawing their authority from the source: US articulations of intersectionality, Russophone translators of intersectionality are positioned in the hierarchy of mediation vis-à-vis 'the author of discursivity,' wielding considerable power as mediators while simultaneously negotiating the stigma of translation. Russophone translators of intersectionality as figures of intersectional authority invoke intersectionality as an authoritative source and a body of knowledge, helping them navigate political concerns in their contexts and build Russophone intersectional feminist idiom via translations. Exercising power through translation, they become constituted as intersectional authorities: translating the concepts, moderating (mis)uses and applications of ideas, and shaping the discourse locally. Although this influence and power is by no means uncontested by other Russophone feminist groupings and should be read against the broader unfriendly Russian state rhetoric and policies, it helps to reexamine some of the assumptions conventionally associated with translation, including the idea of its secondariness and powerlessness vis-à-vis the original. Researching situated translation praxis of FIO allows seeing Russophone translations of intersectionality as a site of power-laden negotiation where the boundaries between original and translation, between authors and mediators, change and shift.

²⁹ [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authority](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/authority)

The privilege to know. Monolingual Russophone backwardness vs. cosmopolitan English-Russian bilingualism.

In the previous section, I argued that Russophone grassroots translators of intersectionality become figures of intersectional authority through translations construed as new originals. At the same time, the FIO project is marked by constant negotiation of the stigma of translation. This section foregrounds how temporal and linguistic geopolitics of feminist knowledge operates on FIO pages. I will draw on several discussions in comment threads to show how chronotopic ideologies construing the English language as more modern undergird the discussions about what sources are credible for feminist self-education. In these debates, Russian-English feminist bilingualism emerges as an orientation toward a feminist future, leaving regressive Russian monolingualism behind. Such prioritization of Russian-English bilingualism, however, ignores the class implications of English proficiency and may render the need for feminist translations redundant.

In November 2013, FIO published one of its early posts featuring a rubric for *Frequently asked questions*. After introducing themselves and indicating FIO's commitment to intersectional feminism pitted against both liberal and radical feminist orientations, moderators remarked on the theme of cultural appropriation:

Если вы хотите узнать, является ли что-то культурным присвоением, забейте этот предмет в гугл по-английски и добавьте "cultural appropriation". Если вы не знаете, что такое культурное присвоение, забейте в гугл "what is cultural appropriation". Если вы считаете, что культурное присвоение это не такая уж и большая проблема, лучше сразу уходите отсюда.

If you want to know whether something constitutes cultural appropriation, type these words in English on Google and add "cultural appropriation." If you do not know what cultural appropriation is, type into Google "what is cultural appropriation." If you don't think cultural appropriation is a big deal, get out of here.

Cultural appropriation, a significant theme in Anglophone feminist and anti-racist activist scenes, has been a focus of sustained attention in FIO's translations. FIO has translated several texts on non-offensive Halloween costumes, diversity within US pop culture, and similar concerns. This excerpt is notable in that FIO readers are encouraged to actively work on their feminist self-education by drawing on feminist resources available in English. Taking responsibility for feminist self-education is cast as a moral imperative, signifying respect for the translation labor of the moderators. As figures of intersectional authority, moderators take on a stern, pedagogical tone, preemptively pointing out that questioning cultural appropriation as a valid analytical frame is a position not worth disputing. Russophone feminist subject, in turn, is expected to be able to distinguish between what does and what does not constitute cultural appropriation. What interests me in the excerpt above is claim-making about what counts as proper feminist knowledge and where one can obtain it. Such constructs of

validity are both relational and temporal. Materials in English are not simply construed as better sources of information; they become so in relation to the Russian-language sources, discursively produced as impoverished, scarce, belated, and backward.

Some users who responded to the post echoed these visions of scarcity. Aligning with the stance of the moderators, they describe the hurdles of maneuvering the impoverished landscapes of Runet in search of decent materials for feminist self-education:³⁰

User1: может вы все-таки покурите гугль по уже названным ключевым словам? И нормальные источники, а не русскоязычную википедию.

User1: Maybe you could look into Google using the keywords mentioned? And try to use normal sources, not the Russian language Wikipedia.

User2: А есть нормальные русскоязычные материалы про культурное присвоение?

User2: Are there normal Russian-language materials about cultural appropriation at all?

The ‘normal-abnormal’ distinction in the comments assigns differential value to the sources of information. Russian-language Wikipedia is produced as an abnormal source of knowledge, where the information on the topics relevant to intersectional feminists is either absent or untrustworthy. Google, in turn, provides access to reliable information in English. Such information is marked as ‘normal’ because it is seen as modern and up-to-date. English acquires more progressive temporality, while the Russian language is construed as lagging behind, needing an update if not a reboot.

However, the moderatorial call for feminist self-education in English also provoked some readers’ less enthusiastic responses. One of them drew attention that not everyone on a Russian-language feminist page may be fluent in English:

User: Пункт 3. Исходя из теории интерсекциональности, стоит задуматься, что далеко не все женщины в русскоязычном паблике обладают привилегией в виде знания английского и немножко снизить до наших мелких проблем. То есть задуматься, а не являются ли рекомендации в русскоязычном паблике искать что-то на английском формой дискриминации.

User: Regarding point 3. According to intersectionality theory, it is worth pondering that not many women reading this Russian-language page have the privilege of knowing English. Try to stoop down a little to our menial problems. Consider whether recommendations to search for something in English on a Russian-language page are a form of discrimination.

What is fascinating in this comment is how the authority of intersectionality is used to challenge the status of FIO moderators by implying that they are not intersectional enough. Building on the language of privileges and circulating terms like discrimination, the user contests the legitimacy of recommending searching for the information in English, framing it as an unaddressed but relevant concern for the Russophone intersectional feminist praxis. English language proficiency in Russophone contexts, the

³⁰ Whenever I focus on FIO discussions in the comment threads, the unit of analysis is one interaction or comment thread. Therefore, when discussion is between one user and admins, the user is marked as User and admins are marked as Admin1 and Admin2 (or FIO when reply is made from community account). In discussions involving several users, I mark users with numbers: User1, User2, User3 etc. These numbers only mark roles within one comment thread. This is done both for the sake of anonymity and analytical focus on the interaction rather than personalities of users and admins. Sometimes when I deal with one long comment thread, I break the presentation of empirical materials into parts, but in such cases I indicate through text that this is a part of the same discussion.

argument goes, should be considered a form of privilege, one of the central concepts used by FIO. Encouraging users to consult English language sources for self-education is seen as an exercise in West-centric optics. Via this commentary, FIO's articulations of intersectionality appear un-intersectional, not following intersectionality's postulates to their logical points. Claiming that FIO moderators' views are inconsistent and too dependent on the 'Western' feminist toolkit allows the user to generate a critique of hierarchical relations between moderators, construed as 'feminist elites' and ordinary readers of FIO. Recommendations to google things in English are cast as condescending and juxtaposed to 'ours' (simple, ordinary, non-Anglophone) women's minor problems. The demarcated foreignness and Anglophoneness of intersectionality cast the admins who mediate it as foreign feminist elites, cosmopolitan bilinguals of sorts serving 'alien' interests, disconnected from the everyday struggles of ordinary Russophone women who do not speak English.

In the discussion that ensued between the user and the admins, these themes were developed further:

FIO: Мы думаем, что знание английского - это не "преимущество, исключительное право, предоставляемое кому-нибудь в отличие от других", а достаточно легко приобретаемый навык, было бы желание.

FIO: We think that knowledge of English is not an "advantage, an exclusive right given to some, unlike others," but a relatively easily acquired skill if one is willing.

User: У знающих английских есть в данном случае преимущество и исключительное право узнать, что такое культурное присвоение. Я не считаю, знание английского - легко приобретаемый навык, и независимо от степени его тяжести/легкости, здесь никто не обязана его знать. Рекомендую английский поиск, вы создаёте в своём паблике привилегированную и дискриминируемую группы.

User: Those who know English have an advantage and exclusive right to know what cultural appropriation is. I don't think knowing English is an easily acquired skill. Regardless of the severity/ease of it, no one here is required to know it. By recommending searching in English, you create a privileged and discriminated group on your pages.

FIO: Никто не обязана знать, да, но мы точно так же не обязаны гуглить за других людей.

FIO: Yes, no one is obligated to know, but we are also not obliged to google for other people.

User: Вы не обязаны, да. Но вы рекомендуете гуглить на английском. Исходя из этого, создаётся две группы - та, которая может узнать интересную/полезную информацию, и та, которая её узнать не может. А ещё в интерсекциональном феминизме существует такое направление, как постколониальный. Который говорит о том, что феминистки других стран не обязаны ориентироваться за западный опыт и знать чужой язык.

User: You don't have to, yes. But you recommend googling in English. Based on that, two groups are created - the one that can find interesting/helpful information and the one that can't. And then, within intersectional feminism, there is also a direction like postcolonial feminism that says that feminists in other countries do not have to be guided by Western experience or know a foreign language.³¹

FIO: Причем здесь западный опыт? на английском есть куча материалов на эту тему. на русском - нет вообще. можно гордо не ориентироваться на чужой опыт и ждать, пока об этом что-то напишут по-русски, да. судя по количеству вопросов, ответы на которые можно найти даже в русском гугле, проблема спрашивающих не в незнании английского, а в нежелании делать что-то

FIO: What does Western experience have to do with it? You can find tons of materials about this topic in English and none in Russian. You can proudly reject following foreign experience and wait while something about it is written in Russian. Judging by the number of questions, the answers to which are available even in Russian (russkii) google, the problem of those asking is not their lack of English

³¹ Both the user and the admin in the thread use the Russian word *чужой*, which is more polysemous than my translation of it as foreign. On the polysemy of the term, consult the footnote 11 in the section Departures.

самим. у нас еще ни разу не было вопроса с содержанием "я погуглила на русском и ничего не нашла, а английского я не знаю, помогите пожалуйста разобраться".

User: Круто с высоты привилегий рассуждать, в чём наша проблема. И рассказывать, что мы сами виноваты, ага:) Классическая ситуация, когда пытаешься привилегированной группе что-то объяснить. Предприму последнюю попытку. Можно бедным женщинам рекомендовать ездить ночью на такси, а что у них нет денег - так это они плохо стараются, деньги же такой легко приобретаемый ресурс.

knowledge but the unwillingness to do something themselves. We have never had a question like, "I googled in Russian and found nothing, and I don't know English. Please help me understand".

User: It's cool to talk from a height of privilege about what our problem is. And tell us that it's our fault, yeah:). This is a classic situation when explaining something to a privileged group. I'll make one last attempt. You can recommend poor women to hail a cab at night, and if they don't have money - that's their fault; they don't work hard enough; money is such an easily acquired resource.

FIO admins reject the user's framing of English proficiency as a privilege or an obligation and present it as an easily acquired skill, following a neoliberal language of self-betterment and meritocracy. Only motivation and hard work matter if one wants to succeed, and everyone allegedly has an equal chance to become fluent. English-language proficiency is positioned as an aspirational ideal for becoming a proper intersectional Russophone feminist subject. Such a feminist subject would constantly self-educate and better herself, striving for proximity to the unmediated feminist knowledge in English. Since anti-oppression information in English is framed as a source of proper feminist knowledge, the ability to access it or refer to it is validated. When admins say they refuse to google for others, they use a recurrent trope circulating within transnational feminist activist discourses. This trope revalorizes the labor of educating others, especially when marginalized groups are expected to educate more privileged persons about discrimination. However, since the FIO project is imagined as an educational space focused on feminist translations and therefore valorizing translation as labor, appeals to turn to English-language sources make the rationale of the community based on translation redundant. If all Russophone feminists acquire sufficient English-language proficiency and access 'the source' directly without mediation, would there be a need for feminist translations?

According to the user, FIO's valorization of English-language proficiency creates the division between 'enlightened' and 'unenlightened' Russophone feminists, with or without unmediated access to 'the source.' Such hierarchies are problematized by evoking postcolonial feminism, which the user positions as a subset of intersectional feminism, seen as something that is supposed to question West-centric feminist approaches to knowledge. The user thematizes the orientation of FIO towards feminist texts in the English language as a problem of intellectual dependency and 'Western' hegemony: looking too much at the 'Western' experience while encouraging others to learn a foreign language.

In reply, admins reiterate the visions of the barrenness of the intellectual landscape (*можно найти даже в русском гугле*) when it comes to comparable feminist materials in Russian and dismiss the criticism as an example of proud anti-Western defensiveness. For them, the user's critique is seen as advocating Russian monolingualism, which would lead to an intellectual impasse. Such defensiveness is characterized as a protective

aversion to things foreign and is read as a retrograde position that rejects the foreign as alien (*можно гордо не ориентироваться на чужой опыт*). Tellingly, not knowing English is again framed through individualizing vocabulary stemming from the alleged laziness and lack of initiative (*нежелании делать что-то самим*). In response, the user draws a parallel between time, money, and education access by using an example of advising poor women to get a taxi. Class implications of English-language proficiency are expressed through the language of privileges. The problem of poor women and non-Anglophone women is described as ‘ours,’ and moderators are not included in this feminist groupness since they are framed as talking from the position of privilege: with fluent English proficiency and unmediated access to ‘the source.’ The framing of moderators as alien feminist elites versus ordinary, simple, Russophone readers is reinstated.

It is important to note that English-language proficiency and fluency in countries where English is not a native language have class connotations and are markers of prestige, status, and affluence (Ustinova 2005:242; Yelenevskaya and Protassova 2021:556). As Proshina notes, ‘the more English words a person knows, the more educated s/he is assumed to be. English words characterize and rank a person socially’ (Proshina 2020:349). Gritsenko and Laletina remark on how ‘English in Russia conveys several symbolic and cultural connotations—Westernization, internationalism, modernization, prestige and innovation’ (Gritsenko and Laletina 2016:441). Achieving English language proficiency that would allow one to participate in intellectual discussions and exchanges is a matter of class distinctions because access to these resources is unequally distributed.

The last fragment of the exchange reiterates the moderators’ disavowal of considering English-language proficiency as a form of privilege. Admins’ replies build on the economic vocabulary, rejecting the framing of English fluency as an unearned privilege. Instead, linguistic capital is seen as being created through hard work, as an investment into the future, where returns are expected and legitimate:

FIO: Вы меня не поняли. поинт поста вообще не в том, о чем вы говорите. мы готовы отвечать на вопросы, если человек действительно хочет разобраться, но у него не получается. проблема в том, что зачастую человек даже не пытается ни в чем разобраться, а хочет, чтобы мы ему объяснили, и при этом хочет читать наши ответы по диагонали и задавать еще сто глупых вопросов. ваше сравнение с такси некорректно. у человека либо есть деньги на такси, либо нет. при этом если человек может читать наш паблик и писать нам вопросы, то он совершенно с тем же успехом может сначала зайти в гугл, хотя бы в русскоязычный. ну если только мы не считаем, что ожидание от людей, которые читают наш паблик, умения самостоятельно искать и анализировать информацию, - это эйблизм.

Admin to User: Я работаю репетитором и знаю, за сколько сейчас можно достать репетитора по английскому/французскому/немецкому/испанскому.

FIO: You misunderstood me. The point of the post is not at all what you are talking about. We are ready to answer questions if someone wants to understand but fails. The problem is that often the person does not even try to understand anything but wants us to explain everything, and yet wants to read our answers diagonally and ask another hundred silly questions. Your comparison with a cab is incorrect. a person either has money for a cab or does not. At the same time, if a person can read our page and write us questions, they may as well go to Google first, at least in Russian. Unless we think that expecting people who read our page to be able to search and analyze information themselves is ableism.

Admin to User: I work as a tutor and know how much it costs to get a tutor in English/French/German/Spanish these days. Female students with excellent language skills

девушки-студентки с прекрасным знанием языка готовы заниматься за 800-1000 рублей за полтора часа только потому, что у них нет возможности без диплома найти лучший способ заработка. и все, что вам нужно сделать - это оставить заявку на репетиторском сайте, коих в рунете развелось больше грязи. не надо мне пожалуиста рассказывать охуительные истории про привилегированных знатоков английского. привилегия - это роскошь, которую ты имеешь просто по счастливой случайности и ради которой ты ни хера не сделал. я работала над своими языками черт знает сколько времени и вложила в них кучу сил. меня бесит, когда кто-то обесценивает мой труд слезливыми рассказами про "привилегию знать английский".

User to Admin: Штука за 1,5 часа - вы считаете, что это мало? Вас бесят люди, которые на это не зарабатывают? Атлична. Нет возможности найти лучший способ заработка - ёбнуться просто. С таким способом за полный рабочий день из 8 часов поднимается больше 100 штук в месяц - это более чем в два раза превышает среднестатистическую зарплату по Москве. Вы пишете, что работали над языками чёрт знает сколько времени, а до этого мне писали (не знаю, вы или нет), что английский - легко приобретаемый навык. У вас были ресурсы потратить "чёрт знает сколько времени" на изучение языков, а у кого-то таких ресурсов нет, представляете. А у кого-то - кощунство! - не то что ресурсов нет, а другие приоритеты. И существование таких людей ваш труд не обесценивает. А также то, что они - о ужас! - смеют заявить о том, что подвергаются дискриминации. И кстати. Дискриминация - это не только то, о чём уже много раз написали западные феминистки. Всё, привет горячий.

are willing to do 800-1000 rubles for an hour and a half just because they can't find a better way to earn money without a degree. And all you have to do is leave an application on a tutoring site; there are plenty of them in the Runet. I have worked on my languages for God knows how long and put a lot of work into them. It pisses me off when someone devalues my work with tragic stories about "the privilege of knowing English."

User to Admin: A grand for 1.5 hours - do you think that's little? Are you pissed off at people who don't earn that much? Great. There's no way to find a better way to make money - fuck you. In this way, a full-time job of 8 hours raises more than 100 grand a month - more than twice the average salary in Moscow. You write that you've been working on languages for God knows how long, and before that, you wrote to me (I don't know if it was you or not) that English was an easily acquired skill. You had the resources to spend "God knows how long" learning languages, and some people don't have those resources. Can you imagine? And someone else - blasphemy! - It's not that they don't have the resources; they have other priorities. And the existence of such people does not devalue your work. And also the fact that they - oh, the horror! - Dare to claim to be discriminated against. And by the way. Discrimination isn't just something Western feminists have written about many times already. That's it, adios.

This heated exchange illustrates some of the fundamental tensions underpinning FIO's translational intersectional feminist praxis. Those who mediate intersectionality, positioning it as more foreign and modern feminist discourse, may also become foreign. Because access to the original intersectional texts depends on access to the English language, and societal hierarchies shape the chances to develop fluency in English, new inequalities may emerge between Russophone feminists involved in the mediations of intersectionality. For the disillusioned user, translated intersectionality becomes positioned as the work of 'Western' feminists, whom Russophone feminists labeled as privileged, revere and worship, translate and reference, and whose analyses of discrimination they adopt presumedly in an unquestioning way. Framing access to foreign languages as a form of capital and using the language of privileges, the user calls for recognition of both class implications of English fluency and economic disparities between feminists in Moscow and the rest of Russia. For the user, economic issues should be viewed as a legitimate part of Russophone intersectional feminist analysis. In contrast, the admins rely on the neoliberal language of skills and human capital to cast English fluency as a result of the hard work of an entrepreneurial multilingual self that legitimizes moderatorial authority and dismisses class politics of Russophone feminist mediations of intersectionality.

The invocation of backward Russianness illustrated in the debate above by modulating the expressions such as ‘even in Russian google’ represents a much more persistent trope within FIO’s discourse, featuring both in the rhetoric of moderators and many readers. Discursive invocations of backward Russianness and impoverished landscapes of Runet are applied to characterize Russophone *radfem* discourse and decry Russia’s ‘conservative turn’ and, by extension, Russian society at large, presumed to be inherently conservative and essentially backward. Many FIO users support and align with the position of admins by reinforcing the image of the Runet’s supposed intellectual scarcity. Some may employ, at times, highly charged characterizations, such as calling Runet a ‘useless trash bin’ in the comment below:

User1: Почему админы виноваты в том, что рунет - бесполезная помойка, я не поняла. Они что ли обязаны по такому поводу русифицировать вообще все?

User1: Why it’s the admins’ fault that Runet is a useless dump, I don’t understand. Do they have to russify everything on such an occasion?

User2: Ссылки на тему культурного присвоения даны на английском, т.к. на русском ничего годного не найти.

User2: The links to the topic of cultural appropriation are given in English because you can’t find anything of descent in Russian

As the heated debate in the thread changed into a more friendly tone, the discussion shifted towards sharing the best techniques for mastering English. Trying to cheer up one user who admitted struggling with English, the FIO admin motivated them:

Admin: Подумайте о том, какие возможности вам откроет английский) например, возможность смотреть фильмы и сериалы в оригинале, а не в чудовищном русском дубляже, убивающим все живое.

Admin: Think of all the opportunities English opens up for you, like being able to watch movies and TV shows in the original, not in the monstrous/beastly Russian dubbing that kills everything alive.

The perceived superiority of accessing the English-language movies in the original gets reinstated throughout the framing of the Russian dubbing as ‘beastly,’ reinforcing traditional prejudice against translation as secondary. English is cast as opening the opportunity to connect to the entire world of cultural achievements as an agent of cosmopolitanism, while Russian stands for a beastly provincial nook of uncivilized dubbing. However, research on early pirate Soviet and post-Soviet voiceover translations points towards a more imaginative take on these translation practices (Burak 2011). These ‘beastly’ voiceover translations of Hollywood films, as Burak demonstrates, were highly inventive and creative. Loaded with affective value, they have a cult following and a nostalgic aura now that English-language film dubbing has become professionalized. Dubbing foreign films is an established strategy in many regions of the globe, with some unique features, such as allowing for less interrupted engagement with the film and not having limitations on subtitle size. Framing dubbing as a backward monstrosity of post-Soviet cultures questions the necessity of translation as such if the ideal is the unmediated access to ‘the source’ and English-Russian feminist bilingualism.

The primacy of English and unmediated access to the analytical pieces on intersectional feminism or watching films in the original soundtrack takes the status of doxa. Valorization of English proficiency in the Russophone intersectional feminist community is rarely problematized as hegemonic. Critique of new hierarchies within feminist communities created by prioritizing English is cast as either regressive or irrelevant. Because English is construed as more modern, fluency in English is framed as a natural thing for Russophone intersectional feminists to aspire to. The labor required to acquire proficiency in English to read feminist texts is articulated through the neoliberal language of possibilities and self-betterment. Knowing English emerges as an investment in a better Russophone intersectional feminist future.

The exchange in the comment threads I followed in this section allows grasping how intersectionality may appear in some situated readings as exclusionary, hegemonic, and even 'Western.' Intersectionality, decoupled from the initial context of articulation as a counter-hegemonic black feminist critique, circulates globally, entering diverse socio-political contexts through translations. However, coming from the USA, intersectionality may figure as Western cosmopolitan cultural capital requiring English language proficiency to master. It indexes advanced temporality due to its associations with the USA, the English language, counter-hegemony, and modernity. It is imagined as a remedy to repair problems within Russian language feminisms. Crossing into non-Anglophone spaces, to some Russophone users, intersectionality may appear first and foremost as US-American, Western, and Anglophone. Mediating intersectionality through translation depends on English fluency and generates symbolic capital for its mediators, resulting in new hierarchies of knowledge within non-Anglophone feminist communities. Intersectionality and its translators may therefore be rejected by some Russophone users feeling that it is not for them and not about them.

I have traced how the discursive prioritization of English on FIO pages assigns Russophone monolingualism to belated temporality. However, those readers presumed to be Russophone monolinguals may as well be bilinguals or multilinguals, as many people in post-Soviet countries are proficient in Russian and other languages of the region. In such relationships, it is often the Russian language that plays the role of the more dominant and modern language, while others stand for provincial, monstrous nook. That highlights the need to pay critical attention to scaling global and post-Soviet hegemonies and the relationality of the status of languages vis-à-vis each other. However, 'the other' bilingualism, where the Russian language is hegemonic and modern, barely features in FIO discussions, which may reinforce the juxtaposition between 'advanced' Russian-English feminist bilingualism versus Russian 'backward' monolingualism. Downplaying the relations of power between Russian and other languages of the region, both state, regional, and minority, obscures how Russian monolingualism within Russia itself is a norm. In this context, Russian-non-Russian languages bilingualism may be pathologized or read as backward. What follows is quite simply that not all bilingualisms are valued equally. Although contested in the

abovementioned thread, Russian-Western languages bilingualism may also be valorized within Russia, whereas minor bilingualisms are stigmatized or invisibilized.

Nevertheless, FIO's chronotopic ideologies, marking English as a more 'modern' feminist language, construct unmediated access to knowledge in English as a Russophone intersectional feminist ideal. The privileging of English-Russian feminist bilingualism ignores the class implications of English fluency and renders the need for feminist translation redundant. In the next section, to better unpack the temporal politics unfolding in the same comment thread, I will turn to the scholarship on feminist storytelling and introduce the concept of feminist chronotope as a valuable tool for analyzing feminist discussions about translation and discursive disidentification within Russophone grassroots feminist scenes.

Circulating feminist chronotopes: *временный radfem* stuck in 'the 60s.'

In this section, I will draw on Hemmings' theorizations of feminist storytelling, focusing primarily on the feminist narrative of progress, to show how translated intersectionality circulates on FIO pages as a promise of a brighter and more modern Russophone feminist future. I use Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope to introduce the notion of feminist chronotopes, which allows me to expand Hemmings' conceptualizations of Western feminist narratives through an emphasis on the inseparability of time-space and models of personhood in feminist storytelling. I then show how Western feminist chronotopes of 'backward transphobic 1960s' and 'intersectionality as feminist future' circulate on FIO pages in discussions over translations. These feminist chronotopes are fused with local chronotropic constructs, such as Russian peasant backwardness and Slavophile parochialism, and get deployed to portray some Russophone feminist orientations, such as *radfem*, as more backward than others through their attitudes towards foreign borrowings.

In her book *Why Stories Matter*, feminist scholar Clare Hemmings has mapped out how the story of Western feminist theory's recent past is told through three interlinked narratives: progress, loss, and return. Hemmings examines the temporal dimension of Western feminist theory's storytelling invested with 'the politics that produce and sustain one version of history as more true than another' (Hemmings 2011:15–16). Seeing these stories as dependent on each other, Hemmings traces their articulation through textual techniques, citation politics, division of the past into decades, and affective mobilizations. Thus, within progress narratives, feminist theory's temporal trajectory is described as: 'We had moved from a time when we knew no better, a time when we thought "woman" could be the subject and object of liberation, to a more knowing time in which we attend to the complexity of local and transnational formations of gender

and its intersections with other vectors of power' (Hemmings 2011:35). Progress narratives are charged with positive affect: 'it is a narrative of success and accomplishment and positions feminist theory, and its subjects, as attentive and dynamic' (Hemmings 2011:35). Their temporality has clear markings, Western feminist theory's past is emblemized by the 1970s decade, which carries 'the weight of essentialist anachronism in Western feminist progress narratives' (Hemmings 2011:39). The vision of the 1970s, figuring in Western feminist narratives of progress as 'the essentialist decade', presumes that 'the essentialist past belongs to and resides in the 1970s, with difference proper taking place in the 1990s' (Hemmings 2011:40-41). Textually, the movement from the feminist past to the feminist present is described as a 'trajectory from sameness to difference, singularity to multiplicity, or simplicity to complexity.' (Hemmings 2011:36). Although Hemmings does not explicitly deal with intersectionality, she argues that within feminist progress narratives, 'black feminism is always the one challenging exclusion and holding the temporal as well as moral high ground' (Hemmings 2011:53). In a similar vein, Nash traced how in the US debates intersectionality is framed as a feminist orientation in time, both as 'the movement of intersectionality toward the inevitable future (what I call feminism-future) and the location of intersectionality in an already-transcended past (what I call feminism-past)' (Nash 2014:46).

Drawing on Bakhtin's notion of chronotope and its application in sociolinguistic research (see Chapter 2), I develop the concept of feminist chronotope to extend Hemmings' analysis of feminist storytelling and Nash's approach to intersectionality as a feminist orientation in time. Looking at the Russophone adaptations of intersectionality through the notion of feminist chronotope allows to link the inseparability of time and space in feminist storytelling with the discursive production of the modes of personhood, that is, feminist types positioned chronotopically. Hemmings ties these elements together only implicitly: 'We are being enjoined to leave behind homogeneity and essentialism, which we now know are racist and homophobic as well as anachronistic. To be ethical subjects of feminism, we must leave the past behind.' (Hemmings 2011:56-57). Feminist chronotopes circulate widely and transgress borders; they can be deployed in various contexts and ways to produce particular effects and achieve distinct goals. Feminist chronotopes enact models of feminist personhood, as Hemmings hints: 'the anxiety of being labeled essentialist or anachronistic within Western feminist theory is thus a more precise anxiety of being understood as racist' (Hemmings 2011:44). The concept of feminist chronotopes also makes it possible, in Agha's terms, to trace chronotopic displacements and cross-chronotope alignments (Agha 2007). Circulating Western feminist chronotopes get layered and transposed on local chronotopic imaginaries within feminist contestations of English to Russian translation. In what follows, I show how these scattered feminist chronotopes figure in debates over translations of intersectionality to achieve particular effects and legitimize specific translation strategies vis-à-vis the others.

On FIO pages, intersectionality figures explicitly as ‘the inevitable feminist future’ (Nash 2014:52) understood through a feminist narrative of progress, describing a ‘trajectory from sameness to difference, singularity to multiplicity, or simplicity to complexity’ (Hemmings 2011:36). As a traveling feminist chronotope, intersectionality as a feminist future is tightly linked to its association with the global power of the USA, the prestige of the English language, and the counter-hegemonic promise of Black feminism. In the domestic/geopolitical context, Russia’s post-2013 drift towards the rhetoric of ‘traditional values’ positions it as antithetical to gender/sexual modernity discourses. The ‘conservative turn’ with its invented rhetoric of ‘traditional values’ can be seen as a chronotopic construct, positioning itself against the decaying modernity of the ‘West.’ The organic domestic tradition is juxtaposed to the alleged artificiality and decay of the West, reversing the Euro-centric hierarchy of value and casting alleged progress as over-development leading to decay. In Russian oppositional imaginaries, however, post-2013 Russia figures as even more backward, stuck in the past of ‘tradition,’ in contrast to the progressive ‘West.’ What is interesting is that within the field of grassroots Russophone feminisms, some of its incarnations, such as *radfem*, become coded in Russophone intersectional discourse as more anachronistic and backward.

As I argued before, the project of FIO contained from the start an explicit dis-identificatory dimension: actively self-positioning itself against Russophone *radfem*, explicitly likened in its assumed backwardness to the USA’s ‘second-wave feminist movement’ and guilty of the same exclusionary vices: racism, homophobia, transphobia. This politics of comparison is linked to modes of Western feminist theory’s temporal narratives analyzed by Hemmings. In the Western feminist narrative of progress, the 1970s decade is framed as a site of anachronistic essentialist singularity and the present time as a locus of complexity and multiplicity. Within such a narrative, the 1970s, discursively constructed as ‘the essentialist decade,’ can be read as a feminist chronotope. Drawing on Bakhtin, this feminist chronotope may be viewed as enacting a particular type of anachronistic personhood. Russophone feminist translators of intersectionality mobilize Western feminist chronotopes, fusing them with local chronotopic imaginaries in the struggle for both affiliation and distinction, linking spatiotemporal constructions with models of feminist personhood in the continuation of the comment thread analyzed in the previous section:

FIO to User: Тут больше одного модератора как бы. я считаю, что конкретно английский легко приобретаем - я им свободно владею после одного курса универа и нескольких лет сериалов. (Имя админа) считает иначе, что в принципе правда: изучение любого языка требует инициативы со стороны изучающего. сам процесс во времена интернета, на мой взгляд, сравнительно легок.

Admin to User: потому что я как бы филолог и языков у меня как бы 4 + от меня требовался уровень свободного устного перевода, а не уровень "прочитать статью на тумблере". английский - примитивнейший язык. вы приняли решение не учить его, как я, например,

FIO to User: There is more than one moderator here. I think English is easy to acquire - I am fluent in it after one uni course and several years of series. (Admin name) thinks otherwise, which is true in principle: learning any language requires initiative on the part of the learner. In my opinion, the process is relatively easy in Internet times.

Admin to User: I am a philologist and know 4 + languages. I was required to be able to interpret freely, not "read an article on Tumblr." English is a primitive language. You made a decision not to study it like I made a decision not to study dance because I am not interested. I will not yell later

приняла решение не заниматься танцами, потому что мне это неинтересно. я не буду потом орать, что люди, которые хорошо танцуют, задискриминировали меня своей привилегией хорошо танцевать. потому что они вложили в это кучу усилий, а не взяли свое умение с потолка. разница только в том, что мне, как феминистке, уметь танцевать не очень-то принципиально, а вот знать английский мне необходимо. впрочем, если вас удовлетворяет дремучий трансфобный русский феминизм а-ля 60е годы - вперед. в этом случае знать языки вам точно незачем

that people who dance well have discriminated against me for their privilege to dance well. The only difference is that I, as a feminist, do not care much about dancing, but I need to know English. However, if you are happy with the ignorant transphobic Russian feminism of the 60s, go ahead. In this case, you do not need to know languages.

In the admin's reply, Russophone radical feminism (*radfem*) is portrayed through the evocative word *дремучий*. In Russian, this word most often describes dense impassable forest (*дремучий лес*) but also ignorant, uneducated individuals, usually referring to peasants in pre-revolutionary Russia. Since *дремучий* in this particular instance is used together with the qualifier *русский* (ethnographically or linguistically Russian), we are entering the register of imaginary uneducated peasants from pre-revolutionary Russia. The juxtaposition is staged between unenlightened, transphobic, and monolingual backward Russian *radfem*, hostile to foreignness and foreign languages (although Russophone *radfem* also actively translates English texts and just as much participates in transnational feminist exchanges), on the one hand, and open to foreignness modern and cosmopolitan Russophone intersectional feminism, on the other. Circulating feminist chronotopes such as 'transphobic 1960s feminism' get sutured to local chronotopic imaginaries of the Russian past. Through the language ideology of personalism (Hill 2009), the user who launched the discussion about class implications of English language proficiency is dismissed through the invocation of the chronotopic figure of a non-modern *radfem*, refusing the foreign, stuck in the past of Russian folklore and peasant life mapped on the comparably backward transphobic 1960s US feminism. Moreover, the criticism of the foreign is read as implying the speaker's identity as *radfem*. Indexical focus is shifted from the stance on translation and the role of English on a Russophone feminist page towards a type of personhood.

This pairing of translated Western feminist chronotopes and local chronotopic imaginaries sutures together the progress narrative of the feminist movement in the USA, framed as moving away from the exclusionary past of radical feminism towards the progressive future symbolized by intersectionality, and Russophone feminist translation debates, where aligning with Anglophone intersectionality indicates a more advanced and enlightened position, and resisting it becomes associated with prerevolutionary Russian peasant backwardness hostile to foreign innovations. Interestingly, reaching out for pre-revolutionary chronotope involves making a temporal leap, skipping over Soviet times, as if non-existent and irrelevant for contemporary grassroots Russophone feminist politics.

It is important to remember that Russophone intersectional and radical feminist discourses are translated varieties since there were no corresponding feminist 'decades' in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This temporal mismatch introduces the problem of

backwardness and lag within LGBTQ and feminist discourses, theorized by feminist and sexuality scholars from Central and Eastern Europe. Kulpa's and Mizielińska's concepts, 'Western time of sequence' and 'Eastern time of coincidence' or 'knotted time' (after 1989, when breaking with socialist temporality occurred in Central and Eastern Europe), attempted to describe divergent discourses of geotemporality within sexual liberation politics, where knotted 'Eastern' time got introduced to 'everything at once' (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011:15–16). They problematize how Western/Anglo-American narratives of sexual liberation got decontextualized and dehistoricized to become 'narratives of sexual liberation in general and introduce their temporality as normative, producing the 'East' as lagging behind' (Kulpa, Mizielińska, and Stasińska 2012:118). Rasa Navickaitė, however, warns against the implicit framings of the 'Eastern European time of coincidence' as inherently queerer and more subversive, sexy time: 'The insistence on the queerness and inherent eroticism creates a romanticised picture of post-Soviet reality of Eastern Europe, as opposed to its "other," presumably non-erotic, linear and "straight" Western reality' (Navickaitė 2014:174). Vanya Mark Solovey, who has studied contemporary feminist grassroots movements in Russia in a similar vein, remarks on the knotted temporality within Russian feminisms: 'in Russian feminist scenes, it is common to combine the "lag discourse" with the "three waves of feminism" narrative, which sparks debates on whether "it's time" for Russia to go over to the "third wave" or if it has to "catch up" more thoroughly with "the second."' (Solovey 2020:160).

Shifting analytical focus from 'Eastern/Western times' to narratives about time, including the notion of feminist chronotopes, that links different foldings of time-space with a type of personhood, allows grasping how circulating Western feminist chronotopes are utilized in situated feminist activist discussions to reach particular effects. Western feminist chronotopes might enter such contexts simultaneously or in disarray, depending on the times of their translation and other obstacles. When entering, these Western feminist chronotopes may be stitched onto localized chronotopic imaginaries allowing recalibrating social relations, supporting claims-making, and (de)legitimizing translation practices.

Digital Russophone feminist discursivity of the mid-2010s is simultaneously inhabited by scattered feminist chronotopes deployed and contested on the ground for situated feminist struggles and projects. On FIO pages, Russophone *radfem* is rendered as a Russophone feminism's anachronistic past. In contrast, Russophone intersectional feminism operates through deploying intersectionality as a feminist chronotope of progress, embracing multiplicity and complexity and moving beyond exclusions, such as homophobia, transphobia, or racism. Such translated feminist chronotopes are tied to local historical chronotopes from Russian intellectual history, allowing for *radfem* anachronism to be mapped on the time of backward and illiterate pre-revolutionary Russian peasants or *народ* (people) stubbornly resisting progress. Additionally, the issue of language acquires a temporal framing. The valorization of English language sources, advocated by FIO, assigns English fluency and Russian-English bilingualism to advanced

temporality and casts Russian-language monolingualism as backward and anachronistic. To refuse English or proximity to English is to be stuck in the past. In order to advance temporally, a Russophone feminist subject needs to embrace English and be on the side of complexity and sophistication. English language within this pairing signals an orientation to the future and openness to the world.

However, 'the fact of translation' complexifies this temporal scheme and challenges the ascriptions of the Russophone *radfem* to the past and Russophone intersectionality to the future. In his work on the role of translation in Russian literature, Baer argues that 'every act of translation nonetheless carries with it a reminder of Russia's belatedness (translations typically come second) and of its imitative position vis-à-vis the West (as a source or model)' (Baer 2015:10). The belated temporality of translation haunting FIO's project necessitates the need to engage with the claims about Russophone intersectionality's secondariness in relation to the original intersectional feminism in the USA. Although the vision of translation as a belated copy is ideologically charged, this perceived belatedness of Russophone intersectionality opens up a discursive space for those contesting FIO's project on the ground and even for interrogation of 'the model.' Translational temporalities may intervene in the feminist chronotope of progress, informing Russophone translations of intersectionality.

Having sketched a general overview of the central aspects of FIO translation praxis in the upcoming chapters, I will examine the specific translation strategies used when translating intersectionality into Russian. I look at the multiplicity of these strategies' effects, focusing on the ascriptions of foreignness. The next chapter examines transliterations, one of the most popular translation strategies used by FIO moderators, and discusses what kind of trouble foreign feminist concepts evoke when transliterated into Russian.

4. Foreign elements: transliterating feminist concepts

Introduction

The practice of translation is not an innocent and neutral act but a politically engaged practice laden with power and partiality (Tymoczko 2000). The political nature of translation also concerns power relationships between different languages (Jaffe 1999:42). From FIO's inception, its political orientation to generate change both on linguistic and conceptual levels was apparent. FIO and other feminist intersectional public pages introduced political interventions into Russian language feminist vocabularies to fight transphobia, racism, and homophobia and distinguish themselves from other forms of Russophone online feminist activism. A flux of transliterated concepts appeared on FIO pages through English to Russian translations. These concepts, such as transphobia, victim-blaming, gaslighting, slut shaming, mansplaining, whitewashing, blackface, abuse, and many others, would be transliterated into Cyrillic and appear in the FIO's texts as *трансфобия, виктиблейминг, слатшейминг, мэмплейнинг, вайтвошинг, блэкфейс, абьюз*, etc. Such heavy borrowing of English-language terminology became a noticeable feature of the page, even its main feature for some of its critics. Opponents of Russophone intersectional feminist discourse, both feminists and non-feminists alike, often pejoratively call Russophone intersectionality *калька с Запада* (a calque from the West) to highlight both its translatorial (calque is a translation studies term)³² and allegedly deeply derivative, non-original nature. However, intense discussions over translation strategies and feminist loan words have also animated the debates amongst FIO's readers and admins.

In this chapter, I look closely at FIO's use of transliterations when translating English-language feminist terms to Russian. Transliterations represented one of the most dominant translation strategies used by FIO moderators. Approaching transliterations as an example of foreignizing translation strategies, I focus on the discussions in the comment threads where transliterations are actively contested. I aim to trace how different language and chronotopic ideologies motivate preference for or rejection of transliterations by associating it with a type of personhood and as a proxy for suspicious political positions. I explore how moderatorial choices favoring transliterations might have amplified the rhetoric of intersectionality's foreignness, allowing some users to position it as a feminist theory poorly suited for post-Soviet space. I explore how feminist discussions about transliterations become a site of an ideological struggle pulling together language, temporality, translation, and nation/Empire. Heated grassroots feminist debates on transliterations and the search

³² See the next chapter on the FIO's use of calque translations.

for alternative translation solutions are underpinned by ideologies about language and language contact, which are then read chronotopically.

On loving Russian language: ideologies of language mixing and linguistic purism

Transliterations as foreignizing translation strategies bring foreign words into a new language by changing the script. Transliterations, therefore, are highly noticeable 'foreign elements' that stand out in the target text, provoking concerns about the foreign. What else do they generate? The excerpt below, extracted from the comment thread under a short post published by FIO in December 2013, helps investigate this question. The post used the word 'abuse' transliterated into Russian by moderators as *абыюз*. In the ensuing thread, one user wonders about the reasons for using this word:

User1: почему "абыюз"?

User1: Why "abuse"?

User2: Потому что с английского "abuse", очень ёмкое слово.

User2: Because "abuse" comes from English, a very succinct word.

User1: Почему все используют слова, которых нет в нашем языке?)

User1: Why does everyone use words which do not exist in our language?)

User2: А что в этом такого? оно емкое и хорошо подходит

User2: What's wrong with it? It's pithy, and it fits well.

User1: Мы все же не в Канаде живем, чтобы смешивать наш язык с английским так ловко

User1: We don't live in Canada to mix our language with English so cleverly.

User2: Я по прежнему не вижу в этом ничего плохого, английский знают буквально все, он разговорный. не нравится слово? не читайте с ним (кон)текст. из мухи слона делаете. ярим патриотизмом попахивает.

User2: I still don't see what's wrong with it. Everyone knows English, and it's colloquial. If you don't like the word, don't read it. You make a big deal out of it. This reeks of patriotism.³³

User1: Не читать с ним? это как можно умудриться не читать слов, которые мне не нравятся) или предлагаете вы мне не читать это сообщество? что ж, не буду, чтобы не раздражаться) да что-то вам не тем попахивает. я люблю язык, язык это важно

User1: Do not read with it? How can you manage not to read the words that I do not like) or are you suggesting that I do not read this community? Well, I will not, so as not to get annoyed) It does not reek of anything. I love language. Language is important.

User2 to User1: о'кей, только свое мнение не навязываете, а то я люблю английский

User2 to User1: Ok, but don't impose your opinions here because I love English.

User1 to User2: Я тоже люблю английский, но не смесь английского с нижегородским

User1 to User2: I also love English, but not a mixture of English with Nizhny Novgorod (parlance).

User3: В русском языке почти все слова - заимствованные. Придется смириться

User3: Almost all words in Russian are borrowed. You will have to put up with it.

³³ I translate Russian word *патриотизм* as patriotism into English however acknowledging much more positive valence the term has in English compared to its routine deployment in the sense of chauvinistic nationalist parochialism on FIO pages.

This discussion reveals a disturbance evoked by transliterated feminist terminology. The influx of foreign words is perceived as making an incursion within Russian language feminist idiom and the Russian language itself. The anxiety over English language dominance is articulated through the stress on locality, defined as a decidedly not an English-speaking one: 'We don't live in Canada, to mix our language with English that cleverly.' User1 criticized excessive transliterations characterizing FIO's posts through the hybridized idiom *смесь английского с нижегородским* (mixture of English with Nizhny Novgorod's parlance). This expression is a reworking of an aphorism *Смесь французского с нижегородским* (mixture of French with Nizhny Novgorod's parlance), coined by the 19th-century writer, poet, and diplomat Aleksandr Griboyedov, appearing in his famous *Woe from Wit* verse comedy, a satire on post-Napoleonic Russian aristocratic society. The Russian aristocracy heavily used the French language at the time. In his phrase, Griboedov not only criticizes this obsession with the French language but also scorns the local aristocracy's emulation of nobility in St. Petersburg and, thus, the production of deemed vulgar language mixtures between Russian and French. Several centuries later, a reworking of this aphorism by FIO's reader replaces French, once a global lingua franca, with English, its contemporary counterpart, reflecting the shift from French-Russian bilingualism to English-Russian bilingualism noted by Russian sociolinguists (Proshina 2020:341).

The disapproval of language mixing, using hybridized feminist Runglish, remains at the center of this criticism, even if Russian aristocratic society disappeared a long time ago, and the debate is held about the precise translation of the word 'abuse' for Russophone feminist use. This striking resurfacing of the tensions of Russia's identity vis-à-vis the West in feminist discussions about intersectionality and translation is unexpected. What is at stake in this disapproval of feminist language mixing? Why is it articulated through a hybridized reworking of the 19th-century Russian literature trope? How are feminist translators of intersectionality who facilitate the proliferation of loanwords positioned in this trope? These questions necessitate detangling the mutual imbrications of language, nation, Empire, and translation within Russophone translation contexts. As Baer notes:

The legacy of empire, combined with an internalized sense of inferiority before the West, produced an educated elite throughout Eastern Europe and Russia that was – and to a great extent still is – multilingual, often fluent in the administrative language of empire, the “local” language(s), and the prestige language(s) of the West [...] this multilingualism, fostered in part by the cosmopolitan nature of empire, allowed many established writers in the region to engage in translation, which in turn lent prestige and cultural “legitimacy” to those translated texts [...] At the same time, multilingualism made possible a kind of “double readership.” That is, readers could and did compare the source and target texts, which made visible the translator's decisions and highlighted the (Russian) “difference” (Baer 2011a:7–8).

The search for Russian language purity is historically intimately linked with the ideas about Russia's national identity and the place of cosmopolitan multilingual and multiethnic elites within it (Baer 2015:6-7). The struggle with foreign languages' influence on the Russian language has impacted Russian intelligentsia's discussions since the 18th century. It culminated in the intellectual debates between Slavophiles and Westernizers, struggling with the issue of 'Western' hegemony. Anxiety over the cultural hegemony of the English language in feminist borrowings extends into questioning the place of local feminist activists. Read through this lens, FIO moderators may appear as cultural brokers bringing foreign discourses, such as intersectionality, into the Russian language feminist idiom. Multilingual translators mediating the foreign may be cast as elites leading an essentially different life from 'ordinary' feminists.

Scorning feminist transliterations reinforces the idea of mixing languages as something to be disapproved of or something that threatens 'our language,' which is positioned as an object of love. Defending languages from the influence of foreign words or protecting their linguistic purity is called linguistic purism or linguistic protectionism. As with any set of predispositions about language, linguistic purism may be considered a language ideology. Ambivalence towards a post-Soviet stream of English loanwords into the Russian language after the collapse of the USSR characterizes both state policies, scholarly communities, and the general public (Proshina 2020:348-49). Linguists have framed the post-Soviet conspicuous Westernization of the Russian language as a dangerous inundation with foreign words and excessive Americanization (Yurchak 2000:411). One of the founding admins of FIO, a philologist/linguist by training and a multilingual, repeatedly denounces the ideology of linguistic purism by stressing the omnipresence of loan words in the Russian language and its hybridized character. These once-borrowed words are not registered as foreign anymore after being assimilated and perceived as 'naturally Russian', exposing language contact as constitutive of Russian. FIO moderators favour language mixing over the ideology of linguistic protectionism. This rejection of the ideology of linguistic purism is based on associating its proponents with chauvinistic patriotism, conservatism, and nationalism. In the discussion above, in response, another user makes this metonymic link, accusing the speaker, concerned with language mixing, of patriotism. This reading is implicit and visceral (it reeks); it operates through indexicality and language ideology of personalism. User's words are taken to mean a stance vis-à-vis transliterations and signal a type of personhood associated with chauvinistic conservative Russian patriotism. This association, taken in the context of the 2013-2014 changes within Russia, is more than understandable. The metonymic chain links the suspicion towards foreign words to the desire to protect the linguistic purity of the Russian language, which in turn is read to signal Russian nationalism and, by the force of association, conservative visions of gender and sexuality.

Intelligibility trouble: ugly words and speaking ‘in bird language.’

Transliterations may appear unsightly and exclusionary. Below is a snapshot of the conversation in the comment thread under a short article dedicated to victim-blaming published on FIO pages in December 2013. The discussion started when one user expressed discontent with the perceived ugliness of transliterated words:

User1: всё бы норм, только зачем изобретать столь уродливые слова, как "виктим-блейминг", "фэт-фобия" и проч.? всё это легко сказать по-русски

User1: It could be fine, but why invent such ugly words like "victim-blaming," "fat-phobia," etc.? It's all easy to say in Russian.

User2: Точно, точно)

User2: Right, right)

Admin1: серьезно? предложите ваш вариант перевода

Admin1: Seriously? Suggest your version of the translation.

User3: мне даже интересно, как вы скажете "фэт-фобия" по-русски, никого не оскорбив.

User3: I wonder how you can say "fat-phobia" in Russian without offending anyone.

User4: боязнь жира. Ахахахаха

User4: Fear of fat. Lol

User3: (...) "Привет! Понимаете, мой парень... Он боится жира... Что мне делать?"

User3: (...) "Hi! You see, my boyfriend... He's afraid of fat... What should I do?"

Admin1 to User1: я жду ответа

Admin1 to User1: I am waiting for an answer

Admin2: Мы же рЮСКЕ ДОВАЙТЕ ГОВОРИТЬ ПАРЮСКЕ

Admin2: WE ARE RUSSKE! LET'S SPEAK RUSSKE!

User2 to Admin2: А вы-то сейчас что делаете?

User2 to Admin2: Isn't it what you are doing now?

Admin2: юзаю агли англиш слова

Admin2: I use *ugly English* words

User2: Слова, упомянутые User1, не являются заимствованными из других языков, их вполне можно перевести в каждом конкретном случае. Просто так легче, видимо. Просто кириллицей написать. Вопрос только в этом был, как я понимаю.

User2: The words mentioned by User1 are not borrowed from other languages. Translating them in each case is quite possible, and it's just easier not to. Just write them in Cyrillic. That was the only question, as I understand it.

User5 to User2: что это такое, если не заимствования?

User5 to User2: What are these, if not borrowings?

User6: Жертвоинение и жиробоязнь конечно всё меняют, да. По-русски жи!

User6: The accusation of the victim and *zhiroboyazn*³⁴ changed everything! What matters is that they are in Russian!!!

User2 to User5: может со временем, это и будет заимствованием, как компьютер или феминизм, например, но эти словосочетания можно перевести без утраты смысла. Моё не лингвистическое мнение.

User2 to User5: It may eventually become a loan, like computer or feminism, for example, but these phrases can be translated without loss of meaning. My non-linguistic opinion.

User5 to User2: я тут так и не увидела ваших классных лаконичных вариантов без утраты смысла. Жиробоязнь? Шлюхостыжение?

User5 to User2: I still haven't seen your excellent concise options here without loss of meaning. *Zhiroboyazn*? *Shlyhoustyzenie*?³⁵

³⁴ From Russian *zhir* – fat, *boyazn* – fear.

³⁵ From Russian *shlyuha* – whore, *styzhenie* – shaming.

User7: зачем, если это и так устойчивые выражения существующие в рамках отечественного феминистского дискурса. Годами так писали, а теперь придумывать какие-то аналоги, зачем?

User8: Кстати, "обвинение жертвы" вроде говорят, есть даже статья в википедии, но звучит все равно не очень. а фэтофобию я лично теперь буду только пухлестрахом называть!

User2 to User5: а зачем пытаться сократить? Victim blaming не одно слово, так почему аналог должен быть лаконичным? Всё, что я хочу сказать, так это то, что стоит переводить то, что подвергается переводу, а вот если не перевести, то да...

User5 to User2: вопрос в том, сколько в вашем переводе потребуется слов/букв, чтобы не потерять смысл. Если переведенный термин в переводе представляет собой более сложную конструкцию, чем в оригинале, то с лингвистической точки зрения удобнее использовать заимствование. А с вашим подходом можно и слова вроде "менеджер" и "драйвер" переводить, АТОНИПАРУСКЕ!

User1 to Admin1: мой вариант перевода - "тупость". зачем разводить ложную терминологию для каждого конкретного случая тупости - чтоб звучало красивше? и да, как-то неприятно удивила нервическая реакция сообщества в комментариях.

User9: нет гомофобов, фэтфобов и прочего, да. просто они все тупые. как всё просто

User2 to User5: ОК. Говорите как хотите, я не спорю. Просто высказала своё мнение.

User8: Можно устроить демонстрацию женщинисток с плакатами: "Мы против жертвообвинения!" "Борись со своим пухлестрахом!" "ДОЛОЙ ШЛЮХОУСТЫЖИВАНИЕ!"

User5 to User1: зачем мы тут вообще какой-то феминизм развели? Чо-то гендер какой-то обсуждаем как дурачки. А ведь все объясняется ТУПОСТЬЮ, остальное - ложные термины епта.

User9 to User1: сути явления не отражает.

User1 to User9: ок, если я скажу "обвинение жертвы насилия" или "неприязнь к полным женщинам" - суть изменится?

User9 to User1: это уже не будет ёмким термином, выше – "Если переведенный термин в переводе представляет собой более сложную конструкцию, чем в оригинале, то

User7: Why, when these are already stable expressions that exist within the domestic feminist discourse? For years they've been written that way, and now they have to make up some analogs, why?

User8: By the way, people do say "accusation of the victim" there is even a Wikipedia article, but it still does not sound right. I will be only using *puhlestrah*³⁶ instead of fatphobia now!

User2 to User5: Why try to shorten it? *Victim blaming* is not written in one word; why should its analog be concise? I am saying that it's worth translating what is translatable, but if not, then yes...

User5 to User2: The question is how many words/letters in your translation will be needed so as not to lose meaning. If the translated term is a more complex construction than the original, borrowing is linguistically more convenient. With your approach, you can start translating words like "manager" and "driver," too, because ITISNOTINRUSKE!

User1 to Admin1: My variant of translation is "stupidity." Why should we use false terminology for each specific case? Stupidity. To make it sound prettier? And yes, I was unpleasantly surprised by the nervous reaction of the community in the comments.

User9: there are no homophobes, fatphobes, etc.; they're all dumb. How easy.

User2 to User5: ОК. Say what you want. I'm not arguing. Just stating my opinion.

User8: Let's organize a women's rally with posters: "We are against accusing the victim," "Fight your *puhlestrah*," and "Down with *shlyuhoustyzhivanie*!"

User5 to User1: Why are we making a big deal about feminism here? We're discussing gender like idiots. And everything is explained by STUPIDITY; the rest are false terms, for fuck's sake.

User9 to User1: it doesn't capture the essence of the phenomenon.

User1 to User9: Ok, if I say, "accusing the victim of violence" or "dislike of chubby women"? Will the central idea change?

User9 to User1: that would no longer be a pithy term; see above - "If the translated term in translation is a more complex construction than in the original, it is linguistically more convenient to use a borrowing."

³⁶ From Russian *puhlyi* - chubby, *strah* – fear.

с лингвистической точки зрения удобнее использовать заимствование. "

User8 to User1: мне кажется, меняется ощущение. Термин дает какую-то основательность и подчеркивает, что это отдельное явление (несмотря на то, что вы со мной не согласитесь, потому что считаете, что все это просто тупость), а не просто частный случай.

User1: если и так, и в эти словах есть подсмислы, которых я не вижу, я в душе не чаю, зачем вообще та куча терминов. когда я хочу говорить об этих проблемах с людьми, в частности, делать репосты, то хочу использовать понятные слова, чтобы понял Вася из соседнего подъезда. разумеется, это только моё личное мнение и мой опыт.

Admin2: Здесь у некоторых еще слова типа "авторка" и "докторка" возмущение вызывают, тоже мне феминисты.

Admin2 to User2: вася может а) спросить что это такое в коментах б) загуглить. В противном случае васе в принципе насрать на ваш репост, а не из-за уродливого слова.

User9 to User1: "обвинение жертвы насилия" не звучит как давно принятый по-умолчанию паттерн в патриархальном обществе. это штука именно что систематическая, и конструкция "обвинение жертвы насилия" не отражает полностью этого.

User1 to Admin2: если моя задача - говорить на птичьем языке в своём кругу единомышленников, то вопросов нет. для неподготовленного читателя это лишний повод пройти мимо - любой копирайтер знает)

User8 to User1: кстати, а мой опыт показывает, что люди часто обращают внимание на подобные тексты как раз из-за непонятного слова, задают вопросы, гуглят, и у них больше откладывается в голове. Я и сама не могу сказать, что в восторге от того, как все это звучит в контексте русского языка, но тем не менее считаю, что эти слова тоже в какой-то степени работают на благо, потому как жутковатые термины довольно впечатляющи для тех, кто не в теме.

User9 to User1: рост сообщества кагбэ намекает на обратное. поэтому это довольно спорный вопрос, кто проходит мимо.

User8: Если по частоте использования смотреть, то "обвинение жертвы" можно назвать устоявшимся выражением в русском интернете. Но фэтфобию я все равно не знаю, чем заменить можно

User8 to User1: In my view, it creates a different feel. The term gives some grounding and emphasizes that it is a separate phenomenon (even though you would disagree with me because you think it's all just dumb) and not just a random case.

User1: Even if it is so and these words have connotations that I don't see, I don't understand why having a heap of terms. I want to talk about these problems with people and do reposts. I want to use understandable words that next-door neighbor Vasya could understand. It is strictly my personal opinion and experience.

Admin2: Some people here also resent words like "authoress" or "doctress," what kind of feminists they are.

Admin2 to User2: Vasya can a) ask what it is in the comments; b) google. If not, it means that Vasya generally does not give a fuck about your repost, not because the word is ugly.

User9 to User1: "accusation of the victim of violence" does not connote an established by default pattern in a patriarchal society. This is a structural issue, and the "accusation of the victim of violence" doesn't fully reflect that.

User1 to Admin2: If my goal is to speak in 'bird language,' no questions are asked. For the untrained reader, this is an extra reason to pass by - any copywriter knows)

User8 to User1: My experience shows that people often pay attention to such texts because of such hard-to-grasp words, they google, and more things stay in their heads. I can't say that I'm thrilled with how it all sounds in the context of the Russian language, but I think these words also work to some extent for good because the creepy terms are pretty impressive for those not in the know.

User9 to User1: The growth of this community hints to the contrary, so it is a pretty questionable issue when it comes to passing by.

User8: If you look at the frequency of use, one can say "the accusation of the victim" is an established term on the Russian-language internet. But I still don't know how fatphobia can be replaced.

User1, who questioned the politics of transliterated feminist concepts, emphasized the troubles with intelligibility and communicability of foreignized vocabulary. As User1's argument goes, when the goal of feminist movements is to achieve social change, then clear and widely accessible language matters. One strong metaphor of unintelligibility

and foreignness of feminist transliteration used by User₁ was ‘speaking in bird language,’ a colloquial idiom in Russian, meaning to speak in highly coded terms, using gibberish or jargon incomprehensible to outsiders. Another metaphor of local intelligibility is the figure of Vasya (*Вася из соседнего подъезда*) evoked to stand for a social type: generic typical Russian next-door neighbor, unaware and ignorant of feminism. The figure of Vasya is a metonym for simple, ordinary people to whom feminist knowledge should be communicated but who will remain unreachable through unfamiliar transliterated feminist terminology that is hard to understand. Similarly, User₂ also insists on translatability instead of transliterations; it is argued that one should attempt to translate what is potentially translatable.

For those who defend transliterations, attempts to domesticate foreign words by searching for similar vernacular terms are seen as futile. Existing words are said to be not radical enough, lacking explicit attention to power structures. As is indicated by the discussion, borrowed from English *виктимблейминг* (victim-blaming) is read as having a radical force and sharpness, unlike the Russian equivalent *обвинение жертвы* (the accusation of the victim) characterized as ‘not sounding quite right.’ Foreignized transliterated terms appear more rigorous and conceptually clear. Transliterated feminist concepts exude an aura of Western feminist theory and activism, legitimizing new-coming transliterations as sharper tools for feminist analysis, which are superior to those available in Russian. They stand for theoretical innovation and sophistication as signs of ‘foreign modern’ (Pereira 2014) sustained by circulating feminist narrative of progress (Hemmings 2011). Drawing on the struggles rooted in US feminist movements adds legitimacy and weight to the problems discussed by Russophone feminist activists. US-American activism appears more radical, the cradle of the anti-oppression struggles, and a model for activists worldwide to follow. The desire to catch up with it, learn from it, and benefit from its authorizing force may motivate foreignizing translation strategies. In the debate above, some even argue that transliterated feminist concepts have an estranging potential: by being foreign, unfamiliar, and even ‘creepy,’ they intrigue and capture attention. They ‘stick out’ in the text, generating both interest and anxiety, unlike translation decisions that try to smooth over the foreignness through more domesticating translation strategies.

Subsequent discussion in the same comment thread reinforced the associations of criticism of non-translation with conservative Russianness, so parochial to become even more removed in time, rendered archaic. Several users embraced the ludic linguistic play, which involved digging for alternative translations of foreign feminist terms indexing the chronotopic construction of archaic Russianness. The fragment of this exchange is quoted below:

User10: Верхние комменты доставили. Так и представила себе пикет феминисток в русских сарафанах, кокошниках, с косами до пояса и с плакатами "Долой шлюхостыжение", написанными словянской вязью.

User10: The comments above rock! I imagined a rally of feminists in traditional Russian sarafan robes and kokoshniki headpieces with long braided hair and headscarves holding a "Down with *shlyhostyzhenie!*" poster in old Slavic script.

User11: Как slutwalk, только православно..!D

User11: Just like a slutwalk, only orthodox:)

User5: шлюхогуляния!

User5: *Shlyhogulyaniya*!³⁷

User12: А специальная платформа, на которой они будут торжественно ехать, пусть зовётся блядоход.х)

User12: And the special platform on which they will solemnly ride, let's call it a *blyadohod*!³⁸

User8: (...) хочу на шлюхогуляния! прямо что-то типа масленицы представилось, только круче :))

User8: (...) I would take part in such *shlyhogulyaniya*! Looks like Maslenitsa but cooler!

User12: Жечь чучела патриархата.

User12: Burning effigies of patriarchy.

User13: не, ну какое же шлюхостыжение.. по-прусскски должно быть какое-нибудь "блѣдопозорище", не меньше, ящетаю

User13: no, *shlyhostyzenie* does not work. It should be "blѣdopozorishe"³⁹ in Russian, no less than that!

Users engaged in this ludic translation brainstorm generated translation alternatives for such English-language feminist concepts as 'slut-shaming' and 'victim-blaming,' replacing them with archaic-sounding old Russian words. Causing comic effect, mock English and pidginized archaic Russian highlighted the untenability of the protective concerns with the influx of loan words. Through this ludic linguistic creativity, attempts to find translation alternatives to the English language terms in Russian were further cast as futile and ludicrous exercises. The Russian language was discursively tied to backwardness and tradition, while English was tethered to progress and modernity.

These themes and conversations were developed further in the thread:

User14: Я считаю, лучше говорить "обвинение жертвы", потому что вне феминистской тусовки термин "виктим блейминг" мало кому известен. Слово "фобия" вроде как прижилось в русском языке, люди понимают, что оно означает, хотя "фэтфобия" с неприязнью не воспринимается, не доходит, что это такое.

User14: I also think it is better to say "the accusation of the victim" because apart from the feminist crowd, the term "victim-blaming" is not widely known. The word "phobia" is rooted in Russian, and people understand what it means; although "fatphobia" is not automatically understood, people don't get what it is.

User15: ну вы говорите о тех, кто не знает английского, я употребляла в речи такие слова с теми кто знает, они понимали с первого раза

User15: well, you're talking about those who do not know English; I used such words in conversation with those who do, and they understood me without a problem.

User16: если вам так удобнее, пожалуйста кто мешает, но "обвинение жертвы" слабенько звучит, не термином.. так

User16: If it is easier for you, go ahead, but "the accusation of the victim" sounds relatively weak, not as a concept.

User17: по мне так обвинение жертвы не звучит как что-то плохое. это вроде как не термин, а порядок вещей

User17: In my opinion, the accusation of the victim does not sound like a bad thing; it's kind of not a term, but rather something normal.

User15: так обычно считают люди у которых нет таргета в жизни. Люди с отсутствующим эскипиенсом. Не смартовые.

User15: That's usually the way people without a *target* in life think. People who lack *experience*. Not *smart*.

User16: Хотя опять же существует виктимология (научная отрасль, труды которой переведены на русский язык и есть множество представителей

User16: Still, there is victimology (a scientific discipline with works translated into Russian, and many victimologists from Russia who produced their works). Maybe some of the

³⁷ From Russian *shlyuha* – whore, *gulyaniya* – public festivities.

³⁸ From Russian *blyad'* – whore, *hod* – that walks, moves.

³⁹ From Russian *blyad'* – whore, *pozorishe* – disgrace. Here the user digs deeper in time by using the sign ъ.

русской виктимологии, которые написали свои работы) - может быть кто-нибудь из присутствующих здесь криминалистов, судебных экспертов сможет найти русскоязычный аналог термина "виктимблейминг". Все-таки чрезмерные заимствования - отвратительны, а "стикерная" краткость такого явления так и просит превратиться в универсальный ответ и повальную истерию. Некоторые вещи необходимо различать, ведь начнутся нечестные манипуляции и придирки к словам. Например, заклеят "виктимную модель поведения" как обвинение.

User8: в том смысле, что я хотела сказать, что в виктимологии уже "обвинение жертвы" используется.

User16: вот и славно - ни к чему пугать людей заморскими формулами да басурманскими речами.

User17: Если у новичков есть интерес к теме, то перевести пару терминов не составит труда, я думаю.

User18: Вообще, складывается впечатление, что некоторых проблема чистоты русского языка волнует куда больше, чем проблемы виктимблейминга, фэтфобии и абьюза вместе взятые. Мне не так давно написал мудчинка, с которым я поспорил в какой-то из фем групп как раз из-за его сентенций в стиле "самадуравинувата". Его там быстро забанили, но он решил покачать права в личке, и самой большой претензией ко мне было, что я употребила слово "виктимблейминг". Типа, там изнасиловали кого-то? Похуй! Кто-то употребил заимствованное слово? Берсерк моуд он!

User19: о, прямо с языка сняли)) это похоже на какой-то очередной способ переключить внимание с реальной проблемы на какую-нибудь отвлеченную от темы деталь

User20: а чем этот товарищ предлагает заменить эти выражения? Тот же "абьюз", например, в одно русское слово не уместить, значение слегка другое.

User18: виктимблейминг он предлагал заменить на обвинение жертвы. А по поводу абьюза есть выступления в посте ниже. Я согласна, что полностью заменить нельзя, да и смысла нет.

criminologists and forensic experts present here can find a Russian analog of the term "victim-blaming." After all, excessive borrowing is disgusting, and the "sticker-like" brevity of such a phenomenon just begs to turn into a universal answer and widespread hysteria. Some things need to be separated; scheming manipulations and picking on the words may emerge. For example, using the "victimized model of behavior" as an accusation.

User8: I meant that victimology already uses "accusation of the victim."

User16: Great! Why scare people away with overseas formulas and *basurman*⁴⁰ speeches

User17: Translating a couple of concepts won't be a problem if newcomers are interested in the subject.

User18: In general, it seems that some people care about the purity of the Russian language much more than they care about the problems of victim-blaming, fatphobia, and abusive behavior. Not so long ago, I got a message from a guy I argued with in a feminist group because of his "itsawomansfault" style sentences. He was promptly banned there, but he decided to message me, and his biggest complaint was that I had used the word "victim blaming." Like, did someone get raped there? Fuck it! Did someone use a borrowed word? Berserk mode is on!

User19: I was about to say the same)) it looks like another way to deflect attention from a real problem to some unrelated detail.

User20: What replacements for these phrases does this dude offer? You cannot fit "abuse" into one Russian word since the meaning is slightly different.

User18: He suggested replacing victim blaming with the accusation of the victim. There are commentaries below about abuse. I agree that it cannot be replaced entirely.

What resurfaces in the discussion above and other dialogues in FIO comments threads I have observed is that Russian-language analogs to transliterated English concepts or attempts to find a translation for these terms are perceived as in some way deficient. Both FIO admins and many readers have repeatedly reiterated that such domestic analogs either sound weak and not catchy enough or are perceived to lack critical potential, seeming to justify the status quo instead of challenging it. On the other hand, for those few who feel bitter about using Anglicized transliterated feminist concepts,

⁴⁰ One of the old-fashioned ways to describe a non-Christian and specifically Muslim person in Russian language. Used in ironic way by the user to evoke the feel of archaic Russian xenophobia.

such terms appear ‘disgusting’ and ‘sticky,’ harboring a danger of provoking ‘hysteria’ or threatened by being misused and manipulated. As User18 claims, it seems that for some individuals, the purity of the Russian language is more important than the ‘real’ existing problems on the ground. Here concerns with language are described as less legitimate and channeling attention away from serious issues. Could one way to stage the confrontation in the comments thread be to frame it as competing for feminist definitions of relevance? Both those who criticize the foreignized borrowed terms and those who challenge such positions are concerned with the situations and problems that matter locally. However, for some users, it is the foreign words that become the locus of such critique, and what they are concerned with is the issue of intelligibility of feminist messages to wider audiences, perceived to affect their capacity to change the situation ‘on the ground,’ that is how far and how wide feminist thought in the Russian language can reach. While the second position suggests that the excessive criticism of foreign words takes away attention from handling the problems on the ground, a critique of foreignness is read as hindering rather than enabling. Reimagining this dispute, not in terms of emulation of the Western models but in terms of pragmatic utility for the situated feminist movements, can be seen as one possible way to transcend the antagonism of the debate. For now, I want to dig deeper into the questions of transliteration’s generativeness. As the thread above revealed, transliterated feminist terms are described as ‘disgusting’ and ‘ugly,’ evoking highly charged affective responses amongst Russophone feminist readers.

Visceral unease with transliterations

In July 2014, FIO published a translation of Bitch magazine article written by Lucy Vernasco, *Seven Studies That Prove Mansplaining Exists*. The term mansplaining in a transliterated Cyrillic version, *менсплейнинг*, featured prominently in this translation. Ensuing discussion in the comments points towards how the excessive use of transliterations becomes a source of visceral unease for some readers:

User1: Мне адово жгут глаза слова "менсплейнинг", "слатшейминг"...Сложно воспринимать. Нужно устроить как-нибудь мозговой штурм по корректному (наиболее) переводу терминов. Чтобы паники и тошноты не вызывали. Все же мне бы хотелось, чтобы не только интеллектуалы разбирались что здесь к чему. П.с. отдельное спасибо за сноску на термин в статье(если человек "не в теме" зайдет, ему будет гораздо легче вникнуть. а не из контекста вытягивать)

User1: Words like “mansplaining,” and “slut-shaming” burn my eyes... It is hard to process them. We should brainstorm about the adequate translation of concepts so they won't cause panic and nausea. I would like to see not only intellectuals doing that. PS. Many thanks for the explanation of the concept in the footnote. If someone unaware of it accessed it, it would be much easier to understand instead of getting it from the context)

Admin: Слова "менеджер" и "компьютер" вам случайно глаза не жгут?

Admin: Do words like “manager” and “computer” not burn your eyes?

User1: Менеджер не нравится. компьютер - заимствование, пришедшее вместе с изобретением.

User1: I don't like the word manager. Computer is a loanword coming together with the invention itself. When

Когда слова укореняются в языке, то они перестают быть заметными. Мне не нужно читать лекции про заимствования - я диплом уже получила по этой теме. Просто если бы нашлась корректная замена, то было бы намного лучше и произносить и понимать.

the words become ingrained in the language, they cease to be conspicuous. I don't need to be lectured about loanwords; I already have a degree in the field. It would have been easier to understand and pronounce if an adequate replacement had been found.

Visceral rejection of transliterations is expressed through references to the bodily domain. Transliterated feminist words borrowed from English, 'burn the eyes,' provoke 'panic,' and 'nausea' complicate sensory perception. Instinctive, physical unease with the foreign is juxtaposed here with the scholarly realm. FIO's admins transform into feminist intellectuals in a position of authority to decide which terms are best and what translation choices are more precise. User₁ calls for a more dialogical redistribution of this power through appeals to collective decision-making over translations of key feminist concepts. The debate is reframed in quasi-post-colonial terms: locally rooted readers viscerally reject the cosmopolitan embrace of feminist anglicisms by FIO admins. To sustain this vision, User₁ evokes the figure of *человек "не в теме"* (unaware passerby), who performs the work similar to the neighbor Vasya used in the previous section. Both figures stand for 'the people,' who need to understand Russophone intersectional feminist idiom but cannot because of the complicated coded language. FIO admin, in turn, picks up the visceral dimension of this critique and uses mock politeness to question the perceived resistance to foreignness. By bringing up the examples of loan words deeply assimilated into the Russian language, User₁'s reaction is interpreted as a parochial resistance to language mixing. User₁, in turn, immediately registers the condescending tone of the admin, calling it 'lecturing about loan words,' thereby reinforcing the framing of the debate as 'feminist intellectuals' vs. people' introduced in the first message. At the same time, User₁ rejects the alleged lecturing by evoking one's own authority to partake in scholarly discussion. User₁ casts language change through organicist metaphor: when borrowed words 'root' deep enough into the language, they no longer disturb and facilitate rather than hinder the understanding. This process illustrates how FIO readers in the comments sometimes take up the position of authority to contest the choices of the moderators.

The discussion continued further with another comment from the FIO admin addressed to User₁:

Admin: Этот вопрос уже не раз обсуждался. Находится очень много желающих возмутиться "ненашими" непонятными словами, но желающих предложить им адекватную замену почему-то никогда нет. У нас точно так же нет идей, как эти понятия можно хорошо перевести, и мы считаем, что объяснения в скобках достаточно. Тем более, что слатшейминг, виктимблейминг и т.д. уже активно используются в русскоязычном фем-пространстве, не только в этом публице. Насчет жжения глаз - это вопрос привычки. Феминитивы тоже многим жгут глаза

Admin: This question has already been discussed many times. There are so many of those being disturbed by words that are "not ours" and not clear. But for some reason, there is never any willingness to suggest an adequate replacement for them. We also have no idea how to translate these concepts well, and we believe that the explanation in parentheses is enough. Especially since slut shaming, victim blaming, etc., are already in active use in the Russian-speaking feminist space, not only on this page. About eye burning - it's a matter of habit. Femininitives also burn some people's eyes.

The admin stresses that the criticism of the foreign is not new (and therefore dated) and that nothing is conceptually innovative in this rejection of foreign terms. Possible critique of cultural hegemony and elitist discourse within feminism is displaced as a manifestation of linguistic-cum-theoretical conservatism, archaic attachment to the purity of the Russian language, illegitimate, almost irrational rejection of newness and progress, coming with foreign, English words-concepts into Russian-language feminist discourse. What, however, betrays the relevance of such criticism is that it keeps happening (*Находится очень много желающих возмутиться “ненашими” непонятными словами*). The reoccurring trouble with foreign terms amongst FIO readers reiterates the split between cosmopolitan feminist intellectuals vs. ordinary users struggling with English-language terms. At the same time, the FIO admin also tries to mute the pedagogical tone and acknowledges admins’ vulnerability-in-translation, presenting the borrowing of Anglophone feminist terminology as a project of continuous feminist reflection. This puzzle can hardly culminate in any resolution, where a provisionary explanation of translated terms in brackets appears as the only workable strategy. In the admin’s reply, visceral rejection of the foreign is also displaced as a matter of time and of getting used to terms that would gradually assimilate into the Russian language’s intersectional feminist idiom and no longer appear foreign. Rejection of transliterations is compared to the debate on feminitives, that is, the attempts to replace generic masculine in Russian names for professions. Both debates are cast as illegitimate and parochial.

The exchange above pushed another user to align with the comment of FIO moderators. User2 evokes ludic chronotopic constructs of Russian language intellectual scarcity to reflect on the alleged foreignness of transliterated feminist concepts:

User2 replied to User1: Лол ... слово компьютер, не пришло в месте с изобретением, на просторах Руси матушки, он назывался ЭВМ :D. если мне незнакомо какое то слово в книге или в нете, я не возмущаюсь, а пользуюсь мерзким изобретением прогнившего запада - гуглом :))) ... Ну если у вас профильное образование по данной теме, то вы прекрасно знаете сколько у нас нем, фр, англ. заимствований. И по теме феминизма нет аналогов, т.к. у нас нет ни каких исследований, рус. ученые не выдумывают для нас русскоязычные аналоги и тд. Это как и феминитивами, ежедневно в рунете рождаются новые слова ... Так предложите ваши варианты, придумайте свои/наши русские слова, я уверена что вы ни чем не хуже Гумилева :) я без претензий лично к вам:)

User2 replied to User1: Lol ... the word computer did not come with the invention; it was called EVM in Mother-Rus :D. If I don’t know a word in a book or on the internet, I don’t nag about it but use the vile invention of the Rotten West, Google:)))...If you have specialized education in this field, you know well how many loan words we have from English, French, and German. Moreover, when it comes to the topic of feminism, there are no analogs because we don’t have any research. Russian (speaking) scientists do not invent Russian-language analogs... Suggest your alternatives, and create your own/ours Russian words; I am sure you are not worse than Gumilyov. No offense, nothing personal)

User2’s critique is mapped across two planes: linguistic and theoretical. On the linguistic plane, the ideology of linguistic purism is evoked as untenable since the Russian language has already incorporated multiple foreign loan words, as its history demonstrates. The linguistic change manifesting in English borrowings is positioned as unstoppable. When it comes to feminist research in the Russian language, the landscape

is even bleaker: it does not exist. Russophone scholars do not produce concepts; no research is being made. Hence, there is no other destiny for the Russian-speaking feminisms but to borrow transliterated terms. As the Russian language is bound to change, opening up to new loan words coming from English, so does Russian-speaking feminisms, opening itself to the new conceptual vocabularies, which would gradually assimilate into Russophone feminist idioms and, at one point, would stop appearing strange. I am interested in this circulating image of the Russian language's intellectual scarcity and alleged backwardness on FIO's pages and how it ties up with the contemporary oppositional imaginaries of Russia, Russianness, and Russophone feminisms. They may be framed as anachronistic, stagnating, forever backward, resistant to change, unproductive, and incapable of coining new concepts.

User2 also draws on localized chronotopic imaginaries to jocularly contest the criticism of transliterations and reorder positions within the debate. What is most interesting is the ironic cross-chronotopic deployment of the late-soviet predecessor of computers ЭВМ⁴¹ said to be inhabiting 'Mother-Rus.' 'Mother Rus,' a trope widely used as a national personification of Russia, is employed here in a jocular fashion, mocking the position of User1. 'Mother Rus,' an image tied to the Slavophile movement, emphasizes Russian patriotic rejection of Western innovations, personified by the search engine Google. However, the Soviet chronotope, evoked by using the expression ЭВМ, now sounding archaic, is aligned with the Slavophile chronotope of 'Mother-Rus,' collapsing these allegedly 'archaic' times together. *Загнивающий Запад* (Decaying West) is another iconic visual and textual meme that made a dazzling career on Runet. It can be used to mock the users who laugh at the allegedly decaying West by showing instead of the negative imagery of Russia's decay and Russia's backwardness – broken roads, dilapidated houses, and suicidal landscapes with alcoholic men lying around. The trope of rotten, decaying, or morally corrupt West is much older than its current online visual memetic articulations. The Slavophile movement used it back in the 19th century as a metaphor to express skepticism towards ideas and values coming from 'the West.' The trope of the decaying West in its original articulation is chronotopic, where the return to pre-Petrine goodness and the unsoiled past of tradition is imagined as an alternative to Russian Westernizers' infatuation with Western models. Decaying West chronotope interrupts West as progress chronotope by recasting what is seen as advancement into a vision of defect and decomposition. Positioning Google as an invention of 'Rotten West,' employed by the user, is also significant. Evoking this powerful imagery in a ludic way, User2 reframes the confrontation about loan words as a battle between archaic Slavophile patriotism frozen in a protective posture, trying to preserve both the purity of the Russian language and halt Russophone feminism's development which is bound to advance due to the unstoppable force of progress embodied by intersectionality as feminist future. This linguistic-feminist patriotism is

⁴¹ Stands for Electronic Calculating Machine.

seen as rejecting modernity and innovation. The concern over the intelligibility of terms and communicative effects of feminist discourse is perceived as an attack on intersectional feminism from a conservative position. This defensiveness towards criticism of loanwords must be understood in the context of extreme emotional costs both admins of feminist pages, other feminist users, and most persons announcing themselves publicly as feminists often encounter on social networks and other online platforms.

Chronotopic displacements. ‘Slavophile feminism with blackjack and intersectionality!’

Slavophile chronotopes and imaginaries of archaic Russianness resurfaced in other comment threads where debates over feminist transliterations took place. I quote below an excerpt from the comment thread under the translated post from everydayfeminism.com, *The Latest War on Women: Online Harassment*, posted on FIO in June 2014:

User1: Почему в этом паблике используют английские транслитерации 'харассмент', 'абьюз' и т.д. вместо русских аналогов?

User1: Why do you use English transliterations such as 'harassment' and 'abuse' instead of Russian-language analogs on this page?

User2 to User1: Конечно же, только для того, чтобы выпендриться. Действительно, не уловили веяния времени и новейшие законодательные инициативы госудры. А какие у этих слов абсолютно идентичные по значению русские аналоги?

User2 to User1: Of course, just to show off. Indeed, they did not follow the current trends and the latest foolish legislative initiatives of the State Duma. And what are the exact Russian analogs, identical in meaning, for these words?

Admin1 to User1: Потому что точных аналогов не существует и потому что это вполне устоявшиеся в фем-дискурсе понятия

Admin1 to User1: Because there are no exact analogs and because they are well-established concepts in feminist discourse.

User3: Выёбываться — так по полной! "Феминизм" — тоже заморское словечко. Надо начать использовать "женцинизм". А еще "жирострах", "шлюхостыжение", "полизм", нувыпонели.

User3: It's a big fucking deal! "Feminism" is also a foreign/overseas word. We should start using "zhenschinism."⁴² And also "zhistrostrah,"⁴³ "shlyuhostyzhenie,"⁴⁴ "polizm"⁴⁵, you got it.

User4 to User3: Зачем «жирострах»? По-английски же не fatfear. Они взяли самое обычное слово, прибавили к нему греческое «фобия», но нам-то нафига английское «фэт», когда мы можем по той же модели сделать «жирофобия»?

User4 to User3: Why "zhistrostrah"? It is not fat fear in English. They took a very common word and added the Greek word "phobia" to it, but why do we need the English "fat" when we can use the same model to make "zhirophobia"?

User4 to User3: Некоторым терминам действительно трудно или невозможно подобрать соответствия в русском. Для слова «абьюзер», например, я и не придумаю нормальный аналог в одно слово. Но зачем

User4 to User3: Some terms are hard or impossible to match in Russian. For the word "abuser," for example, I can't think of a normal one-word analog. But why transliterate terms like fatphobia from English?

⁴² From Russian *zhenschina* - woman.

⁴³ From Russian *zhir* - fat, *strah* - fear.

⁴⁴ From Russian *shlyuha* - whore, *styzhenie* - shaming.

⁴⁵ From Russian *pol* - sex.

транслитерировать с английского термины типа фэтфобии?

User 3 to User4: Что за бред про "понятнее для русских"? Еще раз говорю, фэтфобия — на данный момент — УЖЕ устойчивое выражение, используемое в фем-среде. Всем понятное и знакомое.

Admin2 to User4: Организуйте свой славянофильский феминизм с блекджеком и интерсекциональностью. а мы продолжим использовать западные термины, которые гораздо удобнее и точнее их русских "аналогов"

User4 to Admin2: Чем «фэтфобия» удобнее и точнее «жирофобии»?

Admin2 to User4: А чем жирофобия удобнее и точнее фэтфобии? тем, что употреблено наше великое руское слово ЖИР вместо гнилого западного fat? большинство устоявшихся терминов вроде "абьюз", "харассмент", "слатшейминг" НЕ имеют аналогов на русском, и чтобы перевести их, потребуется куда больше одного слова. у не-лингвистов часто встречается страх перед потерей своего великого и могучего за счет иностранной лексики, но это страх абсолютно пустой. каждый язык успешно абсорбирует иностранные термины и не становится от этого хуже - это естественный лингвистический процесс. по прошествии лет люди вообще забывают, откуда пришло то или иное слово. много десятилетий назад славянофилы рвали пукан за то, чтобы говорить мокроступы вместо калоши, в 20м веке народ пуканился за отечественное КОНТОРА вместо западного офис - ну и что? никто об этом не помнит. абсолютно бессмысленное занятие

User 3 to User4: What is this nonsense about "more understandable to Russians"? Once again, fatphobia is, at the moment, a stable expression used in the feminist environment. It's understandable and familiar to everyone.

Admin2 to User4: Organize your own Slavophile feminism with blackjack and intersectionality while we will continue using Western terms, which are much more convenient and precise than their Russian "analogs."

User4 to Admin2: How is "fatphobia" better and more precise than "zhirophobia"?

Admin2 to User4: How is *zhirophobia* more convenient and precise than fatphobia? Because our great Russian word *ZHIR* is used instead of rotten Western *fat*? Most of the established terms like "abuse," "harassment," and "slutshaming" DO NOT have analogs in Russian; it takes more than one word to translate them. Non-linguists often fear the loss of their Great and Mighty⁴⁶ due to the foreign vocabulary, but this fear is absolutely groundless. Every language successfully absorbs foreign terminology and does not get worse from it. It is a natural linguistic process; after some years, people forget where this or that word came from. Many decades ago, Slavophiles were busting their balls to use the word *mokrostupy* instead of galoshes. In the 20th century, people were raging over keeping our own term *KONTORA* instead of a Western office, and for what? No one remembers this. It is a completely useless activity.

Concern over feminist transliterations is framed by moderators and some readers as foolish, outdated, uninformed, or hilarious. One of the admins mentions the trope of the 'Great and Mighty Russian language' juxtaposing it to the 'Rotten West' where English is spoken and the word 'fat' is used. By humbling down the self-aggrandizing image of the Russian language's expressive plenitude and deliberately making a spelling mistake inside the word Russian (*рузкуй*), the admin delegitimizes initial concern about linguistic purity. Feminist critics of transliterated loan words are ironically positioned as Russian chauvinists, hostile to Western/English terminology. The admin's dismissal of critique through the suggestion to organize a 'Slavophile feminism with blackjack and intersectionality' introduces a feminist reworking of a pop-culture meme from the Futurama cartoon (original phrase being 'with blackjack and hookers'), whose iterations are prevalent on the Russian-language internet. However, what is striking is the layer of localization referencing Russia's 19th-century debates between Slavophiles and Westernizers over cultural and linguistic borrowings from the West. This localized, Slavophile intersectionality, presumed obsessed with the linguistic protectionism of

⁴⁶ Trope often used to describe Russian language. Here used in a mocking way, to challenge such exceptionalism.

the Russian language, is presented as an impossibility, if not an object of ridicule. 'Russian analogs' are less precise and less convenient. Attempting to adapt intersectionality linguistically and conceptually to the Russian language is read as doomed.

The circulation of the expression 'Russian analogs' construed as an impossibility or abnormality in this conversation is particularly instructive. To the extent that one of the meanings of analog is that of being similar to something else, this 'something' here being the 'original' feminist concepts in English, this similarity can be said to be standing in a secondary position to the 'original.' Thus positioned, 'the Russian analog' is paler than the original and semantically close to the pair original/translation, where the first one always retains the primary status. The problem of translation, imbuing the first item in the pair with higher value, haunts 'the Russian analog,' which is seen as 'less convenient to use and less precise.' FIO admin also appeals to the ideology of language change as natural, construing the process as an organic evolution towards the assimilation of borrowings. Through this move, those who resist and reject transliterations are positioned as disconnected from understanding how things 'really' work.

User4 to Admin2: жирофобия удобнее тем, что это слово понятнее «людям с улицы». А по точности эти два слова, ИМХО, совершенно одинаковы. Я не раз сталкивалась с тем, что люди, которые не в теме и не в ладах с английским, просто не понимали, о чём речь, услышав слово «фэтфобия». Да, я согласна, что у слов типа «абьюз» точного аналога на русском нет. В таком случае, конечно, лучше заимствовать термины. Но зачем это делать, если такой необходимости нет? Я думаю, что чем понятнее будет текст для новых людей, тем лучше (конечно, без ущерба смыслу).

User4 to Admin2: *Zhirophobia* is more convenient because it is easier to understand for "people from the streets." When it comes to accuracy, *ИМХО*, they are exactly the same. I often meet people who are not in the loop and don't speak English well; they could not understand me when I used the word "fatphobia." Yes, I agree that "abuse" has no exact analog in Russian. In such cases, it is better to borrow terms. But why do this if there is no such need? The clearer the text is for the new people, the better (without altering the meaning, of course).

User5: Как по мне, на данном этапе любой русский аналог будет смотреться глупо, уже поздно что-то менять. Вы же не заменяете принципиально "фанарт" на "картинки, сделанные поклонниками"?

User5: As for me, any Russian analog at this stage would look silly; it is too late to change anything. You are not changing the word "fanart" to "pictures made by admirers," are you?

In the rest of the thread, User4 defends the criticism of borrowings, arguing that this influx of foreign words renders feminist texts incomprehensible for ordinary people or outsiders. The intelligibility of transliterations to lay, Russian-speaking readers is at the center of this criticism, and these people are positioned as not fluent in English and intersectional feminism. Here again, the tension between FIO moderators perceived as feminist elites, who are in control of making translation decisions by bringing English loan words in, and 'new people' not used to borrowed terms, is staged. In a rather pessimistic tone, User5 suggests it is too late to do anything since 'Russian analogs' are already belated and 'look silly.' The inevitability of evolutionary changes introduced into the Russian language through borrowings from English is positioned as a given, where the developmental distance between them is so great that reinventing the wheel seems foolish and ineffective. Here and elsewhere in such debates on transliterations and

borrowings, the link is made between translation, language, and nation on the one hand and Russophone feminisms on the other. Such a link connects the imaginaries of the Russian language and Russia's belatedness to Russophone feminisms' choice between modernity and backwardness. Discursive constructions of the Russian language's inability to innovate, linguistically or conceptually, leave feminists no choice but to borrow. This unbridgeable abyss-like gap makes the attempts to question admins' politics of translation futile. However, when FIO admins decide to intervene in the language through transliterations, this is an act of active choice, not an evolutionary or gradual change. That implies that moderators construe some experiments with language as more legitimate than others on FIO pages.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined one dominant translation strategy characterizing FIO intersectional translational praxis, the use of transliterations. I conceptualized transliteration as foreignizing translation strategy and focused on its contestations in comment threads. Transliterations as foreignizing translation strategies may mark specific terms and feminist orientations as foreign and can render translators foreign too. Multi-lingual feminist translators favoring language mixing and opting for transliterations might emerge as cosmopolitan feminist elites detached from the concerns of Russophone users and ordinary people. Sometimes causing visceral unease, highly visible transliterations provoked anxieties and concern over the Russian language being positioned as an object of love. Transliterations also generated critiques of unintelligibility and inaccessibility. FIO admins and some users defended transliterations by deconstructing the ideology of linguistic purism as opposed to that of feminist language mixing. They deployed localized chronotopic ideologies, such as evocations of Slavophile rejection of Western borrowings and archaic Russianness, to delegitimize concern with loan words. Suspicion towards transliterations was read as a manifestation of chauvinistic and anachronistic Russian patriotism.

Slavophiles-Westernizers debates characterizing intellectual milieu of 19th century Russia surprisingly resurfaced in online feminist discussions over transliterated terms borrowed from English in the second decade of the 2010s. These debates were reused creatively on FIO pages, selectively foregrounding some aspects at the expense of others. Gerasimov, Glebov, and Mogilner stress that Slavophiles have in many ways 'anticipated the agenda and ethos of postcolonial theory' (Gerasimov, Glebov, and Mogilner 2013:101), whose project was to condemn mimicry and imitation of 'normative Western culture' (Gerasimov et al. 2013:100). This 'post-colonial' element of Slavophile thought remained somewhat muted down in the discussions of loan-word politics.

Although FIO chronotopically positioned resistance to transliterations and language mixing as a proxy of chauvinistic nationalism, rejecting the foreign and, therefore,

backward, not all modes of Russian nationalism were historically averse to translation. Translation may just as well be deployed in the service of the nation and empire, seen as a source of innovation, modernizing the language by incorporating the foreign. According to Wachtel, translation has been considered by many Russian intellectuals as a source of improvement and replenishment of the Russian language and Russian culture, positioned as having a unique synthesizing potential to incorporate the best human achievements (Wachtel 1999). FIO's orientation to intersectionality as a feminist future also imagines English to Russian translation as a source of replenishment and modernization of Russophone feminisms tarnished by such vices as homophobia, transphobia, and racism, positioning such change as an evolutionary inevitability.

5. Aversion to literalism: calquing whiteness, borrowing anti-racism

Introduction

As I showed in the previous chapter, FIO's translation practice has introduced a veritable influx of transliterated feminist concepts into an emergent Russophone intersectional feminist idiom. If transliterated to Russian words such as *виктимблейминг* (victim-blaming) and *фэтфобия* (fatphobia) provoked visceral unease among some readers, what happens to the racial categories in English to Russian translations of intersectional feminist texts? Within feminist debates on intersectionality's transatlantic 'travels' to Western Europe, it was the question of race that became a crucial point of contention, leading to the arguments about the depoliticization and 'whitening' of intersectionality (Bilge 2013:405) and 'colonizing' intersectionality (Tomlinson 2013) by sidelining the issue of race in the new, primarily Western European contexts of reception. Since the topic of race caused such an uproar in transatlantic feminist debates on intersectionality's travels, it only necessitates exploring the translation of racial categories in FIO's praxis in subsequent chapters.

This chapter deals with FIO translations of the racial category 'white' informing many US intersectional feminist texts. FIO moderators used calquing or literal translation as the primary translation procedure to render the category 'white' and its derivatives into Russian. Because FIO's aim is twofold: to translate intersectional texts into Russian and to carve out a Russophone feminist idiom committed to anti-racism through these translations, English-language racial categories such as *белая женщина* (white woman) entered local use through calque translation. Although racial categories such as 'white' are used in the Russian language to describe US racialization dynamics, their use to index ethnoracial relations in the post-Soviet space is much more circumscribed. I track how through FIO's translation praxis, terms, such as *белая женщина* (white woman) entered intersectional Russophone feminist use. FIO moderators and some users positioned these terms as more modern and indispensable categories for the localized Russophone anti-racist praxis. This process points to racial translation's generativeness, where new categories circulating in Russophone feminist spaces are linked to authorizing bodies of knowledge, such as intersectionality. I zoom in on the FIO's users' engagements with and contestations of the category, probing the limits of its translatability for situated Russophone intersectional feminist praxis. I show how FIO users question literalism in racial translation, which operates on the presumption that ethnoracial power hierarchies in the USA and Russia are commensurate and that categories suitable for the analysis of the former are translatable and equally useful for the latter.

In order to explore these dynamics, this chapter first looks at how translated expressions such as *белые парни* (white lads) and related ones circulate in FIO’s Russophone intersectional feminist idiom. Then, I examine the production of moderatorial anti-racist whiteness-in-translation, which mobilizes chronotopic figures of backward racist others as comparative contrast with more modern bodies of knowledge and types of personhood. I move on to discussions in comment threads where some FIO users debate who may count as *белые* (whites) in Russia and other post-Soviet contexts and thereby probe the limits of translatability of the category and challenge literalism in translation. At the end of the chapter, I interrogate the discussions around the curious translingual category *кавказцы*/Caucasians, which depending on the context and language, may bear opposing meanings in English and Russian when it comes to racialization and gender dynamics across two contexts.

*Белые парни*⁴⁷ and other backward figures

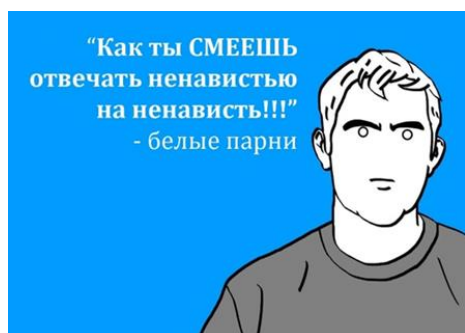


Figure 1. Meme with text *Как ты смеешь отвечать ненавистью на ненависть? Белые парни* (How dare you respond with hate to hate? White lads)

The picture on the left translates a meme from an English-language Tumblr blog into Russian, typical for early FIO posts involving shorter visual-textual forms, such as internet memes. It features a schematic drawing of a figure against a blue background, accompanied by the translated phrase *Как ты смеешь отвечать ненавистью на ненависть? Белые парни* (How dare you respond with hate to hate? White lads). ‘White lads’ in the original is translated as *белые парни*, using a translation procedure which in translation studies terminology is

called a calque translation. Calques are root-for-root, word-for-word translations from one language to another using target language words. Calques are quite different from transliterations in that they appear to be an intrinsic part of the receiving language’s vocabulary after being properly assimilated into a specific language. In other words, after a passage of time, one forgets that certain words were once introduced into a specific language through calque translation, as is the case with multiple calque translations from French or German into Russian, thoroughly assimilated into language and perceived as ‘one’s own.’

I start this chapter with the meme to illustrate a much larger pattern of calque translation that informs FIO translation choices when translating ‘white’ as a racial

⁴⁷ *Belye parni* – literal translation from the English expression ‘white lads’.

identity category into Russian. Translated from English intersectional feminist terms such as 'white men,' 'white feminism,' 'white woman,' 'white person,' and 'white privilege' are rendered into Russian through calque translation as *белый мужчина*, *белый феминизм*, *белая женщина*, *белый человек*, *белые люди*, *белая привилегия*. These translated expressions, appearing on FIO pages, subsequently entered the vocabularies of many users and were routinely used by admins, illustrating the incorporation of translated racial categories into the Russophone intersectional feminist idiom.

My analytical interest is to explore how, through English to Russian translations of intersectional feminist texts, 'white' as a racial category is used not only to describe US ethnoracial dynamics but also enters the emergent Russophone intersectional feminist idiom to analyze relations of domination in post-Soviet contexts. I explore the generativeness of the literal translations of the category 'white' as a presumedly helpful term within Russophone intersectional anti-racist idiom and in its contestations in the comment threads drawing on the limits of its translatability. That 'white' as a racial category for interpreting post-Soviet contexts has entered the feminist vocabularies of many FIO readers is illustrated by an example below, which is one of the typical examples in my materials demonstrating this pattern of incorporation. Here the reader welcomes the article on ethical terminology in the Russian language posted by FIO and stresses the relevance of such discussions by mentioning a personal example of an encounter with the interlocutor described as a *белый цисгетересексуальный* (white cis heterosexual (man)):

User: Невероятно полезная статья :< этим летом был у меня спор с одним белым цисгетересексуальным, которому я пыталась объяснить, что слово 'н*гр' - расистское. В итоге я на личном опыте узнала что такое мейнсплейнинг, эйджизм и суть белых привилегий. Тьфу, до сих пор вспоминать тошно.

User: Handy article :< This summer, I argued with one white cis heterosexual guy; I was trying to explain that the word 'n*gr' is racist. As a result, I learned what mansplaining, ageism, and white privilege are. Shit, I still get nauseous when I think of it.

In this comment, a moderatorial article, written in a rather strict pedagogical tone (see Chapter 6 for a detailed analysis of the text itself), activates in the user a recollection of the story from the past, which re-interprets the encounter through the concerns about slurs and ethical language expressed in the post. Within this re-interpretation, the figure of a racist white cis-hetero male chauvinist is narrated as an anachronistic relic from the past (coincidentally also the speaker's past, but this past is actualized through re-telling), someone who is not familiar with ethical vocabulary indicated by his unapologetic use of slurs, much like the figure of anachronistic *белые парни* form the memetic picture above. Although expressions like *белый мужчина* (white man) are now more well-known in the broader Russophone public discourse due to the influence of US popular culture, terms such as *белый феминизм* (white feminism), *белая женщина* (white woman), *белая привилегия* (white privilege) may not be widely known beyond feminist circles in everyday vernacular Russian, except for the older idiomatic expressions *белый*

человек (white person) and *белые люди* (white people). Two last terms are used to describe the context of US racialized slavery and European colonialism, especially relevant considering the importance of circulating imagery of racial oppression during the Cold War confrontation between the USSR and the USA (Clark 2016; Roman 2012). However, as a vernacular everyday racial category of practice, in Russian, *белый* (white)⁴⁸ circulates in different ways than it does in English. Unless we enter the neo-Nazi racist discourses, racialist vocabularies of proponents of race science, and Russian ethnonationalists (Zakharov 2015) or anti-racist feminist circles inspired by and fluent in the US-American intersectional discourses, in everyday speech, one hardly articulates everyday identities through the prism of racial categories such as ‘white.’

Terms like *белый человек* (white person) and *белые люди* (white people) also have additional vernacular meanings referring primarily not to skin color or racial identity in terms of US everyday conceptions of race (see also similar point in Lemon 2002:60). In pre-revolutionary Russia, the distinction in social status between the highest and the lowest layers in society was coded in color terms. Thus, serfs and peasantry, doing most dirty jobs, were called *чёрный люд* (literally ‘black people,’ not in a racial sense), while nobility was positioned as *белый люд* (literally ‘white people’ not in a racial sense). This distinction overlived its time and is routinely used in contemporary Russian in idiomatic expressions such as the phrase *как белый человек* (as a white person), which references a position of high status and material comfort and is used chiefly ironically to emphasize a status that can hardly be achieved permanently for ordinary people. In a sense, ‘as’ is central to this expression, highlighting the simulation dimension with the impossibility of ever embodying this high status (Fikes and Lemon 2002:507; Lemon 2002:60). Of course, in an era of transnational exchanges, context-specific uses may incorporate a more comprehensive array of meanings, including racial ones, but the major point still holds.⁴⁹ All of that should not be taken to mean that racism/xenophobia is not an acute problem in contemporary Russian society or that primordialist ideas about essentialized differences do not inform the readings of human diversity in the region. However, the fact that the language used to talk about these differences in Russian does not necessarily map neatly to how it is done in English allows me to track the entry of ‘white’ as a political, racial identity category into localized Russophone use through intersectional feminist translation.

I am interested in tracing how, through English to Russian translations of intersectionality and US racial categories, FIO moderators and readers partake in the

⁴⁸ Unlike *чёрный* (black), a special case, also only partially equivalent to English uses of the category black which I address later in the thesis, in Chapters 6 and 8.

⁴⁹ Equally, attempts to translate such critical conceptual terms from English as ‘whiteness’ or ‘blackness’ into Russian would yield somewhat awkward results. In the first case, ‘whiteness’ could be rendered as *белизна*, *от белизность*, and ‘blackness’ could be rendered as *чёрность* or *чёрнота*. Russian speakers who do not have knowledge of English may not intuitively understand these words in the sense of racial categorizations and political critique of the relations of racialized hierarchy as they often function within contemporary English.

resemanticization of terms such as *белый* (white) in Russian, using them not only as literal translations of US racial identity categories but, as I demonstrate later in the thesis, as modern and sharp analytical tools imagined to be equally capable of mapping the relations of ethnoracial domination in post-Soviet contexts as well, thereby discursively animating figures such as *белый мужчина* (white man) into life. That allows seeing how FIO translation praxis is not merely derivative, as its opponents would frame it, but a profoundly generative phenomenon involving the coinage of new concepts through translation. These concepts end up entering local use and are also contested within it. The arrival of these new terms as they enter the Russophone feminist idiom is fraught with contradictions and contestations, which also points to the generative nature of racial translation. It is by tracing these contestations as evoked by FIO readers in the comment threads that I want to explore the limits of translatability of *белый* (white) as a racial identity category for Russophone feminist use.

I illustrate my contention that translated into Russian racial categories such as *белые парни* (white lads) may generate an intelligibility problem for Russophone users with a snippet from the comment thread to the meme I presented at the beginning of the chapter. In this conversation, FIO readers are discussing the expression *белые парни* (white lads) used in the meme by the admins. It is embraced by some users but also not immediately understood by other fraction of readers:

User1: Белые парни уже всем очень надоели своими большими амбициями и желанием унижать.

User1: White lads with their twisted ambitions and desire to humiliate and annoy everyone.

User2: Объясните недалеким, что за "Белые парни"?

User2: Could you explain what kind of "white lads" to the dimwitted?

User3: Это американское выражение. К нам оно всё же меньше подходит

User3: It is an American expression. It does not suit us very well.

User4: Сокращение от "белые гетеросексуальные парни-сексисты", которые приуменьшают проблему дискриминируемых, так как сами состоят в привилегированной группе.

User4: Short for "white heterosexual lads-sexists" who downplay discrimination problems because they are a part of the privileged group.

User5 to User3: Ага, щаз. Расскажите это цыганке-феминистке, я в ответ расскажу, что такое двойной прессинг.

User5 to User3: Yes, sure, tell it to a Gypsy-feminist, and in turn, I will tell you what a double burden is.

User3: Я не говорю, что у нас нет нацизма или расизма (иногда взаимного). Просто в истории России белые крестьяне были в рабстве, а в америке - черные.

User3: I am not saying we don't have Nazism or racism (sometimes mutual). It is just that in Russian history, white peasants were enslaved, and in America – black ones.

User5: Это не отменяет то, что именно сейчас уже развился синдром "белого парня", дополнив образ до "белого гетеросексуального" и т.д. П.ч. под небелыми в Америке подразумеваются далеко не только чёрные = бывшие рабы.

User5: That does not affect the fact that now we have a "white lad" syndrome supplementing the image of "white heterosexual," etc. In America, the term non-whites is used to denote not only former blacks - ex-slaves.

User3: Сейчас не то что раньше. С исторической точки зрения совершенно не одно и то же.

User3: It is not what it used to be. From the historical point of view, it is not the same thing at all.

FIO to User5: Спасибо за комментарий. Каждый раз поражаюсь, когда вижу, как какой-то из жителей

FIO to User5: Thanks for your comment. I am amazed each time I see some inhabitants of the multinational Russian

The scene above highlights some of the frictions translated English-language racial terminology, such as *белые парни* (white lads), transferred into Russophone use, encounters among Russophone feminist audiences. If some users approvingly align with the expression from the meme, it creates confusion for others, provoking questions about the phrase's meaning. It is curious how User2, in a somewhat self-effacing, somewhat ironic way, calls oneself 'dimwitted' as if ashamed for not knowing the term's exact meaning, takes an apprentice stance vis-à-vis other users and community moderators as figures of intersectional authority. User3 helps explain the provenance of the term: stressing its rootedness in the USA activist discourses yet doubting whether it would fit nicely for being used in the local context (*К нам оно всё же меньше подходит*) demarcating the category as 'foreign' and American and therefore less valuable. User4 attempts to explain the meaning of *белые парни* (white lads) by tracking its parent expression and pointing to the place such 'lads' occupy within power hierarchies. User5, in turn, reads User3's labeling of the category as 'American' and 'foreign' as indexing the disavowal of localized ethnoracial discrimination. User5 also draws on intersectional 'double oppression' discourse that provides discursive resources to construct a hyphenated position of 'Gypsy-feminist' (*Расскажите это цыганке-феминистке*) who knows from her personal experience what localized ethnoracial discrimination entails. User3 then tries both to deflect the criticism by acknowledging the acuteness of local racism as a problem, but at the same time, stresses the incommensurability of two systems of human bondage, such as slavery in the USA and peasant serfdom in Russia. Note that User3 uses the word *рабство* (slavery) for both systems.

As this comment thread indicates, when the translated racial category 'white' circulates on FIO pages, it may represent an intelligibility problem for some Russophone users, who then may position it as a foreign, US-American term, perceived as not particularly fitting for describing positions of dominance within the local context. I am especially interested in how the attempt to emphasize the category's rootedness within the US context is taken to signify its' automatic criticism and wholesale rejection of racism as a fundamental problem in Russian society. By shifting indexicality from the subject of the conversation (the usefulness of the category or its translation) to the speaker's identity as a social type (Hill 2009; Koven 2013), questioning the category's translatability is dismissed as a potential instance of racist ignorance.

When a FIO moderator enters the conversation, they thank User5 for taking up an epistemic stance of authority in educating others. The moderator is irritated that some FIO users repeatedly fail to understand the direct relevance of translated terminology for local use. Through this positioning, a discursive frame of enlightened anti-racist progressiveness is juxtaposed with backward others who still fail to 'understand' the

relevance of circulating categories. The issue is located not in the terminology itself, which might not be immediately intelligible for some users, requiring knowledge of English to grasp its usefulness but in backward monolingual Russophone users presumed as potential racists, not willing to educate themselves and embrace new terms. However, some FIO users may welcome new terms, especially those from minoritized backgrounds, for whom new racial vocabulary might provide conceptual resources for self-identification and recognition, such as the user featured in the snippet describing herself through the ‘Gypsy-feminist’ position. Through English to Russian calque translations, figures such as *белый мужчина* (white man), *белая женщина* (white woman), *белый человек* (white person), *белые люди* (white people) and phenomena such as *белый феминизм* (white feminism) come into circulation, presented as valuable and modern categories for Russophone intersectionality invested in anti-racism.

Translating anti-racist white allyship discourse

As *белый* (white) as a racial category enters Russophone intersectional feminist idiom through literal translations, FIO also draws on the broader activist discourse of Anglophone intersectional feminist anti-racism, bringing its discursive structures, thematic concerns, terminology, and pedagogy. In this section, I will trace how linguistic ideologies and chronotopic constructions undergird the production of moderatorial anti-racist whiteness-in-translation juxtaposed against figures embodying a backward past. FIO moderators (and some users) as figures of intersectional authority generated through the mediation of foreign and modern feminist frames engage in a didactic enterprise involving the epistemic makeover of the Russophone readers and identifications of some users and their behaviors as racist. To unpack this process, I build on linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics research, exploring linguistic ideologies and indexicality, and on scholarship developing the notion of raciolinguistic chronotopes (Agha 2007; Delfino 2021; Dick 2010; Hill 2009; Koven 2013; Rosa 2016; Silverstein 2003).

From its inception, FIO’s project defined itself as a translatorial epistemic feminist project, which like many other online grassroots feminist pages, aimed to educate and recruit, to win minds and hearts. However, because Anglophone Tumblr blogs and memes so strongly inspire FIO, it relies on the ethos of Anglophone anti-racist groups described by Delfino (Delfino 2021). Delfino’s critical account of the Anglophone anti-racist Facebook community has explored several semiotic-discursive practices construing the figure of an anti-racist white ally. Amongst them are epistemic stances of authority, alignment, and apprenticeship (Delfino 2021:244). Delfino stresses that allyship is constructed as an ‘epistemic project,’ privileging the idea of individual self-education to overcome bias, inviting ‘white people to take up an epistemic stance of apprenticeship in receiving “guidance and coaching from Black people”’ (Delfino 2021:245). Being critical of how such a position is rooted in Enlightenment rationalism

stressing ‘the rational, conscious activity of discrete individuals,’ Delfino argues that it is based on the presupposition of everyone being positioned as ‘equally agentive’ and ‘having a voice’ to engage in rational dialogue and be able to move away ‘from uncritically inhabiting to identifying and interrupting skin privilege’ (Delfino 2021:246). Within such a framework, ‘education is seen as a moral virtue/superiority and as an individual choice rather than a structure of opportunity’ (Delfino 2021:249).

I use several snapshots from the comment threads to illustrate how FIO moderators, mediating intersectional feminism, assume the epistemic stance of authority and enact a moderatorial position of progressive anti-racist whiteness in translation. This position is enacted chronotopically, through comparative contrast with vis-à-vis anachronistic racist others, be it allegedly non-modern *radfem*, *белые парни* (white lads), or monolingual Russophone readers that fail to understand new terminology circulating under the sign of foreign modern. Below is an excerpt from one moderatorial post about privilege, one of the central conceptual tools for FIO. It answers a hypothetical question of a user who seeks some practical advice on how to be a good ally and wants to be aware of one’s privileges in daily life:

Думаю, я достаточно привилегированн_ая человек. Что мне делать с моими привилегиями? Я не хочу быть угнетатель_ницей. (...)

I guess I'm a pretty privileged person. What should I do with my privileges? I don't want to be a (female) oppressor. (...)

(1)Подумайте о том, какие именно у вас есть привилегии и как они повлияли на вас и ваше сегодняшнее место в жизни.

(1)Think about your privileges and how they have affected you and your place in life today.

(2)Старайтесь как можно больше слушать/читать прямую речь тех людей, кто угнетен по признаку, по которому вы обладаете привилегией.

(2)Try as much as possible to listen/read the direct speech of oppressed people where you have privileges.

(3)Если у вас есть такая возможность, то предоставляйте представител_ницам угнетенной группы время и место для того, чтобы высказаться. Никогда и ни в коем случае не говорите за угнетенную группу, не высказывайте свои собственные идеи и домыслы

(3)If you can do so, give the (female) members of an oppressed group time and space to speak out. Never, under any circumstances, speak for an oppressed group, or give your own ideas or insights.

(4)Если вас просят о помощи, то помогайте, но не тяните одеяло на себя, не старайтесь "возглавить" борьбу, и не считайте себя лучше всего знающ_ей, что именно нужно делать. Постарайтесь выяснить у представител_ниц угнетенной группы, какая именно помощь им нужна, вместо того, чтобы навязывать им свои представления о том, в чем они нуждаются.

(4)If you are asked for help, help, don't take all credit, do not try to "lead" the struggle, and do not assume you know best what needs to be done. Try to find out from the (female) members of the oppressed group what kind of help they need instead of imposing your ideas on what they need.

(5)Помните, что представител_ницы угнетенной группы не обязаны что-либо объяснять вам и подавать информацию в разжеванном виде. Занимайтесь самообразованием.

(5)Remember, the (female) members of the oppressed group do not have to explain anything to you or break it down for you. Educate yourself.

(6)Не ждите благодарностей и признания за то, что вы помогаете. Если вы хотите помогать только ради благодарностей, то лучше не беритесь вовсе.

(6)Don't expect gratitude and recognition for helping. If you want to help just for gratitude, you are better off not helping .

(7)Если представител_ница угнетенной группы говорит вам, что вы сделали что-то не то (даже если это

(7)If a (female) member of the oppressed group tells you that you did something wrong (even if harshly), just

происходит в резкой форме), то просто извинитесь и не повторяйте эти действия больше - вместо того, чтобы начать спорить. Постарайтесь понять, в чем была ошибка.

apologize and don't do it again - rather than start an argument. Try to understand what the mistake was.

These guidelines, especially the third and the fifth points, that is, never speaking for the oppressed and not expecting the oppressed to educate the privileged, resurfaced in several different comment threads as a feature of the epistemic project of FIO. I want to illustrate how the translated rhetoric of not speaking for the oppressed coincided with the production of FIO's moderatorial anti-racist whiteness in translation. In one such instance, a user asked FIO a question about whether a particular term was appropriate to use, and a moderator responded as follows:

FIO: наверное можно, но имейте в виду, что админки белые, так что возможно не сможем ответить.

FIO: It is probably possible, but bear in mind that the admins are white, so, likely, we won't be able to respond

In another case, replying to the user who was offering an alternative Russian-language translation suggestion to the English term 'people of color,' FIO, rejecting this translation variant, remarked:

FIO: мы, как белые люди, не можем придумывать новые выражения и объявлять их нерасистскими, это в любом случае лишено всякого смысла

FIO: we, as white people, cannot invent new terms and declare them non-racist; it is entirely meaningless.

What interests me analytically is understanding the discursive accomplishment of FIO's use of the category *белые люди* (white people) to position themselves in these Russian-language interactions. At this point, I am less concerned with questions of intelligibility of the category for FIO readers but rather with what effects calling oneself *белые люди* (white people) generates on FIO pages in connection to moderators' epistemic stance of authority as translators of intersectionality, brought in as feminist chronotope of modern foreign? If one follows Delfino's argumentation, acknowledging one's whiteness is a crucial part of English-language white allyship discourses, invested in producing an enlightened race-conscious position, actively disidentifying from racism and racists as morally superior (Delfino 2021:240). At the same time, when the idiom circulates in feminist Russophone spaces, this acknowledgment operates by making a linkage to an authoritative source, US intersectional feminist activism, and US activist conceptions of race. It helps generate social distinction as a new foreign and modern discursive frame within Russophone feminist contexts. Stemming from FIO's goals both to translate intersectionality and to create a situated Russophone intersectional feminist idiom, it speaks across two contexts simultaneously. The foreign and modern anti-racist Anglophone idiom is used as an aspirational model to invigorate, repair, modernize, and educate Russophone audiences.

White allyship as a translated discourse in FIO's engagements with intersectionality is also chronotopically situated, and it is positioned as more advanced through contrast with anachronistic racists and 'backward' Russophone *radfem*. Its deployment also implies modernity associated with Anglophone anti-racist 'race-talk.' Evoking the language of white allyship in translation indexes a cosmopolitan worldliness, cutting-edge progressive discourses, being at the vanguard of local anti-racist struggle and ahead of 'backward' Russophone *radfem* and sinking into the abyss Russia immersed into 'conservative turn.' Doing performative self-positioning via the translated category *белые люди* (white people), moderators discursively situate themselves as anti-racist feminist progressives through bilingualism and proximity to Anglophone anti-racist frames, perceived as signs of foreign modern. At the same time, FIO moderators disavow and preserve their epistemic stance as figures of intersectional authority. The epistemic stance of authority is disavowed through acknowledging one's whiteness, also serving as an educational example for other users: not deciding for the oppressed. Still, authority is preserved by giving the user advice on how to use a specific word, confirming her stance as an apprentice seeking the authorization and approval of the moderators. Most importantly, the epistemic stance of authority is maintained by disavowing the discussion on the use and limits of translatability of the category 'white' for the situated Russophone anti-racist praxis. The absence of discussion which would interrogate the translatability of the category 'white' across contexts precludes interrogation of the power of FIO admins to decide and set the agenda, the terms, the rules, and the desired tone of the conversations.

Translating white allyship discourses not only performatively positions FIO moderators as epistemic authorities and anti-racist progressives, mediating the foreign and modern idiom, but it also casts Russophone readers as potentially racist 'white people' who need to be educated about relevant topics and proper alignment vis-à-vis such topics. One example of these dynamics comes from the short FIO post from October 2016 with recommendations for picking appropriate Halloween costumes. The post featured photos of feminist Halloween costumes inspired by Western pop-culture characters such as Darja from the *Darja* cartoon, Skully from the *Xfiles* series, and Hermione from *Harry Potter*, and included the following commentary by the moderators:

Хэллоуинские костюмы по традиции должны быть пугающими. Но наша реальность уже достаточно кошмарна - достаточно вспомнить то, что в нашей стране женщина может получить 7 лет за самооборону во время изнасилования, говорить об ЛГБТ нелегально, а государство каждый год исправно пытается протаскать антиабортные законы. Так что мы вполне можем забыть на призраков и гоблинов и использовать Хэллоуин как возможность почтить потрясающих героинь, которые помогли нам пройти через эти тяжелые времена. Используйте вашу фантазию на полную катушку, но помните - если вы белый человек, а ваша любимая персонажка принадлежит к другой расе или же

Halloween costumes are traditionally supposed to be scary. But our reality is already frightening. Just think that in our country, a woman can receive seven years for self-defense during rape; it is illegal to talk about LGBT, and every year, the state tries to push anti-abortion laws. So, we can forget about ghosts and goblins and use Halloween to honor fantastic heroines who have helped us through these challenging times. Use your imagination to the fullest, but remember, if you are white and your favorite character belongs to another race or is coded as non-white, it is better to pick a more acceptable option. Halloween is about celebrating and not a reason for the whitewashing of dark-skinned or Asian characters.

кодирована как небелая, вам лучше выбрать более приемлемый для вас вариант. Хэллоуин - это развлечение, а не повод для дальнейшего вайтвошинга темнокожих или азиатских персонажек.

This hybrid text speaks across several worlds, performing intricate work of suturing disparate elements together. It also illustrates some tensions FIO faced from the outset: carving out localized intersectional feminist idiom committed to anti-racism from translated intersectional feminist texts. As figures of intersectional authority, FIO moderators translate and refer to the authoritative foreign discourses, making the translated text speak across two contexts by integrating adaptations and educating the readers regarding appropriate terminology and behavior. Drawing on and making links to the US context and US activist discourses around Halloween costumes, FIO moderators sustain their status as intersectional authorities who, by mediating this knowledge to Russophone audiences, partake with them in transnational feminist activist discursivity around US popular culture. However, the text is also localized by inserting references to 'reality' that now points to the context of post-Soviet Russia. The 'nightmarish reality' refers to 2013 anti-LGBT 'propaganda' for minors' law, prison sentences that many women receive for self-defense against abusive husbands, and repeated attempts to curb access to abortions. With such a nightmarish reality, the text goes, one can ignore the usual expectations for scary costumes for Halloween and instead dress as feminist characters from US/global pop culture. This short text shows how FIO moderators work to stitch together Russophone intersectional feminist idiom in translation by tweaking and combining disparate elements. First, it is done by making links both to US pop culture and activism that positions FIO readers as worldly; second, it makes the text refer to recent legal changes within Russia, making it relatable to the readers; finally, it transports the readers back into the pedagogical exercise of choosing a non-racist Halloween costume towards the end of the paragraph. Through the text, by invoking this 'foreign and modern' anti-racist praxis, FIO moderators produce themselves and their readers as particular types of persons.

Russophone FIO readers are preemptively positioned as potentially racist 'white people' who may uncritically partake in Halloween celebrations. FIO readership is framed as needing to be aware of *вайтвошинг* (whitewashing) but first must learn what it means and why it is morally wrong. However, their potentially problematic engagement with Halloween can be interrupted through conscious and committed self-education, which FIO admins provide for the readers, constituting themselves as intersectional authorities and progressive 'white allies.' As Delfino argues, 'discourses of white allyship overwhelmingly sponsor the idea that individuals can educate themselves and other whites out of supremacist thinking' (Delfino 2021:244). In the case of FIO, translated Anglophone discourse of white allyship is not only about dis-identifying from racism and racists through individualizing frameworks of self-education but also invoking and appealing to a particular type of Anglophone anti-racist praxis as a more modern model to follow and as a cosmopolitan cultural capital for anti-racist feminist

emancipation in non-Anglophone contexts. FIO Russophone readers are positioned as inhabiting the two planes simultaneously, one where they are supposed to care and self-educate about Halloween just like their progressive peers from the US, even if Halloween has somewhat limited popularity in post-Soviet countries, and the one where 'the reality' includes anti-LGBT legislation against 'non-traditional' forms of sexuality and assaults on abortion rights.

Another prominent topic on FIO pages is cultural appropriation. Educating the FIO readers about cultural appropriation through translating English texts, explaining why it matters and specifying concrete examples of what constitutes cultural appropriation and how to avoid it, featured abundantly on the community pages. Translated texts about cultural appropriation had some of the most vivid discussions in the comment sections, peppered with readers' questions and answers about what does and what does not constitute cultural appropriation and how not to be an appropriator. I cite an excerpt from a comment thread under a post that explains the difference between cultural exchange and cultural appropriation. FIO clarifies its stance on the issue:

FIO: Мы стараемся переводить такие тексты про КА, в которых бы четко проговаривалось, что разговоры об этом явлении не являются обвинениями, но, кажется, все бесполезно, так как некоторые люди до сих пор не могут научиться осознавать свои привилегии. Нет совершенно ничего постыдного в незнании - в конце концов, доступ к информации тоже привилегия, - и никто не называет вас "воровками" или другими плохими словами из-за того, что вы когда-то по незнанию совершили акт апроприации и живете с ним до сих пор. Нет ничего постыдного в том, чтобы признаться, что вам очень сложно отказаться от каких-то апроприрующих вещей, которые прочно вошли в нашу жизнь, сразу и безоговорочно. Но мы не собираемся терпеть ситуации, когда привилегированные люди называют "оскорблением" то, что угнетенные ими рассказывают о своем угнетении. Вас обижает то, что кто-то говорит, что вам нельзя носить дреды - ах, как это печально, особенно на фоне того, что пока вы с гордостью носите прическу PoC, получая комплименты по поводу вашей оригинальности и стиля, афроамериканцев убивают прямо на улице - просто за то, что они выглядят как афроамериканцы. Каждая из нас самостоятельно решает, как жить и на что обращать внимание, а на что нет. Мы никогда не ставили своей целью "обратить всех людей в свою веру", мы пишем для тех, кого волнуют вопросы угнетения, и кто хочет минимизировать свое участие в нем. Принуждать мы никого не собираемся

FIO: We try to translate such texts about CA (cultural appropriation) that clarify that talking about it is not an accusation. But it seems futile since some people still cannot learn to recognize their privileges. There is nothing shameful in not knowing; after all, access to information is also a privilege. No one calls you "thieves" or other harsh words because you once committed an act of appropriation out of ignorance and are still living with it. There is no shame in admitting that it is hard for you to give up some appropriative practices that inform our lives immediately and unconditionally. However, we will not tolerate situations where privileged people call it an "insult" when the oppressed tell them about their oppression. If you are offended when someone tells you that you cannot wear dreadlocks, how sad! Especially when you proudly wear PoC's hairdo and receive compliments about your originality and style, African Americans are killed directly on the street just because they look like African Americans! Each of us decides how to live our lives and what to pay attention to. We never had a goal of "converting all people"; we write for those concerned with the questions of oppression who want to minimize their participation in it. We are not going to force anyone.

In this snippet, the production of the translated white allyship discourse of moderators operates through deictic positioning, using terms such as 'we,' 'everyone,' 'we write for those who,' 'you,' and 'ours.' At the same time, moderators occupy an epistemic stance of authority in explaining why cultural appropriation should be seen as a serious issue for Russophone feminist readers and why the readers should educate themselves on the matter. They contrast the enlightened anti-racist position of authority with that of

chronotopically produced others: Russophone readers, who still have not learned how to recognize their privileges, despite the possibilities of learning that were offered to them by FIO. This individualist, moralizing vision of learning operates through navigating such emotions as guilt and shame, offering the possibility of overcoming them by recognizing one's complicity. This vision of learning corresponds to liberal frameworks undergirding the notion of cultural appropriation in Western pop culture discourses. It is based on the essentialist conceptions of authenticity and ownership of culture influenced by German Romanticism and 'the idea of cultural property, hailing from libertarian ethics drawn from capitalist property relations' (Crane 2018:253) that emphasize appropriation of culture, not labor. The excerpt seems to operate through personalist linguistic ideology by pre-emptively mapping potential arguments of backward Russophone readers who might engage in culturally appropriative practices. Russophone readers are positioned as apprentices; they can learn from these chronotopically distant others how not to behave and from more progressive stances of moderators mediating the foreign modern. Critique of cultural appropriation is discursively tied to the position of Russophone backward, ignorant racists, unable to recognize their privileges and read certain behaviors they might engage in as cultural appropriation.

Another alignment in the snippet is positioning the FIO feminist readership as if inhabiting the cultural space of the USA. This discursive move places the Russophone readers as potential cultural appropriators on the same spatio-temporal frame with US-American activist conversations: while Russophone readers wear dreadlocks, people of color in the US are subject to police brutality. Temporal and spatial co-evalness constructs Russophone readers of FIO as equally complicit in these crimes, equally responsible for them, and hints that both acts are connected; one might lead to the other. Chronotopic positioning in the post is constantly shifting. Potentially racist and 'backward' Russophone FIO readership is not yet there, lagging behind the Anglophone anti-racism, needing an epistemic makeover by learning from more modern anti-racist idiom in translation. However, paradoxically the Russophone readership is said to inhabit the same time-space: interpellated through translated terms like 'white people' and responsabilized for perpetuating cultural appropriation.

The limits of literalism: 'But who are these whites in Russia?'

This section explores the limits of translatability of the racial category *белый* (white) for situated feminist, anti-racist analysis in post-Soviet spaces by examining one debate in the FIO comment thread where the category has generated intense contestations from the users. In June 2014, a short moderatorial was published in FIO titled *How do*

the opponents of the concept of privileges understand the suggestion to think about their privileges? The post aimed to educate the FIO readers on how to address typical arguments used against the concept of privileges, which were described as follows:

Я обязана извиняться за то, что я бел_ая/цис/гетеро. Быть бел_ой/цис/гетеро - плохо. Я должн_а стыдиться того, что я бел_ая/цис/гетеро. Я должн_а испытывать чувство вины за то, что я бел_ая/цис/гетеро.

I must apologize for being white/cis/hetero. To be white/cis/hetero is bad. I must be ashamed of being white /cis/hetero. I must feel guilty for being white/cis/hetero.

The post, advising readers to dismiss these discursive strategies as manipulative, explained the need to pay attention to the marginalized perspectives, validate them as necessary, and encourage reflexivity from those occupying more dominant societal positions.

The discussion which unfolded in the comment thread started when one user questioned the translatability of the term 'white' for the post-Soviet anti-racist praxis:

User1: Покорнейше прошу прощения, я не белая, но неужели белые в России заслуживают всех этих реплик адресованных белым американцам, по-моему вы здорово пугаете берега или вам нравится чувствовать себя "белыми принцами", которые извиняются за собственное превосходство, но кто эти белые в России - славяне - бывшие крепостные, евреи - их белыми сами белые тоже не считают, кто бывшие рабовладельцы белого цвета в России их коммунисты выгнали еще в начале 20 века, так что не стоит проецировать это на местных. Да расизм в России есть, но есть ли та власть у одних над другими, что есть в США, что порождает подобные суждения.

User1: I humbly apologize, I am not white, but I wonder if whites in Russia merit all these commentaries addressed to white Americans. You seem to greatly confuse sides or enjoy feeling like "white princes" who apologize for their superiority. But who are these whites in Russia? Slavs, former serfs. Jews? Whites don't consider them whites. The white-colored former slaveowners were expelled from Russia by communists at the beginning of the 20th century. So, it is not worth projecting this on locals. Yes, racism in Russia does exist, but does the power of some over others as it exists in the USA exist here?

User1's comment begins with a self-effacing, outmoded politeness formula (*Покорнейше прошу прощения*), indicating a position of humility and a stance of apprenticeship vis-à-vis the FIO admins. The user describes her positionality using the category *не белая* (non-white) probably to prevent potential decoding of ensuing criticism of the category as the manifestation of racism. After these two caveats, the use of the racial category as *белый* (white) in Russian is criticized. This criticism pertains not only to the problematics of translation of the term per se. As I mentioned before, the literal translation of the terms such as 'white women' into Russian as *белые женщины* to describe the US context is established. What is at stake is the metaphoric extension of the term *белые женщины* (white women) to interpret Russophone contexts, that is, their use within FIO's feminist idiom as pointing not only to 'white Americans' but to subject-positions in post-Soviet spaces. User1 portrays this extension as performing an uncritical cultural transfer of the category 'white' across two distinct geopolitical contexts, presuming the commensurability of the systems of ethnoracial marginalization. The admins are accused of confusing these contexts (*вы здорово нутаемте берега*) by transposing US anti-racist vocabularies onto Russia. User1 maintains that the primary addressees of 'white privilege' discourse should be 'white

Americans.’ Neither Slavic people nor Jews, it is claimed, can be viewed to occupy ‘white’ subject positions within domestic hierarchies of ethnoracial value due to the structuring experiences of peasant serfdom in the Russian Empire and legacies of state anti-Semitism. As the comment goes, neither is it possible to unproblematically position former peasant-owning aristocracy as ‘whites’ since they were stripped of privileges or exiled after the 1917 Bolshevik revolution.

By questioning the translatability and applicability of the translated racial category ‘whites’ and simultaneously acknowledging the significance of racism as a problem for Russia, the commenter encourages the admins and FIO readers to think critically about the analytical usefulness of the translated racial categories across languages. Such thinking would, in turn, resist collapsing diverse socio-historic contexts onto each other and reject the practice of literalism. At the same time, while questioning the relevance of ‘whiteness’ as a helpful category for post-Soviet anti-racist optics, the user nevertheless describes themselves through this same idiom as *не белая* (non-white) and uses the construction ‘white princes’ to accuse the admins of occupying the position of self-indulgent anti-racist whiteness. Similarly, while the critique addresses the need to keep the contexts separate and resist the transposition of categories to a different reality, Russian nobles are referred to as ‘white-colored’ and ‘slave-owning’ instead of serf-owning, eventually blurring the preservation of distinctions between contexts defended in the comment. It is hard to say whether this is done for persuasion. What is clear, however, is a constant slippage of terminologies, where the idioms marked as ‘foreign’ end up being used when arguing for the limits of their translatability ‘on the ground.’

User’s comment provoked a vivid reaction from other FIO users. In reply, others remarked:

User2: В России, кмк, дело больше не в том, кто белые, а в том, кто "небелые" - азербайджанцы, кавказцы и проч (остановлюсь здесь, чтобы не спиздануть белую хуйню). Вряд ли для вас будет откровением, что эти конкретные примеры, уверяю, угнетены предостаточно - от анекдотов про Гоги до невозможности получить руководящий пост на работе. Учитывая нарастающую нацпатриот политику в РФ, все плохо, и никого не ебет, в какой степени он сам является славянином, если лицо более-менее "русское"

User2: What matters more in Russia, IMHO, is not who is white, but who is “not white” - Azerbaijanis, Caucasians, and others. (I will stop here not to say some white bullshit). You are probably aware that these concrete cases are quite oppressed - from the anecdotes about Gogi to the inability to get promoted at your job. Given the growing politics of national patriotism within RF, everything is terrible, and no one gives a shit about how much of a Slav one is if their face looks more or less “ethnically Russian.”

User3: В США у белых тоже нет власти над чернокожими, по закону дискриминация и сегрегация запрещены. А по факту, например, полиция занимается профайлингом (то есть заведомо подозрительно относится к цветным). Так ведь и у нас полицейские какую женщину в метро в первую очередь останавливают? Смуглую, бедно одетую, с баулом.

User3: In the U.S., whites also have no power over black-skinned since discrimination and segregation are forbidden by law. But in reality, for example, the police are doing profiling (that is, they are suspicious of *tsvetnye*). In our country, too, what kind of woman would be the first to be stopped by the police in the subway? Swarthy and poorly dressed woman with a *baul* bag.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ *Baul* is a Russian word for an iconic big checkered plastic bag often used by *chelnoki* (private shuttle traders transporting goods in *baul* bags). In its iconicity *baul* can be compared to blue IKEA bag. However, *baul* may also be associated with a particular type of racialized female body, as in the comment, although many ethnic Russian women were also engaged in this type of cross-border trade.

User1: User2, невозможности получить руководящий пост на работе. взяли с чего, кому то отказывали были скандалы? Не надо проецировать цвета это тупо, анекдоты анекдотами, а разрыва как такового я не могу заметить. Я имею ввиду внутреннее население, а не приезжих это другая тема их и представители таких же нац. могут ненавидеть.

User1: в детстве смотрела много документалок про произвол белых американцев над афроамериканцами, про то как полицейские травили на них собак, как их насиловали и т.п. В России одна нация не может так превелигеровано издеваться над другой прямым параллелем я бы проводить не стала. Я кстати тож с Урала тут много башкир и татар они не любят и русских кстати тоже, но любит не любит это не имеет право убить...

User1: User2, the inability to get promoted. Why do you say it? Who got rejected? Were there any scandals? Don't project colors [color-based categories of race]; it is stupid, anecdotes are anecdotes, but I don't see a significant gap. I mean the internal population, not newcomers [migrants], it is another topic. By the way, representatives of other nationalities may just as well hate them [migrants].

User1: when I was a kid, I watched a lot of documentaries about the abuse of African Americans by white Americans, about how the police set dogs on them, how they were raped, etc. In Russia, one nation cannot abuse another nation in such a privileged way, and I would not draw any direct parallels. By the way, I also come from the Urals, and there are many Bashkirs here; they don't particularly like Tatars and ethnic Russians, but not loving is not the right to kill...

User2 joining the discussion suggests that the more important question is not who embodies 'whiteness' in Russia but who is constructed as 'non-white.' Stressing that in the Russian context, it is people from the Caucasus who undergo racialization, the user localizes race by referencing familiar to the Russophone readers, contextual examples such as ethnic humor featuring a paradigmatic man from the Caucasus, and job discrimination cases. This comment, written against the Crimea-induced patriotic rush of 2014, stresses the necessity and urgency of paying attention to nationalism and xenophobia while simultaneously highlighting the fluidity of phenotypically read facial 'Russianness.' What is remarkable is that much like User1, User2 also deploys the calque-expression *белая хуйня* (white bullshit) to emphasize their speaking position, index familiarity with activist parlance and disavow potential accusations of racism from admins through this display of racial self-awareness and knowledge of terms. It is unclear whether this expression indicates critical distance, irony, or embrace of categories of thought. Much like the previous comment, such usage demonstrates the incorporation of translated intersectional anti-racist idiom into the vocabularies of FIO readers and moderators.

User3 also directly challenges User1 by stressing that, on the surface of it, the USA has abolished all formal racial discrimination, which does not preclude the lingering effects of racial oppression shaping the lives of US people of color. Suturing together and shifting between practices of ethnoracial police profiling across contexts (*так ведь и у нас*) and performing racial translation, User3 describes a potential victim of this local, post-Soviet profiling as a 'swarthy woman' with a 'bawl bag.' User1, however, remains skeptical, describing the application of color-based US conceptions of race on post-Soviet ethnoracial dynamics as stupid (*Не надо проецировать цвета это тупо*). Stressing the incommensurability of ethnoracial oppression across contexts, User1 highlights how in more ethnically diverse regions of Russia, some non-majority populations may actively dislike each other and even be xenophobic towards migrants from Central Asia, thereby complicating the transfer of the US dichotomy 'white/blacks'

to 'ethnic Russians/ethnic non-Russians' across the heterogeneous regions of the country, especially national republics.

After a prolonged discussion between users, which focused on comparing ethnoracial privileges across different contexts and problematized the usefulness of the category 'white' in post-Soviet spaces, the conversation finally attracted the attention of FIO admins, who took on a strict pedagogical role, chastising User1 who initiated the criticism of the category 'white':

FIO: Цепляние к слову "белый" - это демагогия. пассажи про "белых принцев" и "берега" - это агрессивный наезд. в целом, от всего вашего коммента за версту несет радфемской риторикой. предлагаю в следующий раз воздержаться от написания подобных комментариев в этом публице.

FIO: Picking at the word "white" is demagogy. Statements about "white princes" and "confusing sides" are aggressive attacks. Your comment reeks of *radfem* rhetoric. I suggest you next time abstain from writing such comments here.

While FIO dismisses the initial comment as mere speculation and demagoguery, it is simultaneously taken as a proxy of suspicious racist positions tied to *radfem* discourse, a central figure of disidentification within the Russophone intersectional feminist scene. The detection of *radfem* leanings is visceral (it reeks) and chronotopic (using the old-fashioned Russian measure of distance *верста*, 'it reeks across distances'). Such understandable defensiveness in the context of constant attacks on FIO nevertheless conflates the criticism of translated racial categories with presumed racism through the language ideology of personalism. It forecloses the problematization of analytical terms and geopolitics of feminist knowledge production by indicating that this type of questioning is not welcomed in the community.

In response, another user decided to intervene and defend User1 from the accusations of admins, stressing the relevance of the initial questioning of categories. This comment, in turn, provoked a more detailed response already on behalf of the moderatorial collective as a whole:

User4: FIO, девушка задала вполне резонный вопрос - почему специфический американский дискурс бездумно перекладывается на пост-советскую реальность? Коннотации переведенного вами поста в США и здесь совершенно различны, что вызывает вполне резонное недоумение.

User3: FIO, the girl has asked quite a sensible question: Why is a specific American discourse thoughtlessly transposed onto post-Soviet reality? The connotations of the post you have translated would be radically different in the USA and here, which provokes quite reasonable confusion.

Admin1: Если вы его перекладываете бездумно - это ваша личная проблема

Admin1: If you are transposing it thoughtlessly, it is your personal problem.

FIO: Хотелось бы закрыть этот вопрос раз и навсегда. "Белый" в данном и других подобных случаях - это символическое обозначение немаркированной/нормативной/привилегированной позиции на оси угнетения по признаку расы/этнической принадлежности. Можно реагировать на этот термин двумя способами: 1. Неконструктивно: прицепиться к слову и обвинить администраторок в "перекладывании американского дискурса на пост-советские реалии" и "желании побыть белыми принцами". 2. Конструктивно: начать дискуссию о том, какие более точные термины мы

FIO: We would like to close this question once and for all. "White" in such and other similar cases symbolically references an unmarked/normative/privileged position within the axis of oppression based on race/ethnicity. You can react to this in two ways. 1. Not constructively: pick on the words and accuse the admins of "transposing American discourse to post-Soviet realia" and "for wanting to be white princes." 2. Constructively: starting a discussion about other, more precise terms we can use in post-Soviet space. Are such terms suitable for all post-Soviet countries? And how the positions within this axis

можем использовать на пост-советском пространстве, подходят ли такие термины всем пост-советским странам и как изменились позиции на этой оси, например, в России в последние годы с подъемом патриотизма и национализма.

have changed in recent years, for example, in Russia, considering the rise of chauvinistic patriotism and nationalism.

User4's urge to interrupt the universalization of US-centered racial categories manifests in calling it a 'specific' discourse, thereby stressing its locality and challenging the premise that it can be applied globally. The user juxtaposes this 'specific' discourse to no less specific post-Soviet 'reality,' hinting at their mutual non-commensurability. The call hit a nerve and provoked the admins. It was first displaced back on User4 and afterward rejected as unconstructive engagement with texts. What might explain such a reaction is that the phrase 'thoughtless transposition' signals harsh criticism of translation work, presuming its mechanical, non-reflexive copycat nature. Since the devaluation of translation through the tropes of translation as derivative and unoriginal haunted the FIO project from the start, User4's remark is read as performing the erasure of the creative labor of translators. In turn, to defend this labor is to create the distinction between constructive and non-constructive engagement with FIO's translation choices.

To counteract the criticism and stall the discussion once and for all, a move that indicates that some types of arguing about terminology are not welcome, admins clarify that *белый* (white) should be read as an analytic concept rather than a descriptive literal term. The analytical definition of 'whiteness' provided by admins is elastic, integrating race and ethnicity in a single domain, construing 'whiteness' as a position of unmarked dominance along the race/ethnicity axis. Indicating the willingness to reflect on more suitable terminology for the situated anti-racist feminist idiom, the admins stress the need to consider both the diversity within different post-Soviet contexts and shifting socio-political conditions within Russia itself, marked by the upsurge in nationalist rhetoric in the wake of the annexation of Crimea and 2014 war in the east of Ukraine.

User4, however, disagrees, pointing to the slippages between conceptual and linguistic usage that generate confusion for Russophone readers:

User4: FIO, если текст считается определенным образом многими читателями (настолько, что приходится объяснять _постоянно_, что "белый" - это некий символ), то проблема не только в читателях. И не их задача подбирать слова за автора - например, мысленно вставлять "славянин" или "русский" вместо каждого употребления слова "белый".

User3: FIO, if the text is read in a certain way by many readers (to the extent that you must constantly explain that "white" is a particular symbol), the problem is not just with the readers. It is not their task to pick up words for the author, for example, mentally inserting "Slavic man" or "ethnic Russian man" instead of every use of the word "white."

Admin2 to User3: Слово "белый" шире, чем "славянин" или "русский". И я решительно не понимаю, в чем проблема - по вашему, никто не в курсе, что русские - белые? Пока что не заметно, чтобы "многим" читательницам было непонятно это, вы вторая здесь.

Admin2 to User3: The word "white" is broader than a "Slavic man" or "ethnic Russian man." And I decidedly don't understand; what's the problem here? In your opinion, no one is aware that ethnic Russians are white? So far, I have not noticed that "many" female readers have issues with understanding. You are the second one.

User4 to Admin2: Причем здесь это? Контекст важен. Американки пишут про белых и черных, потому что история США - это история двухсотлетней расовой сегрегации, именно по цвету кожи. У нас разделение

User3 to Admin2: Why is it relevant? Context matters. American women write about whites and blacks because the history of the USA is a history of 200 years of racial

идет по супраэтнической линии, а не по расовой - "славяне" и "не-славяне"

segregation based on skin color. We have a division across a supra-ethnic line, not a racial one: "Slavs" vs. "non-Slavs."

Admin2 to User4: И по расовой в том числе. К примеру, на территории бывшего СССР проживает очень-очень много представителей монголоидной расы. Мы говорим в том числе и о тех проблемах, с которыми встречаются они. И учитывая это, удобнее использовать слово "белый" для общности немаркированных позиций. Я повторяю - мы не замечали, чтобы читательницы испытывали глобальные неудобства из-за этого, вы преувеличиваете, говоря, что "приходится каждый раз объяснять"

Admin2 to User3: Racial line also matters. For example, many representatives of mongoloid race live on the territory of ex-USSR. We are speaking about the problems they encounter as well. And given this, it is more convenient to use the word "white" for the commonality of unmarked positions. I repeat, we have not noticed so far that our female readers are having big problems with that. You exaggerate by saying, "you have to explain it each time."

User5: Да и с чернокожими у нас не всё так радужно. Если оставить в стороне случаи, когда африканских студентов избивает поехавшая гопота, чего стоят всякие КВНЫ и прочая поп-культура с их изображением черных и обыгрыванием расистских стереотипов.

User4: It is not as rosy with dark-skinned people either. Leaving aside the cases when crazy *gopota* beats African students, what about KVN and other pop culture, the way they portray Black people and employ racist stereotypes.

For User4, FIO admins' defense of *белый* (white) as a useful conceptual category is unsatisfactory in light of the situated Russophone anti-racist project that FIO wants to advance. User4 stresses the practice of reading and (un)intelligibility: the category *белый* (white) is resisted not because its conceptual use is misunderstood but rather because different ethnoracial categories of practice inform post-Soviet ethnoracial dynamics. For the user, if FIO is to advance the formation of the Russophone anti-racist intersectional idiom, these vernacular categories should stand at the center of its development. User4 then puts the responsibility on the shoulders of FIO moderators, arguing that it is their job to develop better categories.

Admin2 downplays the issue of the unintelligibility of categories in the Russian language as a valid concern, stressing that the problem is exaggerated. It is also suggested that 'white' as a category is broader than 'Slav' or 'ethnic Russian' and thereby has an analytical force to explain power relations domestically. This positions 'whiteness' as, first and foremost, a conceptual category. The fuzziness partly results from slippages between conceptual and practical usage of 'white' as a category within English. The fuzziness is also tightly linked to FIO as a translation project that simultaneously draws authority from the US activism and struggles and wants to change and impact post-Soviet racialization contexts.

User3 reiterates that context matters, locating the racial categories 'white' and 'black' in the US history of slavery and racial segregation and arguing for the reading informed by historicized contextual analysis. User4 does not seem to have issues with translating white as *белый* when this category points to the US context. That indicates that the problem of User4 with category *белый* (white) is not literal translation per se but the metaphoric transfer of the category for local use, as if it would signify similarly. To emphasize this, User4 points to the difficulty with both legibility and intelligibility of the category *белый* (white) for situated readership and anti-racist praxis. Such a position implies that the workings of racialization in the USA differ from the racialization in Russia. For User4, specificities of post-Soviet racializations would thus require locating

the ethnoracial tensions across the supra-ethnic line between Slavs and non-Slavs and correspondingly working with these vernacular categories.

Another admin, however, reinstates the importance of race for post-Soviet space by evoking the anthropological racial concept 'Mongoloid race' to describe parts of populations of ex-USSR, for whom FIO's posts are said to be relevant in describing their situations. User5 aligns with FIO's position by bringing examples of stereotypical portrayals of darker-skinned people within Russian pop culture. User4's critique of the category 'white' is read as downplaying the problem of racism and representation. The discussion continued when User4 had to draw on a personal experience of post-Soviet racialization to support their take on the categories:

User4 to Admin2: Монголоиды и чернокожие - это как раз "не-славяне". И цыгане. И евреи. И таджики с кавказцами (хотя вторая группа, если уж на то пошло, включает в себя некоторые этносы, которые без паспорта от тру-арийцев и не отличишь). Так, например, мою родную сестру в школе избивали за армянские ФИО, хотя без подсказки никто и не скажет, что она наполовину армянка. Если бы я не интересовалась проблемой ксенофобии и если бы она не коснулась моей семьи, я бы не настаивала на более точных и близких к местной реальности формулировках.

Admin2: Мы подумаем и обсудим этот вопрос в дальнейшем.

Admin1: Когда мы пишем "белые", мы имеем в виду, что в российской действительности это будут "славяне", и предполагаем, что другие читатели_цы тоже это понимают. мы используем для анализа инструменты, которые были созданы в США, поэтому конечно же терминология имеет определенную специфику. но у нас нет желания ограничивать дискурс исключительно постсоветским пространством. белый/небелый - это переменные, которые можно применить в любом западном обществе. Славянин/неславянин можно применить только на постсоветском пространстве, да и то не везде.

User4 to Admin2: Exactly. Mongoloids and black-skinned people are "non-Slavs." And Gypsies. And Jews. And Tajiks with Caucasians (even if the latter group includes some ethnoses indistinguishable from true Arians without looking at their passports). For example, my sister was beaten because she had an Armenian name, although, without a hint, no one would have guessed she was half-Armenian. If I had not been interested in the problem of xenophobia or if it had not affected me personally, I would not have insisted on using more precise and suiting for local reality formulations.

Admin2: We will think about this and discuss this question in the future.

Admin1: When we write "whites," we mean that in Russian reality, it will be "Slavs," and we assume that other readers understand this too. We use analytical tools made in the USA, so naturally, the terminology has a certain specificity. But we do not want to limit our discourse exclusively to post-Soviet space. White/non-white are variables that can be applied in any Western society. Slav/Non-Slav are only usable within the post-Soviet space and not everywhere.

User4 maintains that non-Slavicness is a better category for situated anti-racist analysis. It is viewed as an elastic umbrella term potentially including all ethnoracially marked others subject to racialization within Slavic majority countries such as Russia. This broad category within Russia can include diverse groups that could be read as 'white' and 'non-white' in the US context. User4 reiterates how the uncritical application of 'white' as a category produces paradoxical situations. Evoking the personal experience of encounters with post-Soviet xenophobia, User4 justifies the urgency for developing Russophone anti-racist feminist tools, which would better deal with the situation 'on the ground' and would not require additional explanations as the translated category 'white' does.

The last comment, which ended the entire conversation, is particularly instructive. FIO admins acknowledge the contextual specificity of racial categories coming from the

USA that end up being used in the community as analytical tools. In most of FIO's translated texts about racialization in the USA, racial categories oscillate between conceptual and everyday use. Anoop Nayak has described the 'paradigmatic tension within social constructionists approaches to race' as 'the tendency to view race as socially constituted on the one hand, yet to continually impart ontological value to it on the other, with the effect that race can take on a reified status' (Nayak 2006:414). Therefore, the problem is, 'how do we discuss race in a way that does not reify the very categories we are seeking to abolish?' (Nayak 2006:415). When it comes to FIO, the issue extends not only to the abovementioned problems but also to the interplay between the particular and the universal when it comes to racialization dynamics. FIO admins try to solve these issues by arguing that if the racial category 'white' is understood as an analytical tool rather than a practical category, although originally context-specific and US-American, it has the capacity to theorize ethnoracial power relations globally. Slavic/non-Slavic distinction is reaffirmed by admins as a valid, albeit limited, pair for understanding these dynamics in the post-Soviet region. In contrast, the white/non-white pair is framed to have a universal capacity for understanding ethnoracial dynamics in *any* Western society.

In this commentary, 'white' is understood as an umbrella term to connote a 'commonality of unmarked privileged positions.' At the same time, the former 'Second World' gets folded by FIO moderators into 'Westernness.' Such a move may overlook important aspects of its alterity: the liminal position of Slavicness (and hierarchies within it) vis-à-vis Western whiteness, uneasy tensions between Russianness and Europeanness, and Russia's complicated imperial/colonial legacies of ethnoracial diversity. FIO's ascription of Westernness to Russia also skips Soviet times as if non-existent, omitting any traces of socialist contributions to anti-racist and decolonization struggles, as well as practices of the racialization of communism as racial treason by Western countries through associating it with Asiatic or Oriental despotism (Bonnett 2002). From the discussion above, it is possible to suggest that FIO moderators loosely adhere to what Ludwig calls 'unificationist accounts of race,' the global white supremacy model, where 'whiteness' appears as a universal analytic relevant for explaining relations of racialization globally (Ludwig 2019). Can color-coded racial categories describe relations of ethnoracial domination in various contexts? Could the categories used by the counter-hegemonic feminist analytics, such as intersectionality, complicate rather than enable the understanding of contextual ethnoracial power dynamics in other geopolitical locations?

These questions cannot be answered separately from considering how the US model of racial categorization associated with Black/white racial dualism underpins counter-hegemonic projects like intersectionality. Clelland and Dunaway have stressed how:

The white/nonwhite dichotomy that predominates in the western race paradigm offers little explanatory traction in a majority of the world's countries where such "color" categories are not employed as the markers of difference or inequality. Indeed, western scholars conceal far more than they explicate when

they arbitrarily apply the white/nonwhite dualism to societies where people do not employ such concepts to justify discrimination or exploitation (Clelland and Dunaway 2021:492).

On FIO pages, this universalization of the ‘white/nonwhite dichotomy’ operates through foreignizing translation strategies. The category ‘white’ circulates as a universal analytical category that assumes a transhistorical decontextualized character propelled by its analytical prestige as a foreign and modern analytic bearing the symbolic allure of US activism. Although FIO moderators claim that *белый* (white) may work as a helpful category for the situated Russophone anti-racist praxis when the users contest it by drawing on their experiences of ethnoracial marginalization, the limits of its straightforward translatability become salient. The following section examines a peculiar case of the translingual category *Кавказцы/Caucasians*, understood as a synonym of ‘white people’ in English but in Russian associated with the people from the Caucasus, an example that further probes the limits of translatability of the category ‘white’ for the post-Soviet anti-racist feminist praxis.

Translingual mutability of the category *Кавказцы/Caucasians*

In this subsection, I explore the limits of translatability of the category *белый* (white) for localized anti-racist praxis by reading it against translingual pair *Кавказцы/Caucasians*, which bear contrasting meanings in Russian and English when it comes to the situated processes of racialization and is also peculiarly gendered in Russian. I engage with the debates in comment threads where FIO users critically reflect on the non-equivalence of racial categories and slurs across contexts and languages.

One such discussion occurred under a translated text from everydayfeminism.com, authored by Jarune Uwujaren, *Three Common Complaints About Political Correctness (That Completely Miss the Point)*. The text dealt with the importance of using non-offensive terminology for marginalized groups. Its translation was published on FIO pages in December 2014 under the title *Почему корректная лексика действительно так важна: нет, мы не "перегибаем палку"* (*Why politically correct terminology is so important, no, we are not pushing it too far*). One user initiated the discussion addressed to the community with a question about anti-racist terminology in Russian:

User1: Ребята, как называть мигрантов/эмигрантов, представителей южных стран? (Часто эту группу людей называют "х*ч*ми") очень мучает этот вопрос, и это очень важно для меня!

User1: Guys, how would you call migrants/emigrants representatives of Southern countries? (Often, this group of people is called "h*chi") I struggle with this question, which is important to me!

User2: Кстати, очень интересно то, что "чёрный" (как и "белый" среди некоторых групп людей) является оскорбительным в русском языке, а те же афроамериканцы (которые родились в Америке) не

User2: By the way, it is fascinating that "black" (as well as "white" among some groups of people) is considered a slur in the Russian language, while African Americans (who were born in America) don't think of the word *black* in

считают слово *black* в английском языке оскорбительным по отношению к себе. Знаю от достаточно большого количества мужчин, которые сами мне об этом говорили, в том числе преподавателя английского языка, проживающего на территории Украины какое-то время. Нужно подходить с умом и пытаться понять ситуацию, разузнать, а не применять какие-то жёсткие рамки к словам. Мы всё же разумные люди. А статья замечательна.

User3: А точно "черный" считается оскорбительным? В США так все говорят *black*. Протесты с плакатом #BlackLivesMatter все видели наверное. Или это о русском языке?

English as a slur towards them. I know it from many men who told me this, including English language teachers living in Ukraine's territory for a while. We must approach things wisely, trying to understand and study the situation instead of applying strict requirements to words. We are reasonable people, after all. The article is terrific.

User3: Is it true that "black" is considered a slur? People use the word *black* in the USA. Probably everyone has seen protests with posters #BlackLivesMatter. Or is this about the Russian language?

In this thread, User₁, taking an epistemic stance of apprenticeship, aligns with the need to develop anti-racist vocabulary in Russian. Colloquial ethnoracial slurs used towards people from the Caucasus are interrupted with the asterisk, recognizing them as words that might wound as performative language ideology undergirding common understanding of slurs would have it. Using an asterisk also signals a desire to belong to the emergent Russophone anti-racist feminist idiom. User₁, trying to find a more neutral word that would describe this group of people in the Russian language, circles indecisively around expressions such as 'migrants/emigrants' and more colloquial *представители южных стран* (representatives of the Southern countries). 'Southern' here shifts its indexicality. What is meant by Southern is not Global South, but Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, that is, 'post-Soviet south' from the point of view of someone based in Slavic heartlands. This more familiar South indicates a localized horizon of racialization within Russophone feminist scenes. Ensuing discussion in the comment thread, where one user ended up being banned for using slurs, discussed English and Russian racial categories/slurs and the problem of their translation, referentiality, and non-equivalence. User₂, for example, engages in translingual reflexivity by pointing to the non-equivalent meanings of 'black' in English and *чёрный* in Russian. This call for a nuanced understanding of categories draws attention to the transnational mutability of languages of race, ethnoracial categories, and slurs. Unconvinced, User₃ doubts if the word *чёрный* (black) is genuinely a slur, stressing that it is not a slur in the US, bringing the 2014 BlackLivesMatter protests as an example of neutral meaning attached to the word 'black' in English.

This ambiguity results from the potential mix-up of the meanings attached to the pair 'black' and its translation to Russian as *чёрный*. When seen more broadly, this ambiguity is related to the problem of double indexicality of Russophone intersectional feminist idiom, pointing simultaneously to the US and post-Soviet contexts. *Чёрный* can be understood within the text as both a contextual slur used in Russian to attack primarily Caucasian and Central Asian people and as a somewhat awkward calque translation of the English term 'black,' referencing African Americans. This double indexicality results in confusion in the comment exchange between User₂ and User₃ illustrated above. However, the double indexicality of ethnoracial categories and their

translations also has implications for FIO, which must straddle the project of translating foreign feminist texts and simultaneously carving out locally relevant intersectional feminism idiom in the Russian language, where racial categories might mean otherwise or have different connotations and history of use. Discussions above and below illustrate this complexity, allowing insights into the transnational malleability of racial categories and slurs:

User4: В разных странах свои slurs! в россии чёрный оскорбление, так даже кавказцев называют, чтобы унизить, хотя в США армяне, или грузины, или осетины, или чеченцы считаются белыми. Зато в США black people считается лучшим вариантом, так как African-American недостаточно инклюзивный термин. Зайдите в любую англоязычную социальную сеть, погуглите black lives matter. Прислушайтесь, потому что вам УЖЕ 100% как минимум предупреждение вынесут, возможно, даже забанят, вы даже не представляете, чего успели наговорить.

User4: Different countries have their own different *slurs!* In Russia, black is a slur; even Caucasians are called this way to humiliate them. However, Armenians, Georgians, Ossetians, or Chechens are considered white within the USA. But in the USA, it is best to say *black people*, since *African American* as a term is not inclusive enough. Go to any English-language social network and google *Black Lives Matter*. Pay attention because you would 100% either get a warning or even be banned without understanding what it is that you said wrong.

User5 to User4: "считаются" мне кажется не совсем корректное слово, ибо кавказцы так и так относятся к белой расе) (прикреплены скриншоты с Википедии и Гугл-переводчика)

User5 to User4: "Considered" does not seem to me to be an entirely appropriate word since Caucasians are members of the white race) (attaches two screenshots from Wikipedia and Google Translate)

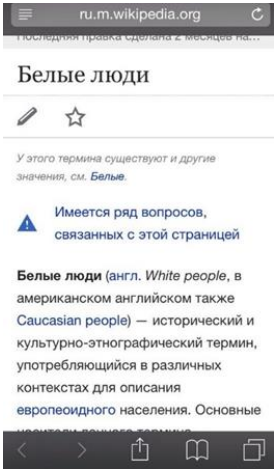


Figure 2. Screenshots attached to the comment of User5 to prove that 'Caucasians belong to white race'. The first one is from Russian language Wikipedia entry *Белые люди* (White people).

Figure 3. The second screenshot is Russian to English Google translation where *белая раса* ('white race' request) yields the term Caucasian.

User4 performs a cross-contextual analysis of ethnoracial slurs, remarking how *чёрный* within Russia is often used to humiliate people from the Caucasus. Within the USA, the same group of people, described by the umbrella term *Кавказцы* (Caucasians) in Russia, would be classified through the racial category 'white.' This example and similar reflections on FIO pages emphasize the *translational and transnational* malleability of racial categories and ethnoracial slurs. This is the case not only with the term *чёрный* as it functions in Russia but notably also with the term 'Caucasian.' The trouble with translating the Russian term *кавказцы* as 'Caucasians' into English is worth separate reflection since it has featured in the comment of User5, who attached two screenshots illustrating awareness of this translanguing ambivalence and using these screenshots as proof.

Bruce Baum eloquently describes this trouble with ‘Caucasians’ in the opening of his book on the history of the idea of the Caucasian race: ‘One of the many telling artifacts of the modern world is the fact that there are Caucasians and then there are “Caucasians”’ (Baum 2006:1). As Merriam Webster dictionary points out more prosaically, the word Caucasian has two definitions in English and ‘the difference between them occasionally leads people to aver that one of them is incorrect.’⁵¹ The first meaning, explained as literal, relates the word to the region of the Caucasus Mountains range or its inhabitants. This is how the term (*кавказцы, кавказский*) is predominantly used and understood within Russia: as a pointer to the peoples and cultures of the Caucasus. Moreover, because Caucasians have been racialized in post-Soviet Russia, the term has additional connotations indexing this baggage of racialization. The second meaning of Caucasian within English is widely used as a synonym of the racial category ‘white’ and is predominantly used in this way within the USA. The category ‘Caucasian’ is, therefore, ambivalent and fuzzy because it has a different meaning across regions and languages when it comes to racialization dynamics. As was remarked before, people from the Caucasus within Russia, along with other non-Slavic groups, can be interpellated through the usage of the slur *чёрный* (black) within xenophobic discourses. Scholars describe this as a paradox of post-Soviet racialization, stressing the malleability of transnational articulations of blackness and its differential attachments (Baum 2006:219–33; Rabinovich 2021; Tlostanova 2010, 2015; Zakharov 2015). However, there is a need to theorize this translanguing ambivalence in the context of transnational and translanguing perspectives on racialization. As I showed, this ambivalence presents an acute problem in English to Russian translations of intersectional feminist texts, modeling its anti-racist idiom on the US context, where ‘Caucasian’ is primarily used as a synonym for ‘white’ and, therefore, references a majoritarian position.

What is particularly interesting in the comment thread discussion is how User5 challenges the statement of User4 when the phrase ‘considered white’ is used about the peoples of Caucasus. Whereas User4 appears to have hinted at the racialization of Caucasians within Russia, stressing the constructedness of both ‘whiteness’ and ‘blackness’ across languages, it seems to be read by User5 as if indicating doubts about the racial whiteness of Caucasians and necessitates a response relying on racialist categories. User5 stresses that such a formulation is incorrect since the people of Caucasus are members of the ‘white race.’ Here a classical Blumenbachian theory of the ‘white race’ allegedly originating in the Caucasus region comes to the fore. Shnirelman showed how belonging to the ‘white Aryan race’ can be used strategically by post-Soviet ethnically non-Russian intellectuals to attain various goals, including new visions of nation-building projects, constructing the noble ancestors’ myth, and mitigating the effects of being subject to racialization in central Russian cities (Shnirelman 2015).

⁵¹ merriamwebster.com/dictionary/Caucasian.

Moreover, my study of the FIO comment threads reveals cases when stigmatization of Caucasians through slurs may not always be understood by those who become their target as relating to problematics of race and racism per se, as evident from both the discussion above and its continuation below:

User5: Еще кто-нибудь может ответить,почему если у меня в комментариях возникают тёрки,и русский человек называет меня х**ем/ч*ркой и т.д,те кто за меня заступаются называют этого человека расистом? Просто если разобрать по полочкам,то у русских и балкарцев(моя фамилия балкарская) расовый тип: европеоидный,выходит он оскорбляет меня не по расовому,а по национальному признаку! Я считаю,что вернее будет называть "обидчика" националистом,разве я не права? Если нет,то поправьте

User5: Can someone explain this to me: why, when I argue in the comments, and someone calls me h*ch/ch*rka, those who stand up for me call this person a racist? If you break it down, both ethnic Russians and Balkars (I have a Balkar surname) have a Europeoid racial type. Thus, it turns out he insults me not because of race but because of nationality! I think calling the "offender" a nationalist is more precise. Am I not right? If not, please correct me.

Admin to User5: В social justice дискурсе используется то понимание расы, которое сформировано не антропологами (европеоидная, монголоидная и т.д. расы), а американскими активист_ками и фактически ближе к понятию этничности. а национализм - это все же несколько другое.

Admin to User5: In *social justice* discourse, the understanding of race is used, which is formed not by anthropologists (Caucasoid, Mongoloid, etc. races) but by American (female) activists and is actually closer to the concept of ethnicity. Nationalism is something different.

User5 to Admin: Но все-таки расист тоже не совсем корректно,думаю) возможно ксенофоб.

User5 to Admin: Still, the term racist is not entirely suitable) maybe xenophobe is better.

Admin to User5: Если использовать американское понятие расы, то расизм вполне уместен. ксенофобия не описывает институционализированную систему угнетения, power+prejudice, вот это все.

Admin to User5: If the American concept of race is used, it is appropriate to call this racism. Xenophobia does not describe the institutionalized system of oppression, power+prejudice together.

In this thread, User5 narrates an online experience of being interpellated through offensive ethnoracial slurs in an argument with a person described as an ethnic Russian interlocutor (*русский человек называет меня х**ем/ч*ркой*), a slur inferred not through visual discernments but from non-Russian last name of User5. Others rally to stand up for the user in that quarrel, labeling the offender 'racist.' Addressing the FIO community with the stance of apprentice, User5 ponders what would be a proper frame to conceptualize the episode and what terms are more suitable for such analysis. Although those who defended the user against the attacks claimed that the ethnic Russian was a racist, User5 doubts the suitability of the term, implying that for the interaction to produce someone as a racist, there should be the issue of race at stake. Such an issue, however, cannot exist since, in User5's terms, ethnic Russians and Balkars 'belong to the same racial type, Europeoid.'⁵² What must be at stake, then, is the discrimination based on *natsional'nost'* rather than on race; the offender, in turn, should

⁵² It is worth pointing out that User5 uses the anthropological racial category 'Europeoid race' instead of 'Caucasoid race'. This might be linked to the fact that the term 'Europeoid race' was used in Soviet anthropology instead of 'Caucasoid' marked as 'outdated' in many dictionaries. I was not able to find academic sources explaining the alleged replacement of 'Caucasoid' to 'Europeoid' in Soviet anthropology in 1920s.

have been called a nationalist rather than a racist (*выходит он оскорбляет меня не по расовому, а по национальному признаку вернее будет называть "обидчика" националистом*).

This quest for the proper terminology merits several remarks. First, individuals subject to racialization by the ethnic Russian majority within Russia may not necessarily reject 'racial thinking' altogether. The assertions that Caucasians belong to the 'white race,' as in User5's phrase, may be used to deny the stigmatizing effect of slurs. What is more interesting is how, after evoking the racial frame of interpretation: equalizing the position of Balkars as being on par with ethnic Russians racially, this frame gets subsequently dismissed as an irrelevant lens for interpreting the conflict. If the difference between Balkars and ethnic Russians is that of *natsional'nost'*, it is argued the incident should be reconceptualized as a manifestation of nationalism, not racism. Reading this scene with attention to users' conceptual choices highlights the relevance of *natsional'nost'* as a central vernacular idiom of human diversity both for self-identification and for providing interpretative frames for explaining discrimination. When User5 suggests interpreting the conflict as a case of xenophobia instead of racism, one may intervene that such conceptual choice disavows racism, as has been sometimes suggested in the recent literature pointing towards the conspicuous absence of the language of race in the region. In this instance, however, the use of the word xenophobia already does the work racism does. Moreover, the user's reluctance to use racism instead of nationalism or xenophobia to explain the conflict illustrates the intimate links between the categories of practice and the categories of analysis, the linguistic and the conceptual.

In his work on anti-racism, Bonnett argues about its ontological dependency on the notion of race itself. Even if the anti-racist project is perceived to be the opposite of racist thinking, it cannot but retain and reproduce what it denies, both the idea of race and racism: 'anti-racists have frequently deployed racism to secure and develop their project. The most characteristic form of this incorporation is anti-racists' adherence to categories of "race"; categories which, even when politically or "strategically" employed, lend themselves to the racialization process' (Bonnett 1999:2). In that sense, following Bonnett, to be an anti-racist one may need the term racism as anti-racism's antipode. In the context of my empirical case, the question could be reframed as how one can develop a Russophone anti-racist intersectional feminist idiom in the context where ethnoracial marginalization may not be described through the very word racism, partly because the category race itself is used neither in census-taking nor in the sense of politicized identity (but may be used in the anthropological sense as the example above indicated).

For FIO admins, who reacted to the comment exchange above, the term racism is read as mode modern and sharp tool to grasp relations of marginalization, unlike Russian xenophobia. FIO admins stay dissatisfied with the analytical powers of the concept of xenophobia, pointing out that it fails to account for the institutionalized dimension of oppression. They argue that if the American concept of race is used, the

abovementioned incident can be classified as racism. Unlike xenophobia, which is more well-known in Russophone social science research, the term racism is perceived as useful, critical, and modern. This rejection of the term xenophobia in favor of racism, conceived as more modern, resonates with the processes I tracked in previous chapters when transliterated from English concepts such as *виктимблейминг* (victim blaming) are seen to have more sophistication, radical edge, and analytical power than analogous terms, already established within the feminist and broader scholarly discourse, such as ‘the accusation of the victim’ (*обвинение жертвы*). Xenophobia and nationalism, although used in Russian public and scholarly discourse to incorporate the very same problematics described by the rubric of racism in the West, are cast as less precise and less modern. All of that is somewhat ironic, provided that xenophobia and nationalism have been borrowed into the Russian language earlier but no longer register as foreign after assimilation.

I want to use another empirical snippet from a different comment thread where similar dynamics were at play. In the thread, one user reacts to the translated text published on FIO’s pages and tries to stitch intersectionality to the Russian context. This is done by stressing the need for Russophone intersectional feminist reflection to focus not only on racism, described in the translated text, but also on Caucausophobia, islamophobia, and antisemitism:

User: Не в тему дискуссии скажу, но мне кажется, что в условиях российских реалий, помимо расизма, важно учитывать проблему кавказофобии (такого термина нет, но я не знаю, как еще сказать), исламофобии и антисемитизма. "Белыми" в российской действительности не могут считаться люди с не-славянской внешностью, или, как у нас многие говорят, "европейской"/"восточной"/"кавказской" (то, что среди невежественных лиц с 90х годов, благодаря масс-медиа, зовется "лицом кавказской национальности").

User: Slightly off-topic, but it seems to me that within Russian realia, apart from racism, it is essential to consider the problem of Caucasophobia (This term does not exist, but I don't know how else to say it), islamophobia, and antisemitism. People with non-Slavic appearances cannot be considered "whites" in the realities of Russia. Or, as many say, with "European," "oriental," and "Caucasian" appearance (in other terms, what, since the 90s, thanks to mass media, circulates among ignorant people as a "person of Caucasian national'nost").

In this comment, the user translates the US idiom of race into the post-Soviet idiom of racialization. By using locally intelligible tropes of phenotypical difference such as *не-славянская внешность* (non-Slavic appearance) and post-Soviet media construct *лицо кавказской национальности* (person of Caucasian *natsional'nost'*), that mark ethnoracial others, the user immediately evokes post-Soviet Russian racisms and simultaneously performs racial translation, by stressing that these subjects should not be read as ‘white.’ The term Caucausophobia, self-described an awkward coinage, points to the discrimination against Caucasians within Russia, which is acknowledged as an acute problem. In this paragraph, islamophobia, antisemitism, and Caucausophobia do not register for the user as varieties of racism since it is presumed that they are not about race but instead about region, religion, and *natsional'nost'*. It would be erroneous to assume that by eschewing the word racism, the user somehow disavows the discrimination against Caucasians, quite the contrary. It seems that this need to separate the terms again illustrates the connections between the linguistic and the conceptual,

linked to the absence/presence of an object, that is, of race to classify something as an instance of racism. Because Caucasians are not conceptualized as a racial minority within Russia (since other categories are used instead), the user does not conceptualize their discrimination as racism but as Caucasophobia. These examples point to how linguistic (practical) and conceptual categories may be interlinked and how looking at racial translation across different systems and languages of racialization allows a unique insight into this process.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, I explored how translated racial categories such as *белая женщина* (white woman) enter Russophone intersectional feminist idiom through FIO's translations of intersectionality. FIO's literal translations of the category 'white' and related expressions such as 'white feminism' and 'white heterosexual man' generated not only new Russian-language terms for the situated analysis of power relations but also emergent idioms such as Russophone anti-racist white allyship discourse. Chronotopic ideologies about the modernity of English and Anglophone anti-racist feminist frames and the modernity of foreignizing translation choices such as calque translations undergirded moderatorial choices. Chronotopically positioned types of personhood emerged within this discourse, such as progressive anti-racist white allies and backward Russophone readers who have yet to learn how to use foreign and modern terms. The generative effects of calque translations of the category 'white' were also central in the comment threads, where FIO users contested the limits of its translatability for the situated feminist, anti-racist Russophone praxis, also through discussions around the translingual ethn racial category *Кавказцы*/Caucasians.

6. Signs of foreignness: leaving ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ untranslated

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored literalism in FIO’s translations of the category *белый* (white) and interrogated the limits of its translatability. In this chapter, I examine perhaps the most foreignizing translation strategy in FIO’s praxis: non-translation of the Anglophone anti-racist terms ‘PoC’ (person/people of color) and ‘WoC’ (woman/women of color). I aim to show that although ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ were left untranslated from English, they generated many discussions about the possibility of their translation and resulted in the translanguing proliferation of terms on the pages of the community. At the same time, the non-translation of ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ had other implications, such as reinforcing perceptions of Russophone intersectionality’s foreignness and inaugurating the elusive search for the post-Soviet intersectional feminist subject.

To illustrate these processes, I start the chapter by investigating what motivated the moderatorial decision not to translate ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ and how their non-translation later became canonical. To do that, I examine FIO’s agenda-setting post about translating ethical terminology into Russian. Underpinned by chronotopic constructions of Anglophone feminist anti-racism idiom as more modern and progressive, the preference for translation strategies favoring foreignization was cast as unavoidable. I afterward show how the strategy of footnoting remedying the alleged untranslatability of the categories ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ into Russian has led to the translanguing proliferation of terms and hybrids, which ended up circulating simultaneously in users’ and admins’ idiom. In the third and fourth sections, I trace some implications of leaving ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ untranslated. On the one hand, this translation decision resulted in FIO’s users’ attempts to find local equivalents of ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ in the figures of women from Central Asia and the Caucasus. On the other hand, the foreign ‘trans woman of color’ figure said to obsessively preoccupy Russophone intersectionality was deployed in Russophone *radfem* discourses as a sign of intersectionality’s complete foreignness to the problems of ‘real’ women and therefore irrelevant for Russophone feminists.

The first time the term ‘PoC’ (people of color) appeared on FIO pages was in August 2014, when FIO published a translated article from *feminspire.com*, *Privilege Discomfort: Why You Need to Get the Fuck Over It*, written by Noor Al-Sibai.⁵³ The article introduced the concept of privilege, using examples from the US context, including the notion of ‘white privilege.’ FIO’s Russian translation toned down the title, transforming it into

⁵³ The original has been deleted from *feminspire* but can be accessed on the author’s website nooralsibai.com/post/125808352551/posted-on-feminspire-in-2013-privilege-discomfort

Дискомфорт привилегий: почему его нужно преодолевать (Privilege discomfort. Why you need to overcome it). ‘PoC’ in the Russian text was preserved in its untranslated form. Below I introduce an excerpt from the original English language post, its FIO translation, and my translation of FIO translation to showcase the appearance of the term ‘PoC’s in the translated version:

Source:

On the first day of a class that focuses on the politics of the civil rights era, an argument erupted between a white student and a black professor. The professor, a scholar and veteran in the field of civil rights who has studied race politics in our small mountain city, made the bold statement that one of the largest and most beloved high schools in our region is a racist institution.

FIO translation:

На первом семинаре, посвященном политике времен движения за гражданские права PoC (англ. people of color, “небелые люди”, на русский язык не существует прямого нерасистского перевода – прим. FIO), вспыхнул спор между белым студентом и темнокожим профессором. Профессор, давно занимающийся вопросом гражданских прав PoC и исследовавший расовую политику в нашем небольшом городке, сделал довольно резкое заявление, что одна из самых крупных и уважаемых школ в нашем регионе является расистским учреждением.

My translation of FIO translation:

At the first seminar on the history of civil rights of the PoC movement (from English *people of color*, “nonwhite people,” there is no direct non-racist translation to the Russian language available – FIO note), a dispute broke out between a white student and dark-skinned professor. Professor, who has long been studying the question of civil rights of PoC and researching racial politics in our small town, made a rather sharp claim that one of the largest and most respected schools in our region is a racist establishment.

When these three snippets are juxtaposed against each other, the transformative work of translation comes to the fore. The version of the text produced by FIO moderators included multiple changes. FIO moderators adjusted the translation to anticipate the cultural expectations of Russophone readers. For example, the English language word ‘class’ referring to a university lecture was replaced with a more locally intelligible *семинар*,⁵⁴ and the English ‘veteran’ was omitted altogether and replaced with a different expression.⁵⁵ In my translation of FIO’s translation to English, I attempted to preserve these transformations to show the changes happening to the original text. The most interesting transformations, however, concern racial terminology. Firstly, the US civil rights movement was translated as *движения за гражданские права PoC*. Instead of the qualifier, which usually follows this expression in Russian, *движения за гражданские права чёрнокожих* (literally: movement for the civil rights of the black-skinned), the untranslated English term ‘PoC’ suddenly replaced Russian term *чёрнокожие* (black-skinned). The word ‘PoC’ was retained in the translation in its original form in English but explained within brackets with an approximate translation into Russian and accompanied by a short moderatorial comment explaining the meaning of the term and the rationale for its use.

⁵⁴ ‘Classes’ are normally associated in Russian language with school education, not university education

⁵⁵ *Ветераны* in Russian are primarily associated with WW2 veterans, and using this term would have confused the audience.

Secondly, ‘black professor’ in the original has been transformed into a *тёмнокожий профессор* (dark-skinned professor) in Russian since translating this expression literally as *чёрный профессор* (black professor) would be to risk potentially entering into a racist register of speech. The word *чёрный* (black) as a descriptor of a person can be employed as a racist slur in the Russian language against a broader range of people (see chapter 8, where I develop a thesis on the partial equivalence of the pair further). At the end of the post, FIO included a moderatorial postscript, which I am quoting below:

Прим. FIO: данный пост является прямым переводом, так что мы просим читательни_ц помнить, что речь идет в большей степени об американских реалиях, и нам следует учитывать так же распространенность националистских и ксенофобных идей на территории СНГ.

Note FIO: This post is a direct translation; we ask our readers to remember that it mainly concerns American *realia*. We also need to consider the spread of nationalist and xenophobic ideas on the CIS territory.⁵⁶

Such paratextual commentary often accompanied FIO translations, showcasing moderatorial reflexivity around circulating discourses and categories. Even more intriguing is how the postscript stresses the situatedness of translated English-language text, pointing at the struggles with comprehension it may create for the Russophone readers. Admins use the term ‘American *realia*’ to reference how racial categories and problems described in the translated text pertain to the US-American context positioned as distinct from ‘CIS territory.’ The term *realia* repeatedly reemerged in FIO moderatorial commentaries and readers’ idiom, and I address its significance in more detail in Chapter 7. Emphasizing that the translated post should be read with its context of production in mind, the admins actively bridge two locations, drawing parallels between the processes in the USA and CIS countries. They stress the presence of xenophobic dynamics locally, which helps ‘domesticate’ the text and its terminology, actualizing its relevance to Russophone feminist audiences despite its seeming foreignness and ‘Americanness.’ As in many other places throughout FIO’s translations, the moderators in this paratext stitch together Russophone intersectionality by appealing to it as both ‘foreign and modern,’ foregrounding its US-Americanness and peculiarity and yet, making it appear familiar by stressing its situated relevance.

The post received several hundred likes and engaged FIO readers, many of whom thanked moderators for the text. Some started brainstorming translation solutions for the ‘PoC’ that was conspicuously left untranslated from English:

User1: А если people of color переводить как люди цвета? Нормально звучит?

User1: What if one translates *people of color* as *lyudi tsveta*?⁵⁷ Does it sound ok?

Admin1: Ну, как-то странно звучит(

Admin1: It sounds rather strange(

User1 to Admin1: ну да, не идеально. Хотя не так ужасно как "цветные"

User1 to Admin1: Yes, not perfect, but not so horrible as “*tsvetnye*.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Commonwealth of Independent States.

⁵⁷ From Russian *lyudi* – people, *tsvet* – color.

⁵⁸ From Russian *tsvet* – color. Literally ‘of color’.

Admin2: Тут русскоязычные PoC должны решать, а не мы, пока не нашли кого-нибудь, кто бы занимал_ась этим вопросом

Admin2: It is up to Russian-speaking PoC to decide, not us. So far, we have not found anyone who deals with this issue.

User2: когда смотрела фильм "Ярость" Пазолини, в субтитрах переводом "gente di colore" было "люди цвета", чем не норм?

User2: When I watched Pazolini's "Rage," "gente di colore" was translated in subtitles as "lyudi tsveta," sounds ok, no?

User3: А почему бы просто НЕ переводить PoC. Так и оставить. Многие термины непереводаемы и не надо

User3: Why don't you just NOT translate PoC? Keep it as it is. Many terms are untranslatable and should not be translated.

FIO: мы так и сделали

FIO: This is exactly what we did

The conversation above demonstrates how the category 'PoC,' left untranslated in the initial FIO post, resulted in active feminist buzz, discussing the possibility of its translation and articulating different visions of its (un)translatability. Not only FIO admins but also readers engaged in the translation discussions, making their own variants and generating feminist translational discursivity. However, the admins often had the final word on which translation suggestions to accept, evaluating their suitability and correctness.

My attention was captured by the curious hybrid translingual category *русскоязычные PoC* (Russian-speaking PoC), used by one of the admins to motivate their decision not to translate 'PoC' into Russian. This hybrid category actively bridges US minorities with those from post-Soviet spaces by pairing the Russian term *русскоязычные* (Russian speaking) with the English-language category 'people of color.' When FIO admins invoke the category, they stress that it would be morally wrong to decide for the group marked as *русскоязычные PoC* what translation of the term 'PoC' into Russian would be appropriate. Non-translation of 'PoC' into Russian appears as an ethical anti-racist dilemma rather than a practical impossibility or moderatorial choice. At the same time, the very invocation of the hybrid category *русскоязычные PoC* (Russian-speaking PoC) for whom one may not decide, discursively generates a constituency of people who allegedly define themselves this way (but are nowhere to be found as the trouble with finding specialists in the issue demonstrates). The admins then authorize permissible Russophone anti-racist feminist categories and generate figures whom this discourse mobilizes. Like the invocations of moderatorial anti-racist whiteness in translation, which I described in the previous chapter, this move disavows any implications in the power of making translation decisions. It does not problematize the elitist expectation of knowing English that the constituency mobilized by the translingual term *русскоязычные PoC* is supposed to inhabit.

User 3's suggestion not to translate the term 'PoC' at all, motivated by the argument of the inherent untranslatability of certain concepts, found resonance with the admins and became canonized through one moderatorial post about problems with translations of anti-racist and other ethical terminology from English to Russian I discuss in detail below.

Starting from scratch. Foreignization as modernization

Less than two weeks after the discussion above, in August 2014, a longer agenda-setting moderatorial post dealing with the general problem of translation of English-language categories into Russian in a systematic way appeared on FIO pages, titled *О вопросах этической лексики в русском языке (On the questions of ethical terms in the Russian language)*. The post was dedicated to developing an ethical intersectional vocabulary for the identity categories describing sexual orientation, gender, disability, and race/ethnicity in Russian.⁵⁹ This post is crucial for my analysis because of its paradigmatic quality. It explicitly addresses troubles in translating racial categories from English to Russian, offering a unique glimpse into translatorial decision-making within FIO. This paradigmatic post later exerted considerable influence on subsequent FIO idiom. Here, the question of the untranslatability of the terms 'PoC' and 'WoC' I mapped in the previous section found its counterintuitive resolution. Additionally, the post contains a solid didactic component: its goal is to educate FIO readers on proper terminology and to argue for the political importance of using the correct ethical terms:

(1) Возможно, вы уже заметили, что у нас есть некоторые проблемы с выбором корректных обозначений для представитель_ниц угнетенных рас и этничностей в наших постах. Это связано с тем, что в русскоязычном пространстве не существует политического антирасистского движения, и соответственно, не существует выработанной терминологии, которая воспринималась бы как нерасистская самими представитель_ницами угнетенных рас и этничностей. Разумеется, белые люди не могут решать, какие слова являются расистскими, а какие нет, поэтому мы не имеем права выбирать самостоятельно.

(2) В англоязычных текстах уже давно используется выражение "people of color" - это понятие было выработано в рамках работы антирасистского движения. Если мы попытаемся наиболее адекватно для русского языка перевести это словосочетание, то мы получим что-то вроде "цветные люди". Почему бы нам не говорить именно так? К сожалению, английское "coloreds", которое использовалось во времена рабовладения, и в данный момент считается расистским оскорблением, также переводится на русский как "цветные". В англоязычном пространстве достаточно нейтральными считаются слова "black" и "brown", однако в русском слово "черный" очень часто является частью неонацистского дискурса, а "коричневый" вообще неупотребимо.

(1) You may have already noticed that we have some problems with choosing the correct labels for (female) members of oppressed races and ethnicities in our posts. This is because there is no political anti-racist movement in Russian-speaking spaces, and accordingly, no developed terminology that would be perceived as non-racist by representatives of oppressed races and ethnicities. Of course, white people cannot decide which words are racist and which are not, so we are not allowed to choose ourselves.

(2) English-language texts have long used the expression "people of color" - a notion developed as part of the work of the anti-racist movement. If we try to translate this phrase most fully/adequately for the Russian language, we get something like "tsvetnye lyudi." Why don't we say it that way? Unfortunately, the English term "coloreds" used during slavery is now considered a racist slur but is also translated into Russian as "tsvetnye." Words "black" and "brown" are considered to be somewhat neutral in English-speaking spaces, but in Russian, the word "chorny" is often a part of Neo-Nazi discourse, and "korichnevy" is not used at all.

⁵⁹ For the sake of preserving my thematic focus on racial translation I omitted three out of total nine passages constituting the post: two of which deal with translation of trans-related terminology and one short passage with homosexuality related terms.

⁶⁰ Black.

⁶¹ Brown.

(3) Другой вариант, который встречался в наших постах, - это "небелые". Это понятие включает в себя всех представитель_ниц угнетенных рас и этничностей, и в контексте дискуссии о расизме должно обозначать человека, у которо_й отсутствуют белые привилегии. Однако проблема в том, что это слово определяет угнетенный класс как противоположность угнетателей, определяет одних через других, подчеркивая роль "другого".

(4) Таким образом, слова "цветные", "черные" и "небелые", хотя они и вписываются в структуру русского языка, а также понятны любо_й читатель_нице, являются проблематичными. Иногда мы выходим из положения, заменяя "people of color" на "афроамерикан_ок", "латиноамерикан_ок", "чернокожих" или "темнокожих", но, как вы понимаете, это не является идеальным решением и возможно далеко не во всех случаях, а также не отражает того факта, что в случае с "people of color" речь идет именно о политизированных представитель_ницах угнетенных рас и этничностей.

(5) В данный момент мы не видим других вариантов решения этой проблемы, кроме использования аббревиатур PoC (people of color / person of color) и WoC (women of color / woman of color) в русскоязычных текстах. Такие обозначения этичны, но проблематичны с точки зрения западоцентризма и не являются интуитивно понятными для русскоязычно_й читатель_ницы: это значит, что в каждом посте, где будет идти речь о PoC и WoC, нам придется делать сноску с пояснением и примерным переводом. Кроме того, в ситуациях, когда необходимо говорить не только о расе, но и о других аспектах идентичности людей, нам придется иметь дело с такими конструкциями как, например, "транс* WoC".

(6) (...) Этничная лексика - непростой вопрос, и, так как движения за социальную справедливость сравнительно молоды, в этом вопросе регулярно появляются новые аспекты. Безусловно, в какой-то момент эти проблемы должны утрястись, и мы искренне надеемся, что в русском языке это тоже однажды случится, но в данный момент мы должны работать с тем, что есть.

(3) Another option that you could find in our posts is "nebelnye."⁶² This term includes all (female) representatives of oppressed races and ethnicities. In the context of discussions about racism, it marks a (female) person who lacks white privilege. The problem is that this term defines the oppressed class as the opposite of the oppressors, defines some people through others, and emphasizes the role of "the other."

(4) Therefore, the words "tsvetnye," "chyornye," and "nebelnye," although they fit the structure of the Russian language and are clear to any (female) reader, are problematic. Sometimes we solve this by replacing "people of color" with "(female) African Americans," "(female) Latin Americans," "chernokozhyi,"⁶³ or "temnokozhyi,"⁶⁴ but this is not the ideal solution and does not reflect the fact that "people of color," refers specifically to politicized (female) representatives of oppressed races and ethnicities.

(5) At the present moment, we see no other solutions to this problem than the use of abbreviations PoC (*people of color/person of color*) and WoC (*women of color/woman of color*) in Russian-language texts. Such terms are ethical but problematic from the perspective of Western centrism, and they are not intuitively accessible to Russophone (female) readers. This means that in every post that speaks of PoC and WoC, we have to make a footnote with an explanation and approximate translation. Additionally, when we need to speak not only about race but also about additional aspects of identity, we will have to deal with constructions such as, for example, "trans* WoC."

(6) (...) Ethical vocabulary is not a simple question, and since social justice movements are quite young, new aspects of this issue constantly emerge. Surely, one day these problems will get sorted out, and we sincerely hope that it will happen once in the Russian language as well, but for now, we have to work with what we have.

The first paragraph (1) links the difficulties in translating categories from English to Russian with the absence of anti-racist movements in Russian-speaking spaces that would take it as their task to develop such vocabulary. This imagined void maps on the chronotopic imaginaries I traced in earlier chapters: terrains of Russophone feminist research were described as barren and even non-existent, legitimizing foreignizing translation decisions to remedy this barrenness. The void is contrasted with comparative plenitude elsewhere: distinctly Western Anglophone places, with already developed

⁶² Non-whites.

⁶³ From Russian *chyorny* – black, *kozha* – skin.

⁶⁴ From Russian *temny* – dark, *kozha* – skin.

social movements and well-established anti-racist vocabularies from which one may learn. This paragraph positions US-based Anglophone anti-racist activism as a progressive model to emulate and FIO readers as diligent apprentices striving for self-improvement, willing to learn how to speak correctly. Towards the end of the paragraph, FIO stresses that people marginalized across ethnoracial lines should decide what terminology is to be perceived as non-racist in the Russian language. Russian language construction '(female) representatives of oppressed races and ethnicities' demarcates these marginalized groups, for whom adequate corresponding terminology is supposedly absent, comparable to 'PoC/WoC' within Anglophone intersectional feminist idiom. Races feature this time separately from ethnicities. Deictic 'we,' however, interpellates all the FIO readers under the rubric of translated term *белые люди* (white people), implying that no minoritized readers might read the page and have their own opinions on the appropriate terminology. Not only such framing omits those FIO readers who should supposedly stand in the center of carving out new ethical vocabularies in Russian, it repeatedly obscures the decision-making power of moderators in choosing particular terms to use. The 'we' constructs horizontal groupness to obstruct unequal participation in decision-making regarding translation choices. As I demonstrated in the previous chapters and will explore later, when such contestations around translation choices occur, the admins remain the final authorities in approving or disapproving the terms.

The second paragraph (2) juggles English and Russian languages, developments of anti-racist movements, and differing semantics of color categories. The term 'people of color' is introduced as a concept developed within the work of anti-racist movements abroad. The expression 'for a long time' emphasizes how much further the English language and the Anglophone anti-racist activism have advanced temporally in relation to the allegedly non-existent local varieties, reactivating chronotopic imaginaries mapped on languages and places. Things developed 'there' a while ago without reaching 'here' yet. 'We' have a long way to go to get 'there.' FIO invokes 'there' as a 'foreign and modern' space and maps barrenness and backwardness onto 'here' to justify the need to catch up.

Earlier, I spoke about the double-sidedness at the center of FIO's project: translating English-language intersectional texts and creating Russophone intersectional idiom from these translations. This double orientation is visible in the second paragraph shaping the reflection around ethical terminology across two languages simultaneously. For example, attempts to translate 'PoC' into Russian as *цветные люди* are seen as unsatisfactory because of the connotations such translated terms would have when translated back into English. Through my research, I was able to trace how this understanding of unacceptability was formed. A critical comment to one of the earlier FIO posts from 2013 left by one user impacted this translanguing reflexivity:

User: Я вижу тут переводят "of colour" как цветной, но цветной это гораздо ближе к "coloured", что является

User: I can see that you translate "of color" here as *tsvetnoy*, but *tsvetnoy* is much closer to "colored," which is a racist

расистским оскорблением. Звучит ужасно. Если б меня назвали цветной, захотела бы дать в морду. У вас и в FAQ употребляется это слово. Может, замените? Хотя бы уж "небелые" и то лучше. Более того, *people of colour* это термин из теории расы в америке. В остальном мире расовые динамики представляют собой иное, и термин не подходит для нас совсем.

slur; it sounds horrible. I would have punched you in the face if you called me this. You also use this word in the FAQ. Maybe you could change it? Even "non-whites" is better. Moreover, *people of color* is a term from race theory in America. The rest of the world has different racial dynamics, and this term does not fit us at all!

The reader, via this comment, directly challenges the intersectional authority of FIO moderators and questions their translation choices. The initial FIO translation practice of rendering English 'of color' as *цветной* in Russian is criticized. The user seems fluent in two languages and able to switch between connotations of ethnoracial terminology in both English and Russian, which results in extending the English connotations of the term to the Russian translation. For the user, the English-language indexicality of English 'colored,' as a slur, seeps into its literal translation into Russian as *цветной*, which used to be the FIO's choice when translating English 'of color.' The user firmly rejects *цветной* by pointing towards its performativity as a racist slur in English, its ability to hurt and wound people. Simultaneously, English-language color-coded racial terminology is distinctively positioned as foreign, US-American, and unsuitable for the post-Soviet, 'our' contexts. The global translatability of such language is challenged by the user, who stresses its peculiar character and situatedness, said to be deviating from the rest of the world when it comes to ethnoracial dynamics. The US-American color-based conceptions of race are positioned as outliers rather than a norm elsewhere in the world, resulting in the verdict that these terms 'do not fit us' yet not preventing the user from transferring the English-language connotations and indexicality of the term 'colored' into its translations usage in Russian.

While this comment did not immediately get any response or moderatorial engagement, it was reflected in the FIO post on ethical terminology (see paragraph two (2) in the text, which incorporates but does not attribute this criticism). This interaction shows that some FIO readers, capable of mediating between diverse systems of racialization and languages, took an active part in confronting FIO translation choices and offering interventions. However, these interventions impacted moderatorial choices only in some cases. As I showed in the previous sections regarding the contestations around the translated term 'white,' user criticisms were often left unaddressed even if they were voiced by those impacted by ethnoracial marginalization locally. I now return to the analysis of the agenda-setting post about ethical terminology.

Conceiving Anglophone feminist anti-racist frames as more modern models to follow introduces the necessity of juggling acceptable terms across both English and Russian, giving the admins almost impossible to solve intellectual conundrum (staying politically correct in both languages and extending the connotations from one language to another). If the word 'colored' has racist connotations in English and is not acceptable in literal translation to Russian as *цветной*, so do neutral and even positive in English terms 'black' and 'brown' used for political self-identification, which become *чёрный* and *коричневый* respectively when translated to Russian and inappropriate for use. The

reason for troubles with the translation of English-language 'black' as Russian *чёрный*, FIO admins stress, is that the latter term is used within the Russian language as a part of xenophobic and Neo-Nazi discourse targeted against predominantly migrant workers from Central Asia, people from North and South Caucasus, Roma and other non-Slavic groups, such as Russia's indigenous peoples and others. Extending this thinking further through the focus on racial translation, one could add that while both 'black' and *чёрный* are applied to racialized populations in the USA and Russia, the first term in the context of the USA is not a slur by itself and is used for self-identification and political appellation, while the latter functions within Russia, especially in the context of 2000s mainly as a racist slur. Secondly, groups harnessed by the term 'black' in English and *чёрный* in Russian are different, which creates additional problems for FIO translators. Not only does 'black' in English, if translated into Russian as *чёрный* would point to a much wider group of people, but Russian *чёрный* is simply inappropriate to use, which makes it a contentious candidate for anti-racist politicized activism inspired by US-American social movements. 'Black' in the USA and *чёрный* in Russia are only partially equivalent.⁶⁵ Additionally, within FIO, translating 'black' as *чёрный* represents a problem of indexicality connected to FIO's translation praxis. Since FIO orients itself both to the USA and the post-Soviet context simultaneously, in some instances, it is unclear for its readers what context the terms index.

In paragraph three (3), half-calque from the English term nonwhites - *небелые* figures as a potential umbrella term indicating the persons without 'white privileges.' As used in this text, the term is imagined as transferring easily from the USA onto post-Soviet space. Earlier, I dwelled on some obstacles concerning the literally translated racial category 'white' when used for situated post-Soviet anti-racist activism. *Небелые* (nonwhites) as an umbrella category for marginalized along ethnoracial axis positions in post-Soviet contexts retains very same problems and may evoke the elitist assumption of English fluency that using such category entails.

In paragraph four (4), the conclusion is made that the translations, intuitively clear to Russian-speaking readers, are nevertheless unacceptable due to a mismatch between connotations across languages. These reflections on translational non-equivalence across four paragraphs pave the way for the final move performed in paragraph five (5), canonizing the decision not to translate 'PoC' and 'WoC.' Although FIO translators address the issues with the intelligibility of non-translated racial categories and the 'West-centrism' of such translation solutions, the chronotopic construction of these terms as more modern tools for situated anti-racist feminist activism positions them as unavoidable (*нам придется иметь дело с такими конструкциями*). This inevitability

⁶⁵ I apply and develop this thinking further in Part III to analyse racial translation in Timati's hip-hop. The comments I make here should not be taken to mean that this partial equivalence or mismatch in connotations is something set in stone. Languages change and develop through contact and it may be very likely that the attempts to negotiate the still lingering offensiveness of the Russian slur *чёрный* will further inspire works like Fardi's 2019 *Чёрный*. See [youtube.com/watch?v=EOYER3yEKO8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOYER3yEKO8). Read more on Fardi in Marc Simon's article (Simon 2020).

necessitates Russophone intersectional feminists to learn from more developed 'foreign and modern' activist vocabularies.

In paragraph six (6), the origins of movements for social justice get positioned as being far away both geographically and temporally from the slower progression pace of intersectional feminist activism in Russian-speaking spaces. Russophone anti-racist intersectional feminist activism, together with the Russian language, has to start from scratch (*надеюсь, что в русском языке это тоже однажды случится*), having no history of counterhegemonic struggles to draw on (*в данный момент мы должны работать с тем, что есть*). This perceived lack, in turn, justifies foreignizing translation strategies of untransliterated terms 'PoC' or 'WoC.' The implicit status of USA-based social justice movements as models to be emulated is constructed through chronotopic ideologies. The perceived absence of appropriate non-racist terminology to designate minorities in the Russian language is a lack that needs to be repaired. The imagined lack justifies engagements with English-language texts and motivates the project of translating intersectional feminism into Russian. The corpus of intersectional activist texts translated by FIO gets constituted as a 'truth point' (Pereira 2014), which should be mastered. One is supposed to learn from the more advanced if the Russophone anti-racist feminist project is to advance.

Why are these images of absence, lack, and backwardness so deeply entrenched? Constructing one's contexts as backward and invoking more 'foreign and modern' idioms is strategic in that it helps justify particular translation choices and is productive of new idioms and types of personhood. However, what is implicit in the imperative to catch up with US social movements constructed as more advanced? What accounts for the repeated reproduction of the image of the intellectual scarcity of domestic landscapes when it comes to anti-racist movements? My concern with these questions is motivated less by the struggle to alleviate the constructions of backwardness but rather by thinking through what makes it possible for Russophone translators of intersectionality in the 2010s to posit the non-existence of contributions to anti-racist struggles within post-Soviet Russophone contexts. Kate Baldwin's work, illuminating the importance of both Marxism and the Soviet Union for black American intellectuals and the general history of black radicalism, has stressed that these histories 'have been forgotten with a purpose' (Baldwin 2002:11). Critical of Paul Gilroy's conspicuous omission of socialist internationalism in his account of black transnationalism, Baldwin attributes 'silencing of the Soviet archive' to the vestiges of the Cold War era (Baldwin 2002:19). This erasure of socialist contributions to anti-colonial struggles and the fight against racism and colonialism, as well as the transnational links between anti-racism and socialist internationalism, has particular salience for post-Soviet generations and feminists interested in anti-racism. Although these contributions were fraught with multiple tensions and contradictions (Law 2012; Matusevich 2008a, 2008b, 2012; Roman 2019; Tlostanova 2010), their erasure and practices of forgetting have been shaped by the effects of the (post) Cold War order (Atanasoski 2013) and influenced post-Soviet

racisms (Djagalov 2021). For the post-Soviet youth who grew up in the atmosphere of a radical break with socialist legacies, erased, repudiated, or selectively instrumentalized by authorities, the West and especially the USA may figure as the sole source of progress, social justice struggles, and modernity. In that regard, it is notable that anti-racist struggles in other parts of the world than the USA, conducted in languages other than English, are rarely considered worthy models for inspiration and terminological borrowing. This attitude shapes the way younger Russophone feminist activists construct the past and present and imagine the models for the future. In her recent explorations of contacts between Black feminisms with Soviet feminisms (Wiedlack 2020, 2022), Wiedlack has argued that ‘examining the early influences of Soviet Russia and Soviet Central Asia on US feminism, and particularly on Black feminism, might enable us to reevaluate feminist history, by elaborating more solidarity-based, anti-racist, and decolonizing approaches’ (Wiedlack 2022:3). The present absence of the legacies of Soviet anti-racism and decolonization on the FIO’s pages is the elephant in the room that can be linked both to post-Soviet generational effects of a rupture with the past and to the global post-socialist condition affecting feminist knowledge production.

The post I analyzed above has played an essential role in FIO’s overall project of racial translation. It inaugurated the repeated usage of the terms ‘PoC and’ WoC’ in their untranslated form, accompanied by a moderatorial footnote. The following section examines some generative implications of footnoting as a translation strategy of presumed untranslatable into Russian terms ‘PoC and’ WoC.’

From untranslatability to raw translation: canonical footnoting and translingual proliferation of categories

I traced above how the decision not to translate ‘PoC and’ WoC’ into Russian was motivated not by the fact that it was impossible but by the normative ideas that framed their translation into Russian as problematic, underpinned by chronotopic ideologies constructing foreignized terms as more modern and progressive. Even though ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ were positioned as categories, resisting precise and neutral translation into the Russian language, this translatorial conundrum has counterintuitively resulted in the translingual proliferation of terms circulating in English, Russian, or both at the same time. In the end, FIO moderators solved the dilemma of the categories’ non-translation through the footnote. The footnote contained literal, ‘raw’ translations of ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ into Russian and their contextual explanation:

[*] PoC, WoC (англ. person/ people of color – досл. "человек/ люди цвета"; woman/ women of color – досл. "женщина/женщины цвета") – англоязычное нерасистское обозначение и самонаименование

[*] PoC, WoC (from English person/people of color – verbatim translation “*chelovek/lyudi tsveta*”; woman/woman of color – verbatim translation “*zhenschina/zhenschini tsveta*”) – English-language non-

представитель_ниц угнетенных рас и этничностей (в рамках идеологии белого превосходства). Мы используем эту аббревиатуру, потому что в русском языке пока не существует аналогичного нерасистского понятия.

racist term and self-designation for the (female) representatives of oppressed races and ethnicities (within the framework of the ideology of white supremacy). We use this abbreviation because there is no similar non-racist term in Russian yet.

The footnote appeared in FIO texts whenever untranslated terms ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ were used. Marked by asterisks and sticking out among Cyrillic letters, as if flaunting their deliberate foreignness, ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ were explained to the readers in the end. This initial decision not to translate ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ but to explain it through the imperfect, approximate translation into Russian became canonical. The footnote above later featured in at least 15 translated texts I included in my corpus. As can be seen from its contents, FIO admins are aware that ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ in their unaltered forms may be difficult for Russophone readers to comprehend. Still, they argue that in the absence of the analogous and ‘proper’ terms in Russian, it is possible to use ‘borrowed’ ‘PoC’/‘WoC’ expressions provisionally. Acknowledging the provisionality and imperfect translation is one of the many strategies of feminist reflexivity around translation on FIO pages, which I will address in more detail in the next chapter. However, marking domestic belatedness with embittered ‘yet’ (*пока не существует*) implies that Russophone intersectional feminists together with the Russian language will one day catch up with more progressive Anglophone counterparts and betrays the chronotopic ideologies undergirding certain translation choices.

I am interested in tracing the broader implications of the decision not to translate ‘PoC’/‘WoC,’ which circulated in the untranslated form on FIO’s pages. These two abbreviations reappearing across multiple texts would be particularly easy to spot ‘intruders,’ making highly visible ‘incursions’ into the Russian language (Butler 2019). No wonder such terms marked as ‘foreign elements’ would provoke questioning among the readers, who would rush to offer their solutions to the translation puzzle to FIO moderators.

The double move performed by leaving ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ untranslated yet providing ‘imperfect’ translation via footnote produced counterintuitive results. On the one hand, this hyper-foreignizing choice of non-translation (not even transliterating the terms) reinforced the reading of intersectional feminism as a maladapted, foreign phenomenon, not fitting ‘our local realities’ because its key figures of concern are foreign and untranslated ‘women of color’ and ‘people of color.’ On the other hand, paradoxically, the same footnote with its provisionary, ‘raw’ word-by-word translation in brackets facilitated the translanguing proliferation of categories.

Alongside the untranslated terms ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC,’ FIO readers started using the Russian expressions from the footnote as workable synonyms of the English-language categories. Thus, such word-by-word Russian translations as *люди цвета, женщина цвета* and their variations *цветная женщина, цветные люди, человек цвета, цветной человек* entered the vocabularies of FIO readers even if the admins caution that such expressions are problematic from the ethical point of view when back-

translated to English. Additionally, some users incorporated Cyrillic transliterations of 'PoC' and 'WoC' as пок/вок into their vocabularies, bending them already according to the rules of the Russian language. Below are some examples gathered from different FIO comment threads which show how the terms from the canonical footnote have found their way into the Russophone intersectional feminist idiom of FIO:

- (1) меня бесит эта позиция: если у нас не написано черным по белому, что персонаж пок, значит мы должны постоянно делать реверансы в сторону белых и говорить что да, вы уместны в этой роли и в этом косплее, вперед, вытесняйте из фандома воков, как вы это обычно делаете.
- (2) Одного не могу понять) почему в русских фемпабликах все так парятся о проблемах пок?
- (3) на мой вкус цветные всегда красивее белых, вы только подумайте: любые проблемы с кожей почти не видны. жаль, никогда не встречала лично.короче, считаю, что любой цвет кожи, кроме типично белого – круче
- (4) У нас пол-мединститута цветные.
- (5) еще в Америке несмотря на мнимую diversity довольно топорное восприятие красоты, во всяком случае их цветной "экспорт" кажется наиболее белым (Бейонсе, Тайра Бэнкс) по сравнению с европейским (Наоми Кэмпбелл)
- (6) изобретать фантомы вроде "обратного сексизма" или "обратного расизма" значит демагогическими уловками отводить глаза от реальных проблем - от крайне тяжелой жизни женщин и цветных людей и ежедневных унижений, которым они подвергаются. и это проявляется регулярно, в жизни КАЖДОГО чернокожего человека в америке, в жизни КАЖДОЙ женщины где угодно
- (7) Огромное спасибо вам от цветной женщины! Это прекрасный текст!
- (8) тут дело не в людях цвета, а в людях криминала, которые могут быть любого цвета
- (9) я так поняла, что следует подумать об истоках тwerking, и что им изначально занимались PoC.
- (10) достижения древних культур уже принадлежат всему человечеству« Принадлежать-то принадлежат, но забывать, что было с добровольно получено, а что украдено - как минимум, гадко и, как максимум, влечёт за собой маргинализацию PoC.
- (1) this attitude really pisses me off; if we don't write clearly that the character is *pok*, then we have to constantly curtsy to white people and say that yes, you are relevant in this role and in this cosplay, go ahead, push *voks* out of fandom, as you usually do.
- (2) One thing I can't understand) why is everyone on Russian feminist pages so concerned with the problems of *pok*?
- (3) to my taste, *tsvetnye* are always more beautiful than whites; just think about it, skin issues are not noticeable. It is a pity I have never met them in real life. Anyway, I think any skin color except typically white is cooler.
- (4) Half of our medical school is *tsvetnye*.
- (5) Also in America, despite declared *diversity*, a rather blunt image of beauty exists; their *tsvetnoy* "export" seems to be the whitest (Beyonce, Tayra Banks) in comparison to the European (Naomi Campbell)
- (6) To invent phantoms like "reverse sexism" or "reverse racism" means via demagogic tricks deflecting attention from the real problems – from the extremely harsh life of women and *tsvetnye lyudi* and the daily humiliations they endure. And this happens regularly in the lives of EVERY black-skinned person in America, EVERY woman anywhere.
- (7) Many thanks from a *tsvetnaya zhenschina*! This is a beautiful text!
- (8) the reason is not in *luydi tsveta*, but people who are criminals and can be of any color!
- (9) As I understood, we should think about the roots of twerking, that initially, it was *PoC* who practiced it.
- (10) "Heritage of ancient cultures belongs to the entire humanity." It does, but let's not forget what was given and what was stolen. It is nasty, to say the least, and ultimately entails the marginalization of *PoC*.

Examples above demonstrate how the terms from the FIO footnote, both in untransliterated and translated forms, ended up being used to analyze materials from

translated texts (1,6,8,9,10), make comments on pop culture in the USA (5), describe marginalized groups within Russia (4), and even used as terms for self-identification of FIO Russophone readers, as one user who calls herself *цветная женщина* (7), thanking FIO moderators for their work. Although these ‘imperfect’ translations circulating on FIO pages may be immediately intelligible to a rather narrow circle of people, this example allows questioning overtly pessimistic views on traffic and the imposition of English-language terminology. A sustained focus on translation’s generativeness may interrupt an analysis presuming the unidirectional force of such processes. Moreover, it may be interesting to consider how a provisional footnote in this particular case constituted a canonical translation of sorts. By being repeatedly re-introduced by FIO into other translated texts, the footnote became the source of borrowings within the FIO community, transforming into an authorizing source of its own.

However, it should not be assumed that the decision not to translate ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ resulted only in the translanguaging proliferation of terms. It also constituted an intelligibility problem for other readers. Below is one example that appeared in the comment thread under the post about ethical vocabulary and illustrated the confusion with categories:

User: Простите, но я так и не поняла насчет PoC и WoC. На письме-то да, а когда в устной речи хочешь употребить, то надо говорить цветная женщина?

User: I am sorry, but I still don't understand regarding PoC and WoC. In writing, yes, but when you want to use it in oral speech, do you have to say *tsvetnaya zhenshchina*?

Admin: Лучше всего говорить "пипл оф колор" или "вимен оф колор", возможно даже поясняя, почему. В дальнейшем аббревиатуру можно произносить как "пи-оу-си" или "пи-оу-ви". Если речь про какую-то конкретную женщину, то лучше всего узнать откуда она и обозначить это, например "афро-американка" или "мексиканка"

Admin: The best way is to say "pipl of kolor" or "vimen of kolor," perhaps even explaining why. The abbreviation can then be pronounced as "pee-ow-see" or "pee-ow-wee." If it's about a particular woman, it's best to find out where she's from and label it, such as "African American woman" or "Mexican woman."

In this exchange about the translation of English racial categories, in many ways itself resistant to translation into English, some things will be most apparent to a bilingual reader.⁶⁶ The user, confusedly and politely, inquires FIO admins about what to do with the category ‘WoC’ when speaking Russian. The user’s choice is to go for *цветная женщина*, the literal Russian translation of ‘WoC’ from the canonical footnote, recognized as intuitive for Russophones but not particularly favored by FIO moderators. Taking the epistemic stance of authority, the admin suggests using transliterations and transcriptions of full and abbreviated terms when conversing in Russian. The exchange shows that although leaving ‘PoC and ‘WoC’ untranslated in writing may be solved through a footnote, it may still appear unintelligible in oral speech. It is one thing when the term is explained in a text with a footnote, accessible to readers, and yet another

⁶⁶ Rendering this exchange into English constituted a translation dilemma of its own which I solved by deliberately twisting the transcription of the abbreviations to preserve the feeling of strangeness it evokes in the initial formulation in Russian.

when it is inserted into a conversation with a non-Anglophone interlocutor. To what extent the speaker will be understood while using these transliterations in the conversation, especially with those who are not fluent in English, is uncertain. The problem of translating ‘PoC’ and ‘WoC’ into oral speech poses a certain challenge if the desired goals of FIO, the development of situated Russophone anti-racist intersectional feminist idiom, is to be achieved. The second issue in the exchange is that transliterations/transcriptions, retaining the trace of foreignness, are positioned by moderators as superior to translations into Russian, even if the translations may be more readily understood. Opting for foreignizing translation strategies results in comprehension problems and pushes some users to reject intersectionality as too foreign and far-fetched. However, they also propel attempts to find local analogs for the figure of ‘woman of color’ in the user discussions in FIO comment threads which I explore in the next section.

Searching for post-Soviet ‘WoC’: проблемы гражданок средней Азии и Кавказа⁶⁷

In November 2013, FIO translated a small snippet from bell hooks’ famous book *Feminism is for everybody: passionate politics*. The translated fragment started with the sentence: *Ни одно вмешательство со стороны не изменило американский феминизм так сильно, как требование чёрных феминисток внести в теорию движения проблемы расы и расизма* (No outside intervention has changed American feminism greater than the demand of black feminists to introduce problems of race and racism into theory). The dialogue that unraveled in the comment thread as a response to the post illustrated some of the founding tensions of FIO I identified in the previous chapters: its passionate commitment to the translation of intersectional feminist texts into Russian and, at the same time, ambition to build Russophone intersectional feminist idiom from these translations. This tension also extends into locating the paradigmatic post-Soviet intersectional feminist subject. It is clear who this subject of intersectionality is in the US context, a US black woman, seen by Nash as ‘the paradigmatic intersectional subject, both as the body that renders clear the importance of intersectionality as theory and practice, and as the body that is thought to be the most intersectional precisely because of its imagined multiple marginalization’ (Nash 2019:98). Puar describes this paradigmatic subject of intersectionality as qualifying ‘the specific difference’ of the US woman of color, a category that becomes ‘emptied of specific meaning in its ubiquitous application and yet overdetermined in its deployment [...] More pointedly, it is the difference of African American women that dominates this genealogy of the term women of color’ (Puar 2012:52). It is much less clear who this post-

⁶⁷ Problems of female citizens of Central Asia and Caucasus.

Soviet ‘woman of color’ might be, as the FIO users’ discussions in the comment thread under the translated fragment from bell hooks’ text indicate:

User1: А разве сейчас положение вещей не изменилась? мне кажется, пост в нашей стране не актуален, хотя бы потому, что чернокожих у нас единицы зато много женщин с Кавказа и средней Азии. Хотя, сомневаюсь, что им интересны идеи феминизма.

FIO to User1: Пост актуален в любой стране в любое время, потому что кроме вопросов расы есть и другие аспекты (например, классовая принадлежность). кроме того, вопросы этнической принадлежности актуальны для России тоже.

User1: Так вот, для нашей страны было бы актуальнее поднять проблемы гражданок средней Азии и Кавказа

User2: Я как раз в этом посте за интерсекциональность заступаюсь. И она меня интересует применительно именно к России. Очень бы хотелось бы такие статьи о наших реалиях видеть. Дихотомия белые - цветные женщины для нас не актуальна, параллель между русскими и иными национальностями в данном случае не актуальна. У нас водораздел пролегает скорее не по национальности, а по наличию гражданства и прописки. Кроме того, есть наверняка другие группы женщин, которые не попадают под определение "общественницы", которые нужно учитывать

User3: Это так мимимилооо. Женщины, которые только в 20 веке добились своих избирательных, имущественных прав, прав на образование, на аборт, на развод. Женщины, которых убивали, сжигали, насиловали, продавали насильно замуж, которые не вольны были передвигаться в одиночку и потратить монету без ведома мужа, вот эти женщины были эксплуататорками. Не мужчины-с. Ну окей

User4: во времена, когда белые женщины не вольны были потратить монету, без ведома мужа, черных женщин разрывали собаками белые люди, а дома их тиранили черные мужчины. и нежелание принимать различия между, переведем на окружающую нас реальность, моим феминизмом гражданки РФ и феминизмом женщины-узбечки в РФ с Змя детьми - весьма странном меня примут на работу, мне сдадут квартиру, я знаю язык, у меня здесь родственники. у нее - нет я очевидно имею перед ней привелегии.

User1: Haven't things changed now? It seems to me that this post is not relevant in our country because we have very few black-skinned people but a lot of women from the Caucasus and Central Asia. However, I doubt that they are interested in feminist ideas.

FIO to User1: The post is relevant in any country at any time because apart from the issues of race, there are other aspects (such as class belonging). Moreover, issues of ethnic affiliation are relevant for Russia as well.

User1: Exactly. Raising the problems of the female citizens of Central Asia and the Caucasus would be more relevant for our country.

User2: I am defending intersectionality in this post. And it interests me as it applies to Russia. I would like to see articles like this about our realia. The dichotomy of white women - women of color is irrelevant in our case, and the parallel between ethnic Russians and other nationalities is also not applicable. The distinction lies not in the *natsional'nost'* but in citizenship and registration. Moreover, other groups of women probably do not fall under the definition of "generic woman"; they must also be considered.

User3: It's so cuuuute. Women, who only achieved their suffrage, property rights, education rights, abortion rights, and divorce rights in the 20th century. Women, who were murdered, burned, raped, sold into a forced marriage, and unable to move around alone and spend a dime without their husband's knowledge, these women were the exploiters. Not men. Okay.

User4: In times when white women could not spend a penny without their husbands' knowledge, black women were torn apart by dogs by white men, and at home, they were tyrannized by black men. Unwillingness to acknowledge the differences between (let me translate it to the reality around us) my feminism of a female citizen of the Russian Federation and the feminism of an Uzbek woman with three kids in the Russian Federation is strange. I will be hired, get an apartment, know the language, and have relatives here, and she does not. Obviously, I have privileges compared to her.

The thread exemplifies the tension in FIO's translation praxis: between intersectionality's rootedness in the US black feminism, critical of structures of racial oppression in the USA, and FIO's drawing on the intersectional feminist texts as authorizing examples and sources of conceptual tools to develop intersectional feminism in post-Soviet spaces.

When User₁ comments on the translated post, they position the text chronotopically, belonging to other times, different from 'the now' and another space, described not as 'ours,' thereby questioning the relevance of the translated post for analyzing local power relations. The translated fragment from bell hooks is denied relevance through an appeal to numbers, the relative scarcity of a population of African descent in 'our country.' Instead of 'black woman' or 'woman of color' as a central figure of intersectional analysis, according to Nash and Puar, an attempt to find a local analog, a conceptual equivalent of women marginalized along the ethnoracial axis in Russia, is proposed. With the help of the Soviet idiom, *гражданки* (female citizens), the figures of women from the Caucasus and Central Asia are evoked, positioned as such equivalents for the category of 'WoC,' even if some of these women from the Caucasus are also the citizens of Russia. It is these, much more numerous, compared to black women figures, according to User₁, that should be central in Russophone intersectional feminist analysis. Yet to what extent the ideas of feminism would appeal to these women is doubted, presuming their alleged disinterest in feminist politics.

FIO firmly rejects this attempt at racial translation, insisting on the universal relevance of the post in 'any country, any time.' This is done by translating race into class and later 'ethnic belonging' as a problem equally relevant to Russia. By folding ethnicity into race, the post is said to be just as applicable domestically. Russophone readers are invited to think of categories 'white women' and 'black women' introduced in the post as also encompassing relations of hierarchization locally. However, such framing is not immediately accessible; it requires active explanations that the feminist texts about 'black women' and 'WoC' must be read as subsuming what is articulated vernacularly as *проблемы гражданок средней Азии и Кавказа* (problems of female citizens of the Caucasus and Central Asia). This discussion raises important questions regarding the commensurability of vocabularies of human diversity, the translatability of intersectional feminist categories, and the dynamics of ethnoracial marginalization across diverse geopolitical contexts.

A somewhat different take on the debate was offered by User₂, who entirely rejects the translatability of the US dichotomy 'white women-women of color.' Positioning oneself as a 'defender of intersectionality' committed to its localized applications, User₂ doubts whether power relations between 'white women' and 'women of color' in the USA are commensurate with the hierarchies between 'ethnic Russian' and 'non-Russian women' within Russia. Rejecting that *natsional'nost'* plays a significant role locally, User₂ instead suggests that the institution of registration and citizenship matter more, i.e., the distinctions in legal status between female citizens of Russia and non-citizen migrant female workers.

The tension between the translatability of Anglophone intersectional categories and their localization informed the debate between User₃ and User₄. When User₃ challenged the idea that racialized inequalities between women matter locally, User₄ intervenes by offering to 'translate' bell hooks' fragment through intelligible examples:

переведем на окружающую нас реальность (let me translate it to our reality). This move recognizes foreignness (hence the need to translate) yet also creates connections by offering examples of ethnoracial marginalization that would be immediately understood in Russophone contexts and will help to relate to bell hooks' text. The search for the subject of Russophone intersectional feminism is performed by engaging in racial translation: instead of feminism of a 'white woman' in the US, feminism of 'female citizen of the Russian Federation' is offered, and instead of a 'feminism of black woman' - 'feminism of an Uzbek woman with three kids.' Language dimension also features prominently in the paragraph, emphasizing Russian language proficiency as one of the essential axes of marginalization for these contextual power dynamics. User4 then draws on gendered and racialized power relations in one context to argue about the importance of acknowledging differences between women in another. This discussion is among many others in FIO comment threads that demonstrate how, by making references to texts from other contexts, FIO moderators and users refer to them both to highlight the similarity of ethnoracial marginalization, to defend the relevance of intersectionality or to underline the difference to inaugurate the search for 'better' categories and proper subjects of Russophone intersectional feminist concern.

At other times, FIO's sustained attention to the texts focusing on the experiences of US 'women of color' provoked more confrontational responses. Some user reactions perceived this preoccupation with the US 'women of color' as a sign of intellectual impotence, excessive dependency on 'the West,' and even hypocrisy. One such intense argument emerged in the comment thread under the post titled *Десять феминистских костюмов на Хэллоуин (Ten feminist costumes for Halloween)* published in October 2016 on FIO pages:

User1: Одного не могу понять) почему в русских фемпабликах все так парятся о проблемах пок? Причём на узбечек и таджичек всем пофигу (хотя они рядом живут, им пиздец как несладко и помочь им можно). Зато всех парят афроамериканки, которым на мнение русских вообще насрать, они нас мусором считают))

User2: Потому что нельзя быть расистом наполовину - к одним норм, а других типа можно хейтить. А обобщение, что все WoC из Америки считают русских мусором - это вообще пять. Это так круто и, главное, прогрессивно. Типа решили, что считают - значит, хейтить можно, им ж "насрать". И вот как будто в России PoC нету, ага.

Admin: на настоящий момент русская интерсекциональность целиком скопирована с западного образца и практически не адаптирована к нашим реалиям. и чтобы сделать это, нужны гигантские ресурсы и усилия многих человек. у меня этих ресурсов нет. нужно ездить по стране, проводить исследования, брать интервью, собирать статистику, и так далее. вы готовы заняться этим? или вам просто нравится кукарекать в коментах? кроме того, я вообще не понял,

User1: One thing I can't understand) why is everyone on Russian feminist pages so concerned about the problems of the pok? And no one gives a shit about Uzbek and Tajik women (even though they live next door, they're in a fucking mess, and you can help them). But everyone is so concerned about African American women who don't give a fuck about (ethnic) Russians' opinions. They think of us as trash)).

User2: Because you cannot be a half-racist: treat some people well and hate others. Your generalization that all WoC from America think ethnic Russians are trash is nuts. So cool and so progressive. You decided they think that way; therefore, it is ok to hate them since "they don't give a shit." And as if we don't have PoC in Russia, yes.

Admin: Currently, Russian intersectionality is entirely copied from the Western model and is almost not adapted to our realia. to do this, you need gigantic resources and the efforts of many people. I do not have these resources. you need to travel around the country, conduct research, conduct interviews, collect statistics, and so on. are you willing to do that? or do you just like to yell in the comments? besides, I don't understand what this insulted white pride is all about. why wouldn't an African American

что это за оскорбленная вайт прайд. почему бы афроамериканке, которая знает, какие русские расистские и гомофобные чмошники, не относиться к ним как к мусору? или вы думаете, что чернокожие люди, которые приезжают в россию, окружены уважением и любовью? здесь они встречаются с еще более диким расизмом, чем в своих родных странах. мы уже сто раз объясняли, что ненависть к белым людям не приводит абсолютно ни к чему, кроме жопной боли белых людей. от того, что кто-то ненавидит русских, хуже русским не станет, разве что может в голове что-то щелкнет, хотя вряд ли. не надо ставить русофобию и расизм в одну линию, потому что это не зеркальные и не идентичные вещи.

woman who knows how racist and homophobic ethnic Russians treat them like trash? or do you think that black-skinned people who come to Russia are surrounded by respect and love? they encounter even more savage racism here than in their home countries. we have explained a hundred times before that hating white people leads to nothing but white people being hurt. The fact that someone hates ethnic Russians will not harm ethnic Russians, except maybe something will click in their head, although I doubt it. you should not put Russophobia and racism on the same plane because they are not identical.

While User₁ attacks FIO's perceived obsession with the problems of US 'people of color,' the criticism draws on the transliterated category *поК* (PoC), perhaps to index awareness of the shared vocabulary. One helpful way to situate User₁'s resentment of FIO's perceived obsession with foreign 'people of color' may be paradoxically linked to the legacies of Soviet state socialist internationalism and anti-racism. The Soviet state's indictments of US racism (Roman 2019) and support of students from the colonized countries of the Global South invited to receive education in the USSR often involved providing them with better housing conditions and generous scholarships, which were several times higher than those of local students (Walke 2019:296). This resulted in the Soviet students' resentment and feelings of not being equally treated compared to lionized foreigners of color. FIO admins, conceived by some users as cosmopolitan bilingual feminist elites, may therefore be similarly imagined to be unfairly preoccupied with figures of foreign 'people of color' at the expense of locals. Although, as I demonstrated earlier in my analysis of the FIO's rhetoric of 'starting from scratch' and learning from the US anti-racist activism imagined as more modern, the legacies of Soviet anti-racism are entirely absent.

At the same time, User₁ is also preoccupied with the possibilities of racial translation. Rejecting the FIO's concern with the US 'PoC,' User₁ offers to find equivalent figures which should be centered instead by Russophone intersectionality. Proposing that Uzbek and Tajik migrant women's oppression is commensurate to the oppression of racialized women in the USA, User₁ positions these women as proper intersectional feminist subjects within Russia. User₁ describes FIO's lack of concern with Uzbek and Tajik women as paradoxical: they are near, and Russophone feminist solidarity campaigns could have centered on them. However, they remain ignored because of how much the attention of Russophone intersectional idiom is said to be fixated on the figure of the US 'woman of color.' In this comment, relevance is understood in terms of proximity. Because the US 'woman of color' is construed as a distant figure of foreign, Anglophone, US intersectional feminist discourse and Uzbek and Tajik migrant women from Central Asia are near, Russophone intersectionality and its translators are also figured as distant and detached from 'reality' in their preoccupations and translation praxis.

If User₁ does the work of racial translation by searching for the local figures of equivalence to the US ‘woman of color’ within Russia, User₂ employs a more foreignizing translation strategy. Accusing User₁ of racism, User₂ argues that it is false to assume that ‘PoC’ do not exist in Russia (*И вот как будто в России PoC нету, ага*). Therefore, FIO’s attention to the problems of the US ‘WoC’ is not excessive but fully justified because, just like in the USA, there are ‘PoC’ in Russia. Equally, FIO’s choice of materials and the use of categories are seen as just as relevant. Tellingly, ‘PoC’ in User₂’s quote is left in English, pointing not only to the limits of its translatability but also to the obstacles the usage of the foreign term may present when assumed to be a helpful category for localized anti-racist feminist activism. For such Russophone anti-racist activism to gain traction, whether those positioned as ‘Russian PoCs’ think of themselves through this untranslated category is not a trivial question.

The reaction of FIO’s admin to this confrontation is particularly curious. They claim that ‘Russian intersectionality’ is entirely copied from the ‘Western model’ and is therefore poorly adapted to ‘our realia.’ Developing properly localized Russophone intersectional feminism is said to require a considerable investment of lacking resources. Open acknowledgment of derivativeness and non-originality of the Russophone intersectional feminist idiom appears counterintuitive. As I showed in Chapter 3, FIO moderators often vigorously reacted to the devaluations of translation and Russophone intersectionality as derivative, protecting it from the assaults. In the comment above, however, the admin disparagingly calls Russophone intersectionality a copy, not even a translation. This stance is contradictory because the position of FIO moderators, directly involved in the translations of intersectionality, implies an interest in valorizing transformative aspects of translation. The exchange demonstrates that articulations of Russophone’s intersectionality’s derivativeness were voiced not only by its opponents, such as *radfem*, but also by FIO moderators. Nevertheless, while FIO moderators may question the unoriginality of Russophone intersectionality, they remain the figures of intersectional authority, discerning some readers’ criticisms as offensive and dismissing others as non-sensical.

For the admin, the alleged ‘contempt’ of the imagined Afro-American woman towards ‘Russians’ sustaining the affective force of User₁’s commentary is interpreted as the allegation of Russophobia. The user then is accused of both racism and of equating Russophobia with racism, presuming they are commensurable. Rather than disproving the accusations of the alleged Russophobia of African Americans towards ‘homophobic and racist ethnic Russian losers’, the admin suggests that this sentiment is entirely justified due to the extreme ‘wilder’ forms of anti-black racism in Russia compared to other countries of the world. Reminiscent of the deployments of the discourses of racism during the Cold War confrontations between the USA and USSR, here practices of competitive contrast support the attributions of (anti)racism to emblematic bodies and spaces. If in the US discourses, the figure of US ‘woman of color’ as a paradigmatic subject of intersectionality ‘must invariably be shown to be resistant, subversive, or

articulating a grievance' (Puar 2012:52), within Russophone intersectional feminist idiom, orientation to this figure is affectively and chronotopically organized. User1 presents the figure of US 'WoC,' symbolized by the category's non-translation into Russian, as symptomatic of Russophone's intersectionality's irrelevance and its out-placeness. In FIO admins' rhetoric, readers' orientation towards this figure indexes the broader problem of generalized racism of Russophone readers imagined as backwardly xenophobic and homophobic 'losers.' The modernity of the USA and US social movements is juxtaposed with the forever intolerant East, imagined as an inherently violent, homophobic, and racist anachronist space.

Apart from the foundational dis-identification dynamics for FIO, that is, moving away from the perceived racism, homo- and transphobia of the Russian-speaking *radfem* scene, the broader layer of dis-identification is imaginary backward Russia populated by racists, sexists, and homophobes, where racism is construed to be much wilder and more aggressive than it is in 'the West.' Russianness, imagined and discursively constructed as barbaric and anachronistic, circulates within the FIO idiom as typical. It is essential to position these framings within the context of Russia's 'conservative turn,' the growth of xenophobic patriotic and nationalistic rhetoric between 2013 and 2015 linked to the annexation of Crimea, actually existing racism, together with emotional costs and burn-out resulting from trolls and online vitriol. At the same time, these discursive and chronotopic strategies unhelpfully essentialize the heterogenous population and tether intersectional feminism to foreignness, irrelevance, hostility, and anti-Russianness. It is an open question to what extent a broad feminist, anti-racist movement within Russia would be possible if one of its core tenets relies on connecting Russianness to the imaginaries of backwardness and mystified 'racist mindset.'

A somewhat similar incident evoking the ascriptions of intersectionality's foreignness, its translational derivativeness, and the search for post-Soviet Russophone intersectional feminist subject occurred in the comment thread under the translated text *Три стереотипных образа черных женщин, которым пора отойти в прошлое* based on the YouTube video *Three Black Female Stereotypes that Need to Die*:

User1: Какой хороший текст, действительно сразу вспомнились эти киношные стереотипы! Очень хотелось бы где-нибудь прочитать аналогичные статьи с учетом российских реалий, так как у нас полным-полно оскорбительных стереотипных образов "сексуальной и поверхностной кавказской девушки", вот этих всех мерзких словечек типа "буряточка", "евреечка" и т.п..

User1: Such an excellent text; it immediately brings these movie stereotypes to mind. I would love to read similar articles with Russia's realia in mind since we have many stereotypical offensive images of "sexy and superficial Caucasian girl," with all those nasty words like "Buryatochka," "Jewess," etc.⁶⁸

User2: не очень понятно, какой бы образ няни устроил авторов блога и не раздражил бы их толерантных вкусов ..у нас процент чёрного населения минимален - какая польза от такой статьи в России?

User2: It is unclear to me what kind of image of a nanny would have satisfied and not irritate the tolerant tastes of this blog's authors ... We have a minimal percentage of the black population in Russia – what good would such an article do in Russia?

⁶⁸ A young woman from the Caucasus, a young and sexually attractive (indexed by diminutives) Buryat woman, a young and sexually attractive Jewish woman.

User3: чернокожих женщин у нас мало, но достаточно мулаток. Моя лучшая подруга мулатка, и она каждый день сталкивается с бытовым расизмом, с тем, что ее воспринимают, как экзотическую сексуальную игрушку (и это в лучшем случае, чаще всего это негатив в виде "обезьяна", "езжай в свою африку", "генетический уродец, вырождение расы", "все негры тупые, ваш IQ как у олигофренов"). И это ее ежедневная реальность. И на этом фоне бесят комментарии в духе "у нас никогда не было чернокожих рабов, у нас мало африканцев, в России нет расизма по отношению к чернокожим, зачем об этом говорить?"

Admin: Я не оч понимаю ваш наезд на "толерантность", по-моему за этим сквозит плохо скрываеваемый расизм и желание, чтобы воки заткнулись и больше не досаждали вам своей рефлексией плохо то, что Мамушка это "идеальный вок" - она не спрашивает, не имеет своей личности или интересов, весь смысл ее жизни - это служить белым господам. и авторка романа междустрочно хвалит ее за это, дает читательнице понять, какая Мамушка замечательная, т.е. какая она хорошая безропотная рабыня, которая целиком растворилась в помощи белым рабовладельцам. если это не расизм, то что это. я не оч понимаю аргумент "этих людей мало, значит надо закрыть на них глаза". транс-женщин тоже мало, мы же не отказываем им в помощи и репрезентации? то же самое с незрячими, аутичными женщинами, что теперь, вообще перестать писать про них? и вообще-то, в россии большой процент небелого населения, а дискриминация работает практически одинаково. поэтому освещая проблемы воков, мы в том числе покрываем проблемы всего небелого населения россии. плюс западное масс-медиа потребляет весь мир, и неплохо знать, какие расистские стереотипы ты усвоил_а, потребляя его. я считаю, что в вас говорит какой-то неотрефлексированный расизм, потому что когда происходит очередной теракт на западе и гибнут белые люди, русские просто жопу рвут от желания поскорбеть и посочувствовать. а вы феминистка, и вас по определению должны заботить проблемы женщин по всему миру, но вы отказываетесь принять их к сведению только потому, что это происходит не в вашей стране? возможно, дело не в странах, а в том, что эти женщины воки.

User3: Yes, we have few black-skinned women, but enough *mulatka* women.⁶⁹ My best friend is *mulatka*, and she confronts everyday racism daily. She is at best perceived as an exotic sex toy, but more often, it is negative comments such as "monkey," "go back to your Africa," "genetic mutant, degeneration of race," "all *negry* are stupid, your IQ is". And this is her everyday reality. With this in mind, it is infuriating to hear comments like, "We had never had black-skinned slaves, we have few Africans, there is no racism towards black-skinned peoples in Russia, why do we need to talk about it?"

Admin: I don't understand your attack on "tolerance" I think it reflects a poorly concealed racism and a desire for *voki* to shut up and not bother you anymore with their reflection. The bad thing is that Mammy is the "perfect *vok*" - she has no questions, no personality or interests, and her whole meaning of life is serving white masters. And the novelist praises her for this between the lines, letting the reader know how great Mammy is, i.e., how good a slave she is. If this is not racism, then what is it? I don't understand the argument, "these people are few, so we should turn a blind eye to them." Trans women are few, too; we don't deny them help and representation, do we? The same with blind and autistic women; should we stop writing about them altogether? And actually, Russia has a large percentage of non-white people, and discrimination works almost identically. So by covering the problems of the *voki*, we are also covering the problems of the entire non-white population of Russia. Plus, the whole world consumes the western mass media, and it is good to know what racist stereotypes you have internalized by consuming it. I think the unreflected racism talks through you because when there is another terrorist attack in the west, and white people die, ethnic Russians just bust their asses to mourn and sympathize. And you are a feminist, and by definition, you should care about women's problems worldwide, but you refuse to take them into account just because it is not in your country? Maybe it is not about the countries but rather about these women being *voki*.

User1 welcomes the text enthusiastically, recognizing the stereotypes described in the US movies. Contrasting the plenitude of materials on the issue 'elsewhere' (in English language intersectional texts), User1 compares it to the lack of materials on the exoticization of minority women in Russian popular culture, emphasizing how much they are needed and how relevant the issue is. User2, in contrast, dismisses the textual adaptation of the YouTube video as completely irrelevant by using a quantitative

⁶⁹ *Мулатка* in Russian is often considered as neutral, however its cognate in English, *mulatta*, has pejorative connotations. I therefore use Russian to English transliteration *mulatka* to stress this semantic gap and non-equivalence of connotations. I do the same for the Russian word *negr*, which in the example is used offensively, but is more often used neutrally in Russian, for example featuring in multiple Soviet anthologies of Black poetry.

argument, a minor percentage of the black population in Russia. This postulated scarcity makes the article seem useless in the particular locality (*какая польза от такой статьи в России?*). Through the comment, FIO moderators are positioned as particular types of persons, preoccupied with irrelevant, useless things and possessing ‘tolerant’ ‘tastes,’ which are hard to satisfy and easy to upset. User2 communicates their disapproval of FIO moderators’ excessive preoccupation with US-style political correctness. Within state-promoted, conservative, and even liberal Russian public discourses, the word ‘tolerance’ may be used as a metonymy for the US presumed obsession with political correctness, emblemized by the visibility of feminist, LGBT, and anti-racist struggles. As ‘tolerance’ circulates to construct claims about Russia’s sanity and superiority vis-à-vis ‘the West,’ User2 remakes themselves as a pragmatic, down-to-earth critic of Russophone intersectionality through self-positioning in relation to the article and FIO moderators. Detecting this self-positioning, User2 is challenged both by other users and moderators. Building on indexicality that is shifted from the topic of the statement to the speaker’s identity as a social type, User3 and FIO admin affectively engage with User2 as a racist type, reframing their comment as a manifestation of hostile prejudice alone. User3 defends the relevance of Russophone intersectionality by evoking the comparative multitude of Afro-Russian women compared to the ‘absent’ black women for whom their *mulatka* friend metonymically represents. Illustrating this friend’s routine encounters with everyday racism as a ‘daily reality’ by evoking slurs and offensive expressions, User3 questions the propositions about the alleged irrelevance and uselessness of FIO’s concern with the figure of US ‘WoC.’

The moderator swiftly joins the discussion picking up on the affectively charged circulations of the word ‘tolerance’ in User2’s comment, identifying User2 as a racist type, easily detectable through their word choice. Afterward, the moderator goes after the ‘small number’ argument by evoking other minoritized subjects whom Russophone intersectionality cannot leave behind. Through this work, User2 is figured not only as racist but also ableist in its criticism of the FIO text. Later, however, the ‘small number’ turns into the ‘significant percentage of the non-white population’ inhabiting Russia. The racialized discrimination within Russia is said to work very similarly to the one in the USA; therefore, this particular post and other published posts of FIO have relevance not only for the US ‘WoC’ but for the entire ‘non-white population’ of Russia. The admin then actively makes connections and draws parallels across spaces to insist that the text is not as ‘foreign’ as User2 puts it. To further illustrate the relevance of the translated text in the new context, the moderator suggests that it is important to scrutinize ‘Western mass media’ for the reproduction of racist tropes they sustain. At the same time, ‘the rest of the world’ who consumes these media are positioned as universally affected by it, as sponges who uncritically imbibe the stereotypes. The moderator evokes User2 through two contrasting types of personhood: a racist nationalist and a failed feminist. Through pitching Russian Eurocentrism that produces the symbolic identifications of Russians with the West against global feminism, where solidarity with

women from the entire world should matter, User2 is accused of failing to approximate these feminist ideals. User2's argument for the translated text's irrelevance to the Russian locality is reinterpreted as a manifestation of racism, Eurocentrism, and nationalism, successfully detected and publicly exposed by the moderator. As a result, User2 emerges not only as a failed feminist but also a racist, while FIO remakes its project as of planetary significance, although most often than not, the subjects of its texts are US 'women of color.'

Unconvinced, User2 connects the FIO administration's preoccupation with US black women with the discourse of translation as a secondary imitation:

User2 to Admin: да я считаю что проблема чёрных женщин, опубликованная в русскоязычном блоге, связана не с вашим желанием рассказать нам об их проблемах, а с нежеланием (неумением) руководства паблика написать собственную (а не переводную!) статью о проблемах нац. меньшинств в России.

User2 to Admin: Yes, I think that a problem of black women, published in the Russian-language blog, is connected not to your desire to tell us about their problems but with unwillingness (or incapacity) of the leadership of the page to write their own (not translated!) article about issues of national minorities in Russia.

Admin: вы сейчас просто побили рекорд по тупости, совмещенной с наглостью. во-первых, расизма против белых людей не существует. с добрым утром. поэтому ваш список белой прислуги тут был абсолютно ни к чему во-вторых, а не охамели ли вы? вы мне еще указывать будете, чем я должна заниматься в свое свободное время? это переводной паблик, здесь практически нет авторских статей, и если вам это не нравится - предлагаю уйти отсюда материалов про дискриминацию небелого населения россии на настоящий момент практически полный ноль. для того, чтобы собирать их, нужно ездить по стране, брать интервью, проводить исследования. у меня и у большинства феминисток нет на это ни ресурсов, ни времени. я проделываю огромную неблагодарную работу по поиску материалов, переводу статей и просвещению людей, а все что делаете вы - выдаете возмутительные околорасистские вскукареки в коментах и указываете незнакомым вам людям, чем они должны заниматься так что - предлагаю вам пройти в бан

Admin: you just broke the record in stupidity combined with impudence. first of all, racism against white people does not exist. Wake up. so your list of white servants was useless here. secondly, aren't you out of your mind? are you going to tell me what I should do in my free time? this is a translation page, there are almost no articles by authors, and if you do not like it - I suggest you leave the page. About discrimination against non-whites in Russia at the moment, there is almost zero material. Most feminists and I don't have the resources or time to do that. I do a lot of ungrateful work to find materials, translate articles and enlighten people, and all you do is produce proto-racist babbling in the comments and tell strangers what they should do, so I suggest you go to the ban.

In the reply above, User2 tries to reorder the ascriptions of racism cum nationalism faced earlier by arguing that FIO admins' preoccupation with the problems of US black women is not what it seems to be. Just like the FIO admins who deploy reading practices of visceral detection of stances indexed by the words used, User2 maintains that what 'really' motivates FIO admins is not their declared concern with the problems of US black women but rather their unwillingness and even incapacity to write 'original' materials dedicated to the issues of national minorities within Russia. 'One's own' in the quote is emphatically juxtaposed to the 'translated' article, loading translation with derogatory connotations of secondariness (*собственную (а не переводную!) статью*). It is also interesting to see how this concern with 'one's own' is expressed by pointing to *нацменьшинств* (abbreviation for 'national minorities'), positioned as proper Russophone intersectional subjects of this article that FIO could write instead of wasting

time on translations. It is their problems, User2 suggests, that need to be foregrounded within Russophone intersectional feminist discourse instead of focusing on the marginalized groups abroad. They keep suffering while FIO admins waste time on translations. Using deictics, User2 creates boundaries between ‘us’ who read the FIO page and ‘them’ and ‘their problems’ (both FIO moderators and US black women), between ‘there’ and ‘here’ (Russophone feminist page), and between ‘original article’ and translations. Through the discursive work performed in the comment, User2 remakes themselves, away from the ascriptions of racism or nationalism, but as a social type that is genuinely concerned with the discrimination of Russia’s minorities, unlike FIO moderators who merely appear to be concerned but lack both skills and desire.

In reply, the admin resolutely rejects User2’s unsolicited advice to write ‘original’ articles, suggesting they leave the community rather than criticize it. Instead, the moderator defends both the labor of translation and the value of Russophone intersectionality, staging it against the utterly value-less contributions of User2, presented as ‘proto-racist babblings’ in the comment threads. Revalorizing the labor of translation means calling this labor a gigantic and ungrateful task that enlightens people. At the same time, FIO is firmly positioned as a ‘translation-based page,’ making it entirely illegitimate to expect the ‘original’ content. That is striking, considering that elsewhere on FIO pages, translation was recognized as authorship (see Chapter 3). Therefore, the admin valorizes translators’ labor in this exchange while reproducing hierarchies of value associated with the original vis-a-vis translation. Evoking the backwardness of Russophone contexts through a lack of materials about minorities while interpellating them as ‘non-white’ allows the creation of an authorizing bridge to translated intersectional feminist texts, thereby justifying FIO’s translations as a task of great value. This interaction in the comment threads ended up with User2 being banned from FIO, although the comments were left for other users to draw conclusions from as a pedagogical example of how not to behave.

A final instructive example illustrating translational and transnational negotiations of English-language racial categories such as ‘WoC’ comes from the FIO post from November 2016, translating a small fragment from Anglophone Tumblr user bottomsurgery.⁷⁰ I list both the original and FIO translation below:

Anything cis womyn deal with trans womyn deal with. Like reduction to genitals? Check. Reduction to the ability to give birth? Check. Parents murdering/leaving the child to die because they’re womyn? Check. Hypersexualization and fetishization, especially among WoC? Check. Told the natural form of their body and natural functions are disgusting? Check. Stop with your ‘unique female experience’ bullshit.

В своей жизни транс*женщины сталкиваются практически со всем, с чем сталкиваются цис-женщины. Сведение к гениталиям? Есть. Сведение к способности рожать? Есть. Родители, которые убивают или оставляют ребенка умирать по той причине, что она - женщина? Есть. Гиперсексуализация и фетишизация, особенно среди чернокожих? Есть. Люди, которые говорят тебе, что естественная форма твоего тела или его естественные функции отвратительны? Есть. Так что заканчивайте с этой чушью про "уникальный женский опыт".

⁷⁰ the-memequeen.tumblr.com/post/u8726661u00/bottomsurgery-anything-cis-womyn-deal-with

Initially, the English language term 'WoC' in the original Tumblr post was rendered into Russian as *чёрнокожие* (black-skinned), a relatively neutral and established term to refer to Black people in the Russian language. This term, however, only partially overlaps with the meanings of the category 'WoC' used in the original post. Nevertheless, the unfortunate use of participial created confusion amongst users, allowing for potential misinterpretation. One FIO user challenged FIO's translation choice on language grounds and through appeals to statistical knowledge. As a result of this negotiation unfolding in the comment thread below, the initial translation *чёрнокожие* was replaced by the term *небелые* (non-whites) in later iterations of translation. I quote this negotiation below:

User1: особенно среди чернокожих? Не поняла того момента

User1: especially among black-skinned people? I didn't understand that point.

User2: WoC - это women of color. Имеется в виду, что небелые трансженщины переживают больше фетишизации, чем белые. Но все же, обращу внимание администрации на то, что "особенно среди чернокожих" - крайне неудачный перевод. Во-первых, непонятно, что речь идет о жертвах фетишизации, а не ее проводниках. Во-вторых, среди жертв фетишизации, все же, гораздо больше трансженщин латиноамериканского и азиатского происхождения, чем чернокожих.

User2: *WoC* is *women of color*, which means that non-white trans women experience more fetishization than white women. But still, I'll point out to the administration that 'especially among black-skinned people' is an extremely unfortunate translation. First, it is unclear that we are talking about the victims of fetishization, not its agents. Second, there are still far more trans women of Hispanic and Asian descent among the victims of fetishization than among black-skinned people.

Admin: из-за расистских предрассудков и из-за влияния порно-индустрии (которая тоже вся пропитана расизмом) чернокожие женщины воспринимаются обществом как гиперсексуальные, озабоченные существа. на это наслаивается фетишизация, потому что черный означает не человек, а такая "экзотическая" секс-игрушка. надеюсь я правильно понял вопрос. , щас поправлю перевод.

Admin: because of racist prejudices and the influence of the porn industry (which is also steeped in racism), black-skinned women are perceived by society as hyper-sexual, horny beings. Fetishization overlaps with this because black does not mean human but "exotic" sex toys. I hope I understood the question correctly. I'll correct the translation.

User3: Пункт про фетишизацию WOC не очень понятен. В моей стране большинство людей казахи, уйгуры и т. д. Это значит что 90% женщин гиперсексуализируется???

User3: The point about the fetishization of *WOC* is not very clear. In my country, most people are Kazakhs, Uighurs, etc. Does this mean that 90% of women are hypersexualized??

User4: Автор скорее всего из США и их опыт сложно применить по отношению к странам Азии. К России, странам средней Азии и Кавказа особенно, потому что на этих территориях преобладает национализм, который наоборот ведет к десексуализации представителей других этносов.

User4: The author is most likely from the US, and their experience is hard to apply to Asian countries. To Russia, the countries of Central Asia and the Caucasus especially, because nationalism is prevalent in these territories, conversely leading to the desexualization of the representatives of other ethnos.

I am particularly interested in the comment of User3, who questions the thesis of 'WoC' fetishization, but from a location probably in Kazakhstan. Within Russia-centric Russophonía of FIO posts and user commentary, it is often women from Central Asia and the Caucasus within Russia that are construed as occupying similar positions to that of 'WoC' in the US context vis-à-vis 'white women,' but can this dynamic be equally

applied to other post-Soviet locations, such as Kazakhstan and other countries of Central Asia or countries of the Caucasus region? The marginalization dynamics may look differently in non-Slavic majority post-Soviet countries, probing the limits of translatability of the English-language category ‘WoC,’ which is dependent on the US ‘white-non-white’ dualism. This debate also echoes those featured in feminist discussions around the possibility of intersectional categories traveling across different geopolitical contexts. As has been argued, ‘categories privileged by intersectional analysis do not necessarily traverse national and regional boundaries nor genealogical exigencies, presuming and producing static epistemological renderings of categories themselves across historical and geopolitical locations’ (Puar 2012:54). FIO users’ discussions in the comment threads that attempt to grasp who the post-Soviet ‘WoC’ may be, point to some limits of the pragmatic political utility of English-language categories like ‘WoC’ for post-Soviet anti-racist projects.

The last section of this chapter examines a comment thread of the opponents of Russophone intersectionality, Russophone radical feminists, whose engagement with the category ‘WoC’ offers a distinct take on the category’s capacity to cross borders. I show how the figure of ‘trans woman of color’ was mobilized in Russophone *radfem* discourses as totally foreign, a metaphor for Russophone intersectionality’s complete irrelevance.

‘Trans woman of color’ as totally foreign: *radfem* critiques of Russophone intersectionality

I pointed out earlier in my analysis of FIO that active confrontation and disidentification with Russophone *radfem* discourse constituted one of its characteristic features, including the very reasons for creating the page and translating intersectional feminism into Russian. For this reason, I want to include a telling excerpt from the openly accessible *radfem* online comment thread that illustrates the role that the figure of ‘trans woman of color’ may take up in *radfem* contestations of Russophone intersectionality. In these *radfem* discourses, one of the most widespread criticisms of Russophone intersectionality is its perceived obsession with too faithful imitation of the US model and its primary figures of concern, such as ‘WoC.’ Transphobia and (anti-)racism feature differentially in these discussions.⁷¹ It is important to note that transphobia may characterize grassroots Russophone *radfem* pages, but not all those who would call themselves ‘radical feminists’ in Russian are necessarily transphobic.

⁷¹ The excerpts featured here appeared on social media pages in 2017 and don’t mention any particular intersectional feminist page they criticize, addressing its concerns towards Russophone intersectional feminist discourse as a whole. I don’t include the link to the comment thread for the safety of activists.

The rhetorical figure used in the center of the contestation of the excerpt quoted below is 'trans woman of color' presumed and presented as absolutely foreign to post-Soviet Russia. Her discursive foregrounding by Russophone intersectional feminism is framed as an obsessive preoccupation, marking this discourse as entirely removed from the problems of average Russian-speaking feminist readers. Within this criticism, Russophone intersectional feminists' imagined preoccupation with the figure of 'trans woman of color' is narrated as overly excessive and laughable, symbolizing not only the unbridgeable distance between the USA and Russia but also the abyss between Russophone intersectional feminism, seen as copying US activism too zealously, and Russophone *radfem* busy with 'genuine,' 'real,' non-translated feminist concerns:

User1: Привет, девканы! Возникла такая мысль, было бы интересно услышать ваше мнение. Если короче, то меня очень интересует вопрос: какой смысл в интерсекциональном феминизме, если он не ложится на Россию и страны СНГ никаким образом? У нас нет такого большого количества темнокожих людей, а если брать людей восточных и прочих товарищей вроде бурятов, то у нас же был СССР с повальным социализмом, где люди технически были равны (равенство-братство, всё такое). И вот я просто не представляю, как они себе представляют интерес в России! Возьмём случайную девочку из какого-нибудь Усть-Пиздуйска в, скажем, Челябинской области. И вот она читает пост: "Темнокожие транс*женщины важны <3<3<3". И я прямо вижу, как она читает и думает: "Еба-а, да ты прав, <паблоснейм>, темнокожие транс*женщины важны!". Где она, а где темнокожие транс*женщины, а?

User2: Всё, лишь бы задвинуть реальные проблемы реальных женщин на второй план

User3: Ну так там помимо всяких бурятов еще и трансятня. Смысл не в том, что оно ложится, а в том, что почти каждый может найти себе повод повыебываться и говорить о себе как об особенном, якобы ради равенства всех людей. Вот спрашивается, если ты за то, что все равны, почему ты начинаешь выебываться своим цветом кожи и тычешь своей особенностью всем, чтоб запрещать носить дреды и красить лицо темнее? Ты свою особенность используешь как предлог поуказывать другим что им делать. И вся эта хуйня называется равенство. И как я сказала, тут не только негры, любая особенность годится для выебонов. А желющие повыебываться и в раске и в снг объявятся уж поверьте.

User4: Я думаю, интерсекциональный подход в России должен рассматривать и анализировать особенности положения женщин из разных этнических групп. Они действительно разные от региона к региону и от этноса к этносу. И это наверняка не только интересная, но практически полезная тема исследований.

User5: Ну любит наш народ всякое говно с запада к себе тащить. За негров трясутся настолько, что всех

User1: Hey, gals, a thought occurred to me; I'd be interested to hear your opinions. In short, I'm very interested in the question: what is the point of intersectional feminism if it doesn't apply to Russia and the CIS countries in any way? We don't have that many dark-skinned people, and if you take people from the East and other comrades like the Buryats, then we had the Soviet Union, where people were technically equal (equality, fraternity, all that). And here I just can't imagine how they imagine *intersek* in Russia! Let's take a random girl from some Cuntville in, say, the Chelyabinsk region. And here she reads the post, "Dark-skinned trans*women matter <3<3<3." And I can just see her reading and thinking, "Fuck yeah, you're right, <pagename>, dark-skinned trans*women matter!" Where is she, and where are the dark-skinned trans*women, huh?

User2: Anything to push the real problems of real women into the background

User3: Well, besides all sorts of Buryats, there are also transnians. The point is not that it doesn't fit but that almost everyone can find a reason to stand out and talk about themselves as special, supposedly for equality for all people. So the question is if you're all for being equal, why do you feel so special about your skin color and make it a point to tell everyone not to wear dreadlocks and paint your face darker? You use your peculiarity as an excuse to tell others what to do. And the whole fucking thing is called equality. And as I said, it ain't just *negry*. Any particularity is good to stand out from the crowd. And there's gonna be people in Russia and the CIS who want to feel special, believe me.

User4: I think an intersectional approach in Russia should consider and analyze the specifics of women from different ethnic groups. They do vary from region to region and from ethnos to ethnos. And this is probably not only an interesting but also a practically useful research topic.

User5: Well, our people love to drag all kinds of shit from the West home. They're so worried about *negry* that they

поголовно называют афроамериканцами (аллоу а вы в курсе, что 99% всех чёрных в России приезжают прямоком из Африки? Какие нахер американцы??) зато на проблемы женщин с ближнего востока всем насрать. Ну и что что их замуж в 10 лет выдают и они света белого не видят, это же традиция, это их выбор!! Хотя.. Ну спасибо и на том, а то с их подходом к решению проблем, нельзя будет на хача заявить за домогательство, ибо он же хач, у него меньше прав, изнасилование белой - не изнасилование!

User3: Принимать человека с его врожденным цветом кожи так то неплохая идея, а вот насчет того, что культурные особенности следует уважать- очень уж сомнительно. Потому что защищать хиджаб вообще бредятина полная, как пример.

User6: Нуу, у нас национализма дохуя, и по сравнению с тем, как называют людей с неславянской внешностью, "черномазый" еще приличный эпитет. Положение женщин у малых народов тяжелое. И у не очень малых, но очень гордых и очень горных тоже. И вот я че-то не вижу, чтобы интерсек чего-нибудь говорил по этому поводу. Только о прелестях ношения хиджаба в этих ваших штатах и слышно.

User7: Ну вот интересячи посты как раз по теме "белые привилегированные цыцки усмиляют небелых мужщин" и не белые религии до кучи.

User8: тоже интересует, почему рашен интерсек так помешан на проблемах, актуальных ток для штатов или европы.

call everyone African American (do you know that 99% of all black people in Russia come directly from Africa? Which the fuck Americans?), but nobody gives a shit about the problems of Middle Eastern women. So what if they get married at the age of 10, and they don't see the light of day? It's their choice!!! Although... Well, thank goodness for that, because with their approach to solving problems, you can't sue a *huch* for harassment because he's a *huch*, he has fewer rights, and raping a white woman is not rape!

User3: It's not a bad idea to accept people with different skin colors, but the idea that cultural sensitivity should be respected is highly questionable. Because for example, defending hijab is complete nonsense.

User6: Well, we have a shit load of nationalism, and compared to what people with non-Slavic appearance are called, "darkies"⁷² is a decent epithet. The situation of women from *small peoples* is difficult. And not very small, but very proud and very mountainous, too. And I don't see *intersek* saying anything about that. All you hear about is the charms of wearing the hijab in your states (USA).

User7: Well, the *intersek* posts are all about "white privileged chicks oppressing non-white men" and non-white religions.

User8: I also wonder why the Russian *Intersek* is so obsessed with issues that are only relevant to the USA or Europe.

In this thread, Russophone intersectional feminism's imagined preoccupation with the figure of 'trans woman of color' is used to argue for the complete irrelevance of such feminist frames, cast as even more foreign and distant due to their reliance on this distant and foreign figure. Another figure conjured up by User1 as a competitive contrast to foreign 'trans woman of color,' although imaginary, is conceived as much more 'real.' This girl from a made-up Russian town *Усть-Пуздюйск* (Cuntville), representing remote provinces, is positioned as a diligent but rather naive reader of Russophone intersectional online pages, taking concepts and frames offered there for granted. She faces a conundrum: 'trans woman of color,' taking such a central place on these intersectional pages, is, according to User1, never to be found around, no matter how hard she looks for her. User2 enthusiastically agrees with such a reading, suggesting that all of that is just a strategy to 'push the real problems of real women into the background.' The figure of 'trans woman of color,' therefore, becomes doubly foreign:

⁷² I translate the original Russian slur *черномазый* used in the comment as darky. However, the first term is primarily applied in Russian foremost as a racist epithet towards people from Caucasus, Central Asia and Roma and rarer to people of African, South Asian and Middle Eastern descent. Darky as a slur seems to be targeted predominantly against Black people in English. See Chapter 8 to learn more about partial equivalence of ethnoracial terminology referring to blackness in Russian in comparison to English.

the opposition between foreign as translated and 'the real' is reworked through the discourse of transphobia in this comment thread. Real women are cis women, who exist locally, unlike foreign, translated, and therefore even more ephemeral figures animating Russophone intersectionality such as 'trans WoC.'

At the same time, although in a much more abrasive manner inflected by transphobia, the work going on in the comment thread also performs a search for localized intersectional figures of equivalence who may take a potential place of US 'WoC.' User₁ initiates the search mockingly, using Soviet tropes, that such oppressed subjects could be 'people of the East and other comrades like the Buryats,' but since these groups are seen to have allegedly achieved equality under socialism, this example is cast as irrelevant. User₃ labels Russophone intersectional feminists' concerns with cultural appropriation or racism as only masquerading as equality, in truth being just a thinly veiled pretext to flaunt oneself as special to attract attention narcissistically. In such an equation, Russophone intersectional feminism becomes too obsessed with entirely irrelevant figures: *там помимо всяких бурятов еще и трансятня* (Well, in addition to all sorts of Buryats, there are also trannies). Just like 'trans woman of color,' who is doubly foreign, 'all sorts of Buryats' and trans people transform into non-real, imaginary, almost ridiculous figures of concern. User₅ laments that the problem is not confined to the Russophone feminists alone but is rather a manifestation of a more generalized diagnosis: Russian people's infatuation and obsession with 'the West': *Ну любит наш народ всякое говно с запада к себе тащить* (Well, our people love to drag all kinds of shit from the West home).

However, the search for localized 'WoC' also included less antagonistic propositions. User₄, for example, stressed that Russophone intersectionality must consider 'women from different ethnic groups,' whose problems may not necessarily overlap with those of US 'WoC.' User₆ similarly reiterated, building on the Soviet idiom, that *положение женщин у малых народов тяжелое* (the situation of women of *small peoples* is difficult), highlighting the problems of xenophobia and racism against non-Slavic peoples in Russia. Russophone intersectionality, pejoratively called *intersek*, is framed as deficient because instead of talking about these more familiar and immediately intelligible women, all it is assumed to care about is hijabi-wearing women *в этих ваших штатах* (in your states (USA)). Russian *intersek*, as User₈ puts it, is literally obsessed with problems that are relevant only in the US and Europe (*помешан на проблемах, актуальных ток для штатов или европы*).

What is important to take from this antagonistic discussion is that the problems of 'WoC' may be construed as less relevant not just because these women are construed as more distant and foreign but also because they are US-American. It is therefore vital to consider to what extent vernacular anti-Americanism, both as a product of the Cold War and as rhetoric instrumentalized by the post-Soviet Russian state, may affect *radfem* and broader feminist rejections of Russophone intersectionality, which is read as too faithfully parroting US feminist concerns. These *radfem* rejections, in turn, themselves

rely on Soviet tropes and relate to them ambiguously. Actively comparing the socialist rhetoric of equality from the past (*у нас же был СССР с повальным социализмом, где люди технически были равны*) with the present, US-modeled social justice rhetoric, embodied by Russophone intersectional feminists (*говорить о себе как об особенном, якобы ради равенства всех людей*) both are rejected as fake, mock equality.

Conclusion

This section has examined FIO's most foreignizing translation strategy of non-translation: leaving the English-language categories 'PoC' and 'WoC' in their original form untranslated to Russian. The rhetoric of their untranslatability had been informed by the imaginaries of the non-existence of any domestic legacies of anti-racism indebted to generational and post-socialist post-Cold War dynamics. This rhetoric was also influenced by the chronotopic ideologies of FIO admins constructing US social movements as more modern models to follow. FIO's dual commitment to translating US intersectional feminist texts and creating Russophone intersectional idiom from these foreign and modern models affected the community's translation choices. It resulted in a sustained preference for foreignizing translation strategies of US racial categories such as non-translation, transliteration, and calquing. The imaginaries of lack and backwardness shaped the FIO preferences for foreignizing translation solutions. Foreignization was construed as the possibility for Russophone feminisms' modernization. Non-translation of terms like 'PoC' and 'WoC' nevertheless paradoxically coexisted with an imperfect, raw translation of the terms in the footnote, which became canonical and influenced FIO users' vocabularies, expanding their repertoires and proliferating translanguaging categories. Non-translation of 'PoC' and 'WoC' propelled a search for the post-Soviet feminist subject of intersectionality, a local equivalent to the figure of US 'WoC.' Leaving 'PoC' and 'WoC' untranslated also had more profound implications. For FIO admins, the intolerance towards the figure of US 'WoC' came to index less a criticism of their translation choices but more a sign of Russian generalized racist backwardness. For some FIO users, however, FIO's concern with this figure and non-translation of 'WoC' reinforced the image of intersectionality and its Russophone mediators' foreignness. Russophone *radfem* used the figure of 'trans WoC' as an index of Russophone intersectionality's absolute foreignness not concerned with problems of 'real' women, authentically cisgender. Although Russophone *radfem* discourses often portrayed FIO's project of translating intersectionality into Russian as a derivative and overzealous imitation of Western feminist activism due to the predominance of foreignizing translation choices, informing its translational praxis, this is only part of the story. With the translation strategies that actively foregrounded foreignness, such as non-translation, transliterations, literal translations, and calques, FIO also engaged in more domesticating strategies, which the next chapter examines.

7. Localizing race: realia, reflexivity, and racial discernment

Introduction

This chapter explores several ways in which FIO moderators and users actively participated in localizations of intersectionality, translating the US idiom of race into the post-Soviet idiom of racialization. English-language intersectional feminist racial categories arrived at already fertile soil, meeting abundant conceptual vocabularies related to human diversity informing post-Soviet contexts. In this chapter, I aim to track translation strategies used to localize and adapt US ethnoracial categories to demonstrate the ongoing reflexivity in the negotiations of racial translation by both FIO admins and ordinary users.

I first attend to the term *realia*, which emerged in my materials as a demand for intersectionality's localization, tuned to the specificities of post-Soviet ethnoracial dynamics. When *realia* is read as a translation studies concept, approaching ethnoracial categories as realia may help think about racialization transnationally and translationally. Afterward, I turn to the strategies through which FIO moderators tried to contextualize US ethnoracial categories informing English-language intersectional feminist texts, moving those closer to the Russophone readers: prefacing, adaptation, and replacement. Finally, I trace how FIO readers actively took part in the work of the negotiation and localization of intersectional racial categories in the comment threads by evoking Russian-language ethnoracial realia and post-Soviet dynamics of marginalization. These conversations provide fruitful sites that allow insights into micro-practices of racial discernment, stress the fuzziness of boundaries between phenotype, citizenship, and *natsional'nost'*, and problematize the non-equivalence of anti-racist struggles across Russia's regions.

What about 'our realia'?

А вообще, читаю про микроагрессию как трансляцию с другой планеты.

I read about microaggression, which feels like a transmission from another planet.

The comment above, left under one of FIO's translated posts about microaggressions, makes a statement on the situated post-Soviet feminist politics of location and translation. The transliterated concept *микроагрессия* (microaggression), taking a central stage in the translated text, is described here tellingly as a 'transmission from another planet.' Such use mobilizes the Russian word *трансляция*, which,

although coming literally from Latin *translatio*, predominantly refers to the transmission of audio-visual information across long distances. The transmission metaphor foregrounds the scale and extremity of this distance – outer space, a vision of absolute separation. The extreme distance seen separating the USA and post-Soviet space invites thinking of them as two entirely different planets. Later in the comment thread, to illustrate this planetary distance, the same user shares a story of coexistence with an aggressive and belligerent neighbor in the *коммуналка* (communal apartment). Highlighted through this story is the incommensurability of life in Russia with that in the USA due to the distinct material and historical structures which have shaped this context, such as the legacy of Soviet socialism. One example of lingering Soviet institutions structuring life in post-Soviet times is communal apartments, where several families would occupy (and later, after privatization, own) a room each in one apartment. The institution of *коммуналка* as an everyday material structure still affects the lives of tens of thousands of people who do not have the funds to move out by buying a separate apartment. In the comment, the possibility to even fathom microaggressions as an issue of feminist concern emerges as a mark of a foreign planet, existing in a completely separate, rather privileged universe and entirely remote from the problems in Russia and elsewhere in the post-Soviet space. The imagined US-American planet is a space of relative comfort; feminists there recognize that microaggressions are a problem worth writing texts about. At the same time, ‘reality’ here, at ‘home,’ is much harsher, involving daily psychological abuse from the neighbor and material impoverishment. This vignette is among many other examples from the comment threads when FIO users expressively emphasize that the context into which translated intersectional feminist texts enter as symbols of US-American life, imagined in these readings as a more leisured and privileged one, is radically unlike the USA.

This plea for contextualizing intersectionality found perhaps a most straightforward expression in one particular word, which kept popping up again and again across my materials, forcing me to look at it much closer than I initially anticipated: *realia*. The term *realia* (*реалии* in Russian) was used extensively both by FIO moderators and readers in texts and comment threads. Moderators often used the word to mark that translated English texts are rooted in the USA context and therefore differ significantly from post-Soviet struggles. *Realia* often appeared in moderatorial prefaces to translated texts as a contextualizing device, anchoring intersectional feminist texts firmly within the USA. FIO users were often explicitly reminded to read the discourses of race featuring in translations as situated. That was communicated by the word *realia*, often in expressions such as ‘American *realia*’ or ‘our *realia*.’ A footnote from one moderatorial introduction that I discussed before illustrates this use:

Прим. FIO:

данный пост является прямым переводом, так что мы просим читательни_ц помнить, что речь идет в большей степени об американских реалиях, и нам следует

Moderatorial FIO:

This post is a direct translation; we ask our (female) readers to remember that it primarily concerns American *realia*. We also need to consider the spread of nationalist and xenophobic ideas in the CIS area.

учитывать так же распространённость националистских и ксенофобных идей на территории СНГ.

Although co-existing in tension with more foreignizing translation strategies of FIO, the word *realia* marked both admins' reflexivity around their translation praxis and the acute awareness of only partial commensurability of structures of ethnoracial marginalization across contexts and languages. The word *realia* also became a buzzword, a term embraced by the readers to emphasize their distance from literal renderings of intersectionality and their acute desire for its localization. *Realia* could be employed whenever the readers wanted to highlight how specific translated text does not neatly match the local struggles or how the categories informing it may not transfer well into vernacular vocabularies of racialization. *Realia* could also be used to mark the problems described in the texts as less relevant or to insist that a similar text about 'our *realia*' should have been written instead of producing translations. The use of *realia* in the comment threads also involved localized ethnoracial dynamics and situated expressions of post-Soviet xenophobia and racism. Through this variegated use, the circulations of *realia* in the comment threads pushed FIO's intersectional feminist discursivity towards carving out situated Russophone feminist anti-racist idiom. Below are four separate instances of deployment of the term *realia* by the FIO readers in different comment threads:

(1) Не в тему дискуссии скажу, но мне кажется, что в условиях российских реалий, помимо расизма, важно учитывать проблему кавказофобии (такого термина нет, но я не знаю, как еще сказать), исламофобии и антисемитизма. "Бельями" в российской действительности не могут считаться люди с не-славянской внешностью, или, как у нас многие говорят, "европейской"/"восточной"/"кавказской" (то, что среди невежественных лиц с 90х годов, благодаря масс-медиа, зовется "лицом кавказской национальности").

(2) Какой хороший текст, действительно сразу вспомнились эти киношные стереотипы! Очень хотелось бы где-нибудь прочитать аналогичные статьи с учетом российских реалий, так как у нас полным-полно оскорбительных стереотипных образов "сексуальной и поверхностной кавказской девушки", вот этих всех мерзких словечек типа "буряточка", "евреечка" и т.п...

(3) что спрашивать американ_ок с карими глазами, смуглой кожей и черными волнистыми волосами, откуда они на_самом_деле_ – это норма. Переформулирую на наши реалии. Предположим, в некоем сибирском городке, где большая часть населения русские с типичной внешностью, живёт девушка с более узким разрезом глаз, более тёмным цветом кожи, прямыми чёрными волосами. Имею ли я права узнать её этническое происхождение в личной беседе? То есть, если я готова выслушать её проблемы, так или иначе связанные с её внешностью, если я принимаю, что она другая, но мне интересна её история и её предков?

(1) Slightly off-topic, but it seems that within Russian *realia*, apart from racism, it is important to consider the problem of Caucasophobia (This term does not exist, but I don't know how else to say it), islamophobia, and antisemitism. People with non-Slavic appearance cannot be considered "white" in the realities of Russia. Or, as many say, with "European"/"Eastern"/"Caucasian" appearance (in other terms, what, since the 90s, thanks to mass media, circulates among ignorant people as a "person of Caucasian *natsional'nost'*").

(2) Such an excellent text; it really brings to mind these movie stereotypes. I would love to read similar articles with Russia's *realia* in mind since we have many stereotypical offensive images of "sexy and superficial Caucasian girl" with all those nasty words like "Buryatochka," "Jewess," etc.

(3) Regarding if it is ok to ask American women with brown eyes, swarthy skin, and black wavy hair where do they come from? I will reformulate it into our *realia*. Let us assume that in a certain Siberian town, where most of the population are ethnic Russians with a typical appearance, there is a girl with a narrower eye shape, darker skin color, and straight black hair. Do I have the right to ask her about her ethnic origin in a personal conversation? That is if I am willing to listen to her concerns about her appearance and if I accept that she is different, but I am interested in her history and her ancestry?

(4) А про отечественные реалии есть что-нибудь подобное? Я сейчас говорю не о дредах или индейских головных уборах, а о взаимоотношениях русской культуры и культур малых народов.

(4) Is there anything like that about domestic realia? I am not talking about dreadlocks or Native American headdresses now, but about the relationship between (ethnic) Russian culture and the cultures of *smaller peoples*.

Evoking ‘our realia’ in each comment above expresses an active plea for situated intersectional feminist analyses of ethnoracial marginalization that would help articulate it through contextually intelligible frames and locally familiar terms. In that regard, language and categories used to describe this marginalization matter significantly and shape users’ understandings of relevance. In the third snippet, for instance, the user proposes to do racial translation from the US idiom of race into more familiar categories: ‘I will reformulate it into our realia’ (*Переформулирую на наши реалии*). She then proceeds by offering a figure of equivalence to the ‘US woman of color’ discussed in the translated text, placing her in a Siberian town inhabited by ethnic Russians and finding ways to ethically relate to this figure without offending her with improper questions. In another instance, having read FIO’s translated text about cultural appropriation featuring the issue of dreadlocks and Native American headdresses as paradigmatic examples, someone inquires what a similar text featuring ‘domestic realia’ would look like. In what way is it possible to talk about cultural appropriation if one places at the center of discussion the relations of ethnic Russians and non-Russian peoples of Russia? These examples propel me to wonder why the word realia emerged as a term articulating translational and transnational reflexivity around ethnoracial marginalization among FIO admins and users.

Upon researching the etymology of the word realia, I was surprised to discover that the word is connected to the Soviet and Eastern European translation studies tradition (see Chapter 2). Could it be that the term was initially used by one of FIO’s admins, back at the time, studying to become a professional philologist?⁷³ Within this translation studies tradition, realia as a concept are culture-specific words, lacking equivalents and presenting difficulties in translation, such as ethnoracial categories and ethnoracial slurs. Realia are immediately intelligible for those inhabiting a particular lingua-culture, often marked by connotations, emphasizing chronotopic aspects of terms, linking time, space, and language. Although the term realia bears a trace of the language of the real, when FIO admins and users use the word, they rarely deploy it to delegitimize translated texts as somehow less ‘real.’ Instead, realia seem to indicate critical distance towards translated texts and the context of their production, conceiving ‘our realia’ and ‘American realia’ in terms of situatedness rather than radical alterity or mutual irrelevance. In this regard, realia, as used in the FIO idiom, is closer to what Zvereva defined as ‘foreign as other’ (Zvereva 2001), a stance of reflexivity vis-à-vis translated Western feminist texts: neither rejection nor complete incorporation, but the recognition of their alterity.

⁷³ This information was publicly shared in the FIO posts and in the comment threads.

When FIO users and admins use *realia*, the term is often employed in two senses: more colloquial, pointing to domestic context ('our *realia*') but also in translation studies vein, by evoking concrete locally intelligible words and ethnoracial categories (such as *евреечка*, *буряточка*, *ЛКН* in the examples above), which would specify contextual dynamics of racialization and would help translate 'American *realia*' of race into more familiar 'our *realia*' of race. These latter categories are Russophone ethnoracial *realia* evoked by users to make bridges or juxtapositions to English-language racial categories centered in translated posts. In the examples above, users not only explicitly demand contextualization and localization of race in intersectionality, but they are also actively doing this work by evoking Russian-language ethnoracial *realia* that could stand in the center of the situated anti-racist feminist idiom. The invocation of *realia* in the comments above may be read as a push to localize racism, to make intersectionality intelligible by relating it to the contextually embedded dynamics of racialization and locally intelligible vocabularies of human diversity. Within the vernacular idiom of human diversity shaped by Soviet modernity and experiences of post-socialist change, categories such as *natsional'nost'*, *natsiya*, *etnos*, and ethnic belonging are often thought through or articulated interchangeably with tropes of blood and essential traits (*смешанных кровей*, *полукровка*, *ты кто по крови*, *это у них в крови*, *горячая кровь*), phenotype (*кавказская внешность*, *славянская внешность*), and lineage (*по папе грузин*, *бабушка еврейка*, *на четверть башкир*). All that makes this idiom easily translatable into the intersectional idiom of race (without needing to use the word itself as a category of practice) and makes the boundaries between them highly fuzzy. Indeed, some scholars argue that *natsional'nost'* (ethnicity/nationality) played the role of race in the late USSR and post-Soviet Russia (Shnirelman 2011).

Although for FIO moderators, foreign and modern US idiom of race signal modernity, theoretical edge, and anti-racism, which legitimizes foreignizing translation choices, it would be erroneous to overlook multiple practices of reflexivity around ethnoracial categories. A careful look into the comment threads reveals intense mixing of idioms, production of peculiar hybrids, combining both translated racial categories and Russian language ethnoracial *realia*, or making sense of one idiom in terms of another. Such mixtures may include translanguaging categories, combining two languages, or combinations of transliterations and calques from English:

User4 to User2: вчера тоже подумалось нечто похожее. Я не этническая женщина, но мне почему то кажется, если цветная женщина "страшная" по понятиям белых мужчин , конечно, то ее просто бьют и оскорбляют , а если она отвечает каким-то патриархальным стандартам красоты (стройная , например , длинные густые волосы, ну что там еще) - то тут мне даже не охота говорить :(((Поправьте , если не права .

User2 to User4: именно так. Этническая женская красота вызывает нездоровый интерес белых мужчин. Кроме того, домогательства имеют место, если среди традиционных женских занятий данного этноса есть

User4 to User2: Something similar occurred to me yesterday, too. I'm not an ethnic woman, but it seems to me that if *tsvetnaya zhenshchina* is "ugly" according to the standards of white men, of course, then she is just beaten and insulted, but if she meets some patriarchal standards of beauty (slender, for example, long thick hair, etc.) - then I do not even want to talk:((((Correct me if I'm wrong.

User2 to User4: Exactly. Female ethnic beauty attracts the unhealthy attention of white men. Moreover, harassment occurs if, among traditional jobs of this *etnos*, there are public professions related to communication (in this case, I

публичные профессии, профессии связанные с коммуникацией (в данном случае, я имею в виду цыганок, к наиболее репрезентативным занятиям цыган у нас в России относится эстрадное исполнительство и гадание). Национальная одежда, как красная тряпка - об этом тут, кстати, писали. И очень часто этническая женщина привлекает белого мужчину именно своей недоступностью.

Speak about Gypsy women; fortunetelling and stage performance are considered the most representative jobs among Gypsies within Russia). National clothing is like a red rag - this has been written about here, by the way. And often, an ethnic woman attracts a white man precisely because of her inaccessibility.

The snippet above is a good example illustrating how when the US idiom of race enters, it does not necessarily overrun the vernacular idioms of talking about human diversity. Instead, it expands the conceptual repertoires of users, proliferating their categorical maps across languages. The users actively make links across contexts of racialization to analyze ethnoracial dynamics, incorporating circulating intersectional feminist idioms into already available ones and using their mixes simultaneously. In the conversation above, User2 and User4 simultaneously deploy racial, ethnic, and *natsional'nost'* vocabularies: *цыганки* (Gypsy women), *этническая женщина* (ethnic woman), *цветная женщина* (woman of color), *белые мужчины* (white men). The Roma performers' clothing is called 'national clothing,' mobilizing the vocabularies of *natsional'nost'*.

Similarly, in another comment thread, one FIO reader actively links the initial FIO post informed by concepts such as 'ignorance of white men' with situated instances of post-Soviet xenophobia and xenophilia, bridging the contexts of the US and Russia together. This comment, in turn, has activated other users and propelled a flash mob where FIO readers narrated their contextualized experiences of everyday xenophobia. The discussion below features a panoply of post-Soviet ethnoracial realia, showing how FIO readers localize racism by engaging in Russophone feminist intersectional discursivity in a ludic manner:

User1: Сексистские, расистские, эйблистские шуточки и бестактности - замечательный показатель, стоит общаться с человеком или стоит его сразу послать. Я - цыганка, и очень часто сталкиваюсь с неприличной бестактностью цыганолобов (про цыганофобов и речи нет).

User1: Sexist, racist, ableist jokes and tactlessness are good indicators of whether it is worth communicating with a person or if it is better to get rid of him immediately. I am a Gypsy woman, and I often encounter obscene tactlessness of gypsophiles (not to mention gypsophobes).

User2: Черт. Я вас так понимаю. Рассказывала "друзьям" про прабабушку-цыганку - "А что, на гитаре играешь, да?", "Айнанэ, коней крадешь?", "НЕ НУ А ЧО ОБИЖАЕШЬСЯ".

User2: Damn. I understand you so well. When I was telling my "friends" about my Gypsy great-grandmother - "You play the guitar, don't you?", "Aynane, do you steal horses?", "NO, WHY ARE YOU UPSET?"

User1: Шутки про коней - это классика, искушенные люди более изощрены в своих шутках. Вот у меня журналистка брала интервью, смотрела на меня как на удава, и всё время переводила тему в плоскость эзотерики, дескать, могу ли я загипнотизировать, проклясть((.

User1: Jokes about horses are classic; sophisticated people make more cunning jokes. I had an interview with a journalist who looked so frightened and kept turning to the esoteric subjects, afraid I could hypnotize and curse her((.

User3: Ну и нелепость же. Сочувствую. Хотя когда я говорю, что я армянин-еврей, то начинается "а у тебя кто-нибудь угорел в 39?", "а ты на свадьбах в центре

User3: Such a silly thing! I sympathize. When I tell people that I am Armenian and Jewish, it starts: "Were any of your relatives killed in gas chambers in 1939?", "do you shoot at Moscow's weddings?" "do you have a gun?", "how many

Москвы стрелял?", "а у тебя травмат есть?", "скольких урусов зарезал?", "ты наверное борьбой увлекаешься?", "на скрипке в детстве играл?" и прочее. Ну охуеть вообще.

User4: или же "а ты овец резала?", "на лошади скакать умеешь?", "зачем нам изучать татарский?", "не забывай, в чей стране ты живешь", "а ты хорошо говоришь по-русски", "ваш народ вообще не принижали" и тому подобная хрень.

User5: Гульназ, татарка? А что платок не носишь? Классика.

User6: а я русский, и меня все время спрашивают хули я не алкашу и не поцреот рашки. ^^

User7: будучи еврейкой ацки поддерживаю вышеподписавшихся. стереотипы причом в среде на первый взгляд адекватных людей вроде как даже не считаются унижением, так, чисто поржать

User8: "Кореянка? Собак ешь? По математике одни пятёрки небось? Делала пластические операции, да?" Бррр.

User9: еще нравится такое снисходительно-одобрительное "нет, ну ты-то нормальная!"

User6: блин, чо все такие няши, а я просто русский :с пойду напьюсь

Admin: балалайку не забудь!

User6: ага, а за водкой на медведе поеду, ыыыы

User10: Ну раз тут все делятся расистскими высказываниями: Я смешанных кровей, с не самой ярко выраженной внешностью. Когда люди относящиеся ко мне с симпатией начинают рассказывать охуенные истории про все хачи-триюкачи, я сообщаю им новость о том что я какбэ тоже между прочим, и начинаю выслушивать о том что неееееет, ты русская прирусская не бывает русской, и они не успокоятся пока я не замолчу. Когда люди не знают как ко мне относиться, или относятся негативно, они сраааазу спрашивают о моей национальности, чтобы уже навешать ярлыков и успокоиться. Люди забавные

User11: о, у моего юбербывшего парня был дружок-пирожок, который тоже ебать какой славянин, но главное то, что когда я ему сказала типа "ну я мордва, ты чо, убьешь меня теперь?" он заявил что мордва - древний славянский народ, лол. Финно-угры лопнули со смеху.

urus⁷⁴ have you slaughtered?", "Are you interested in fighting sports?" "Have you played the violin when you were a kid?" etc. Fucking hell.

User4: Or "Have you slaughtered a sheep?", "Can you ride a horse?", "Why do we need to learn Tatar?", "don't forget whose country you are living in," "you speak Russian well," "your people were not oppressed at all," and other bullshit like that.

User5: Gulnaz, are you Tatar? Why don't you wear a headscarf? Classic.

User6: I am ethnic Russian, and I am always asked why I am not a drunkard and not a patriot of Russia.

User7: As a Jewish woman, I support everyone who spoke above. Stereotypes amongst seemingly adequate people are not considered humiliating; they are there for fun's sake

User8: "Korean woman? Eating dogs? Good at math? Have you done plastic surgery?" Grr...

User9: I also 'like' this condescending "No, but you are not like them. You are normal!"

User6: why is everyone so cute? I am just an ethnic Russian. I am going to get drunk

Admin: Don't forget balalaika!

User6: Yes, and I will ride for vodka on a bear!

User 10: Since everyone is sharing racist statements: I am of mixed blood, without a very pronounced appearance. When people who are friendly toward me start telling all those fascinating stories about *hachi*, I tell them that I am one of them and then hear, no, you are ethnic Russian; there is no one more Russian than you. They won't calm down until I stop talking. When people don't know how to relate to me or relate negatively, they immediately ask me about my *natsional'nost'* to put some labels on me and calm down. People are funny.

User11: My ex had a buddy who was an assproud Slav, but importantly when I said to him, "I am Mordvinian, will you kill me now?" He said that Mordva is ancient Slavic people. Lol. The Finno-Ugres laugh out loud.

⁷⁴ Slang for Russians.

In this conversation, the invocations of domestic ethnoracial realia and slurs perform the work of racial translation and activate a ludic exchange among FIO users. According to Vlahov and Florin, ethnoracial realia are challenging to translate because of their extra-semantic features: contextual associations and affective connotations immediately intelligible within a particular lingua-culture (Vlahov and Florin 1980). In the comment thread above, these connotations and associations are verbalized. Each user invokes connections between essentialized proclivities and specific collectivity or *natsional'nost'* into the conversation. Lemon rightly argues that ‘people in post-Soviet Russia, like people in the United States and elsewhere, did infer internal, biological, and inherited essences from external (if not always physical) “signs.”’ (Lemon 2002:56–57). It should not be ignored that post-Soviet racial discourses may operate without needing to rely explicitly on race as a category of practice but doing just as fine with vocabularies of ethnicity/*natsional'nost'*, connecting imaginaries of distinct social types with inherent, essentialized traits and naturalized proclivities lurking in the blood.

Users together create a ludic gallery of social types, evoking imaginaries of Guitar-playing, hypnotizing, and horse-stealing Gypsiness; cultured Jewishness (playing the violin); Armenianness, which metonymically stands for Caucasian masculinity, evoking hot temper (propensity to fighting sports), customs (shooting at the weddings; carrying guns), dispositions towards Russians (assaulting them with knives); Tatariness signals expectations of female modesty (wearing headscarf) and religiosity (slaughtering sheep) but at the same time nomadism (riding horses) and ethnolinguistic nationalism (imposing Tatar language on Russians); Koreanness – food consumption (eating dogs), the propensity to math and body modifications (plastic operations); Russianness – alcohol consumption and xenophobic patriotism. Note how User10 speaks of herself as having ‘mixed blood’ that does not show much in her physical appearance. The statement itself presumes that one’s blood typically reveals itself, but in her particular case, it failed to show up. That inconspicuous appearance makes her interlocutors feel safe to evoke ethnoracial slurs against Caucasians around her, expecting her to partake in xenophobic sociality only to be shocked when she reveals to them her *natsional'nost'*. This instance illustrates well how blood, physical appearance, behaviors, and ethnic belonging are vernacularly thought through each other within the post-Soviet vernacular idiom of race.

Prefacing, replacement, and adaptation. Moderatorial reflexivity in racial translation

Besides the propensity for foreignizing translation solutions, FIO translation praxis also included more ‘domesticating’ strategies, committed to moving English-language intersectional texts and racial categories closer to Russophone readers. The double goal

of introducing the FIO readers to these texts and carving out a Russophone intersectional feminist idiom committed to anti-racism necessitated adapting the US activist idiom of race informing these intersectional feminist texts to the post-Soviet ethn racial marginalization dynamics, which may not explicitly rely on the category race. In this section, I examine some of such translation strategies that FIO moderators used when translating intersectional feminist posts about racism in the USA. I focus on three such strategies: prefacing, replacement, and adaptation to illustrate the various ways in which US racial discourses and categories, informing intersectional feminist texts, were either contextualized, transformed, or replaced with locally intelligible examples of ethn racial dynamics to make the translated texts speak to the situated Russophone feminist, anti-racist praxis.

FIO admins used prefacing to introduce and locate the translated texts. By situating these texts in their context, prefacing prepares readers to understand their genealogy better, yet also communicates texts' foreignness critically, alerting the reader to keep this distance in mind. In March 2016, FIO published a translation of the text *Почему "расовый дальтонизм" поддерживает расизм, а не помогает с ним бороться* (originally titled *Seven Reasons Why 'Colorblindness' Contributes to Racism Instead of Solves It* authored by Jon Greenberg and published on everydayfeminism.com).⁷⁵ This text, accompanied by a lengthy preface explicating the conceptual approach to race used, explains how this approach differs from post-Soviet dynamics of ethn racial stratification:

Предисловие FIO:

Явление, о котором идет речь в статье, по-английски называется "colorblind racism" ("дальтонический расизм") или "colorblindness" ("дальтонизм"). Осознавая, что использование слова "дальтонизм" в данном контексте будет являться проявлением эйблизма, мы все же решились на перевод "расовый дальтонизм", используя написание в кавычках. Онлайн-словарь также предлагает перевод "отрицание существования рас", но это понятие неадекватно описывает феномен, о котором пойдет речь. В статье используется американское понимание расы, являющееся более широким, чем распространенное в русскоязычном пространстве антропологическое понимание (монголоидная, негроидная, австралоидная, европеоидная расы). Фактически в данном контексте "раса" стоит читать как "раса и этничность". Статья ориентирована на реалии США, и хотя в странах постсоветского пространства нет сходного с американским опыта институционализованного расизма и расовой сегрегации, проблема ксенофобии по отношению к иностранцам, особенно имеющим "неславянскую внешность", стоит очень остро. Поэтому мы предлагаем понимать слово "белая" в данном контексте как "представительница титульной нации/ представительница титульной нации страны-метрополи". Россия не свободна от расизма и

FIO preface:

The phenomenon discussed in the article is called in English "colorblind racism" ("Daltonian racism") or "colorblindness" ("daltonism"). Being aware that using "daltonism" in this context would be ableist, we have nevertheless decided to translate the term as "racial daltonism" using the spelling in quotation marks. The online dictionary suggests the translation "denial of the existence of races," but this concept does not adequately describe the phenomenon. This article uses the American understanding of race, which is broader than anthropological understanding, widely used in Russian-language space (mongoloid, negroid, australoid, europeoid races). In fact, in this context, "race" should be read as "race and ethnicity." The article is oriented to the USA reality. Although there is no similar experience of institutionalized racism and racial segregation in the countries of post-Soviet space, xenophobia towards (female) foreigners, especially those having a "non-Slavic appearance," is rampant. Therefore, we suggest understanding the term "white" in this context as "(female) representative of the titular nation of the metropole." Russia is not free from racism and nationalism. We suggest you think about such facets of history as the conquest of Siberia, anti-Jewish pogroms, the Pale of Settlement, compulsory Sovietization of Central Asia and the Caucasus, etc.

⁷⁵ everydayfeminism.com/2015/02/colorblindness-adds-to-racism/

национализма, и мы предлагаем задуматься о таких аспектах истории как покорение Сибири, еврейские погромы и черта оседлости, принудительная советизация стран Средней Азии и Кавказа и так далее.

In this preface, the moderators stress the conceptual non-equivalence of the US activist and social constructionist concept of race that informs intersectionality and the more common in Russophone spaces anthropological concept of race. They highlight divergent historical experiences of both Russia and the USA when it comes to the processes of racialization and racism. Afterward, moderators argue that although these experiences and histories are incommensurate, problems of xenophobia, racism, and nationalism also characterize Russia (note how all three words simultaneously figure in the paragraph as synonymous). Highlighting the prevalence of racism towards migrants with ‘non-Slavic appearance’ in contemporary Russia, pointing to the colonial history of the Russian Empire and complicated legacies of the Soviet past, admins invite the readers to keep these histories in mind when reading the article about colorblindness addressing ‘USA realia.’ This move helps actualize translated text as, although speaking to a different context of racialization, yet still relevant if its conceptual categories are situated and linked to the local ones.

Two substitutions are offered to ‘translate’ the text into locally intelligible frames. Firstly, because it is argued that the US activist concept of race is more capacious than the Russian anthropological one, admins suggest that whenever race features in the text, it can and should be understood as ‘race and ethnicity.’ The second substitution, clearly informed by the contestations around the translation of the category *белая* (white) that I described in Chapter 5, now suggests interpreting this category as standing for *представитель_ница титульной нации/представитель_ница титульной нации страны-метрополи* (a (female)representative of the titular nation/ representative of the titular nation of the metropole). Here the admins draw on the category ‘titular nationality’ used in the Soviet ethno-territorial demarcations to denote the majority population in a specific autonomous unit (the name of the titular group is reflected in the name of the unit). However, the problem with the category ‘titular nationality’ as a replacement for the US category ‘white’ to mark the privileged position on the axis of race/ethnicity is that the category is constantly shifting. It is one thing if ethnic Russians, constituting the numerical majority and often standing for the country as a whole, are implied under the term ‘titular.’ It is another matter if the scale shifts to the national republics within Russia, each having one or two non-Russian titular nationalities. To what extent the titularity of non-Russian groups results in the reproduction of ethnoracial hierarchies within distinct national republics is a matter for further research. Because the scale is not specified when the category is offered as a substitution for the US term ‘white,’ it may be assumed that marginalization in the titularity/non-titularity axis works the same way in all national republics of Russia. It is, however, not entirely true, as one discussion from a different comment thread, which allows insight into the

problem of scale and non-equivalence of racisms and racializations within different regions of Russia, especially in national republics, makes clear:

User1: Я живу в Кабардино-Балкарии, казалось бы..две равные нации, никакой дискриминации..и всё такое, но тут никогда не был(думаю и не будет) балкарец президентом, и я заметила, что кабардинцы всячески демонстрируют неприязнь к балкарцам! Самое смешное, что за пределами республики, на представителей обеих наций ставят клеймо "Хач/чурка". Я представитель нац. меньшинства в рамках Р.Ф, но и у себя в городе, я тоже представитель меньшинства (как носитель балкарской фамилии)

User1: I live in Kabardino-Balkaria, seemingly, two equal nations, no discrimination, etc., but there has never been (and I think never will be) a Balkar president, and I have noticed that the Kabardinians in every way demonstrate their dislike for the Balkars! The funny thing is that outside the republic, the representatives of both nations are branded as "hach/churka". I'm a representative of the national minority within the Russian Federation, but in my town, I'm also a representative of the minority (as someone with a Balkar surname)

User2 to User1: а я наполовину карачаевка. Не только имеет место нелюбовь между осетинами/карачаевцами, но и нелюбовь к кабардинцам/черкесам. Плюс внутри себя карачаевцы делятся на сословия. При этом в целом отношение кавказцев к русским гораздо лучше, чем русских - к кавказцам. А отношение русских к депортациям кавказских народов сразу перерастает в крик - аааа, как же русские из Чечни? при этом День Победы на Кавказе празднуют исправно.

User2 to User1: I am half-Karachay. Not only is there mutual dislike between Ossetians and Karachays, but also dislike of Kabardinians and Circassians. Additionally, within themselves, Karachays are divided into strata. At the same time, in general, the attitude of Caucasians to ethnic Russians is much better than that of ethnic Russians toward Caucasians. And the attitude of the ethnic Russians to the deportations of the Caucasian peoples immediately turns into a cry - what about the ethnic Russians from Chechnya? Not to mention that Victory Day is routinely celebrated in the Caucasus.

User3: сколько себя помню, всегда напрягалась из-за своего "нерусского" отчества. и когда на собеседования ходила, и вообще в те моменты, когда надо было его называть....даже подумывала о смене его. если честно, только сейчас мне стало все равно, как кто реагирует. это печально ведь, на самом деле, что люди страдают из-за того, кто они есть. может, я и не в тему здесь с этим комментарием, но все же!

User3: For as long as I remember, I was always ashamed of my "ethnically non-Russian" patronym. When I was invited to job interviews, I needed to mention it. I was even considering changing it. Only now do I feel indifferent toward how people react. Sadly, people suffer because of who they are. Sorry my comment is odd here, but still!

User1 to User2: Я это понимаю. у меня мама кабардинка, но больше презрения все-таки к балкарцам, так как они являются меньшинством..суть даже не в этом, а в том, что ненависть по признаку нации, не заканчивается за пределами республики..

User1 to User2: I understand that. My mother is Kabardinian, but there is bigger contempt towards Balkars because they are a minority. But this is not the point; the point is that hatred on a national basis does not end outside the republic.

In this thread, User1 unpacks the complex interplay of hierarchization as it unfolds within the Russian Federation. It is the federative structure of the country informed by the Soviet legacy of 'institutionalized and territorialized ethnicity' (Hutchings and Tolz 2015:24) that prevents the decontextualized application of categories majority/minority. The nested character of ethno-territorial divisions is expressed in the existence of national republics organized through the principle of ethno-territorial autonomy. Who is titular where thus depends on what parts of the country are concerned. The titularity is shifting because the relations between majority/minority nationalities are also shifting from region to region. Due to Soviet ethnoterritorial divisions in some national republics, there are two titular nationalities; the relative strength of titularity also varies from republic to republic. At the same time, ethnic Russians constitute approximately 80 percent of the majority within the country, taken as a whole. As the user pointedly illustrates, while within the ethnonational republics of Northern Caucasus, one may be

titular, when stepping outside the borders of a particular republic, one becomes a minority, often subject to xenophobic remarks, read as less of a citizen if not an invading migrant, a notion presuming exteriority to the Russian citizenship. That relates to the attitude of the ethnic Russian majority ‘to associate representatives of non-Russian minorities solely with ethnic autonomies within Russia’ rather than equal citizens in the country (Hutchings and Tolz 2015:28). At the same time, as the very last comment asserts, ethnic tensions and hierarchization do not magically end as one scales down from the country as a whole to a national republic.

Some recent research attempted to theorize the importance of titularity: ethnic Russians, as the titular majority on a national level, score much higher in terms of xenophobia towards migrants compared to non-Russian ethnic minorities, yet within national republics ‘titular ethnic groups are consistently more anti-migrant than non-titular ethnic groups’ (Alexseev 2010:116). Another study on discrimination in the labor market compared Moscow and St-Peterburg to national republics Tatarstan and Bashkortostan and concluded that ethnic hierarchy in Russia is racialized (and gendered), where recruiters in the capitals were giving much higher preference to Slavic-coded (but also German and Jewish) names compared to ‘Southern’ names. At the same time, there was no variation in response rates in Kazan and Ufa, the capitals of national republics (Bessudnov and Shcherbak 2018). Titularity, therefore, does not seem to appear as a straightforward category that could substitute the English-language category ‘white’ understood in the sense of unspoken normative location on the axis of ethnoracial power relations because titularity is constantly shifting from region to region within Russia. Although this FIO preface may ask too much from the reader, who would still need to do the proposed substitutions (adding ethnicity to race and replacing the category ‘white’ with ‘titular nationality’) to make the text more translatable, it also shows that the work around the adaptation of US racial categories was a matter of ongoing moderatorial reflection.

My second example of localizing translation strategies that FIO moderators employed is that of replacement. These are cases when US ethnoracial categories or terms in the original English text are replaced with locally intelligible categories to make the text more palpable to the reader. In May 2014, in the translation of the text written by Marcie Bianco *Wharton Study Shows the Shocking Result When Women and Minorities Email Their Professors*⁷⁶ FIO used the strategy of replacement when rendering racial categories from English to Russian:

Original fragments:	FIO translation:	Translation of FIO translation:
The type of student who garnered the most responses? The white male. As Milkman told NPR, professors "ignored requests from women and minorities at	Какие письма получили больше всего ответов? Разумеется, те, которые были подписаны именами, типичными для белых мужчин. Как	Which letters received the most responses? Of course, those that were signed with names typical of white males. As Milkman told NPR,

⁷⁶mic.com/articles/88731/wharton-study-shows-the-shocking-result-when-women-and-minorities-email-their-professors

a higher rate than requests from white males. ... We see a 25-percentage-point gap in the response rate to Caucasian males versus women and minorities."

сказала Милкман в интервью NPR, профессора "игнорировали запросы от женщин и национальных меньшинств любого пола чаще, чем запросы от белых мужчин... Белые мужчины получили на 25% больше ответов, чем женщины и национальные меньшинства".

professors "ignored inquiries from women and minorities of either sex more often than inquiries from white men... White men got 25 percent more responses than women and minorities".

Racial bias was most evident against Asian students, which surprised researchers, who assumed the stereotype of "Asians as a model minority group" would be reflected in faculty response.

Предвзятость по национальному признаку наиболее очевидна в отношении студент_ок из Азии, что удивило исследователей, ожидавших что стереотип об азиат_ках как о "примерном меньшинстве" (т.е. наиболее успешном) отразится на реакции профессоров.

Bias based on *national'nost'* was most evident in the case of (female) students from Asia, which surprised the researchers, who assumed the stereotype of "Asians as a model minority" (that is the most successful one) would be reflected in professors' response.

The most striking feature of this replacement strategy is the disappearance of 'Caucasian males' in the English original, substituted in Russian with its synonym *белые мужчины* (white men). In chapter 5, I traced how the translingual category *Кавказцы/Caucasians* may bear opposing meanings when it comes to racialization processes in the USA and Russia, creating the potential for confusion for the students of Russian-language intersectionality. In the English original, 'Caucasian males' are synonymous with 'white males.' However, because the connotations of literally translated 'Caucasian males' in Russian would be radically different, to prevent this confusion, moderators replaced 'Caucasian men' in the initial text with *белые мужчины* (white men).

Furthermore, 'racial bias' in English was transformed into *предвзятость по национальному признаку* (bias based on *national'nost'*). 'Minorities' in the original text were translated into Russian as *национальных меньшинств* (national minorities). In this translation, the idiom of *national'nost'* supplants the Anglophone idiom of race to make the text more intelligible for Russophone readers. Moreover, one of the colloquial meanings of the word *меньшинства* (minorities), when used in Russian without an additional qualifier, is that of 'sexual minorities,' which could have confused the reader. However, later in the article, names indexing 'ethnic flavor' in the USA were merely transcribed, although one could have quickly produced examples of ethnically marked names within the context of Russia to follow the same localization strategy.

The final moderatorial strategy I would like to showcase in this section is a textual adaptation that significantly transforms the original text. In February 2015, FIO published a translation of the text from everydayfeminism.com authored by Ally Boguhn, *You Don't Have to Hate Women to Be Sexist: Everyday Ways You May Be Sexist Without Knowing It*, translated into Russian as: *Необязательно ненавидеть женщин, чтобы быть сексистом: ежедневные ситуации, которые остаются незамеченными*. The text was dedicated to the concept of microaggressions, and what drew my attention to this translation was the use of the adaptation strategy by the moderators. They exemplified the notion of microaggressions adapted to the context of

Russia and added the lines absent in the original text to make the concept of microaggressions intelligible in the new context. If the initial text in English primarily used the example of sexist microaggressions, FIO translators focused on creating made-up examples of ethnoracial microaggressions as they would be expressed vernacularly in Russian. The conceptual vocabulary used in the adaptation relies on the categories of *natsional'nost'*/ethnicity/*narod* (people) and other idiomatic ways of linking phenotypical differences to ethnic collectivities and proclivities. Oksana Karpenko explains the inherent ambiguity of the official and widespread usage of the term *narod* in the Russian language and its conceptual overlap with other categories, “*narod*” is used to signify both the political community (“the Russian *narod*”), and parts of this unity (“*narods* of Russia”). From another perspective, “*narod*” exists at the intersection of racial, ethnic, and civil categories’ (Karpenko 2010:200). In the FIO adaptation of microaggressions through a lens of Russian language ethnoracial terms, it is clear how this conceptual fuzziness linking *natsional'nost'* and ethnicity to phenotype operates in practice:

– Откуда ты?	- Where are you from?
– Я из России.	- From Russia
– Нет, ну правда? Ты же не выглядишь как русская?	- Mmm...Really? You don't look like an ethnic Russian.
– А ты видишь так же хорошо как и мы? Ну, ты понимаешь... из-за разреза глаз?	- Can you see as well as we do? I mean...because of your eye shape?
– А как у вашего народа принято делать?	- What is customary among your <i>narod</i> (people)?
– Но ты выглядишь совсем как русск_ая, твоя мама правда татарка?	- You look just like an ethnic Russian. Is it true that your mom is Tatar?
– Ты довольно симпатичн_а для якут_ки!	- You are quite pretty for a Yakut woman!

The examples above testify to the moderators’ reflexivity around racial translation. Their subtlety is striking. It is easy to recognize such everyday situations. Among the tacit assumptions exposed here is the conflation between the Russian Federation’s citizenship and ethnic Russianness, betraying the ideological constructions of Russia as a mono state of ethnic Russians; the assumption linking phenotype (eye shape) and physical ability; the belief of homogenous group behavior and finally assumption of how members of certain *natsional'nost'* should look like, including beauty standards. In everyday Russian vernacular conversations, *natsional'nost'* gets routinely tied to a particular appearance or phenotype. “To look like an ethnic Russian’ or to read ethnic Russianness from the visible signs marking the body illustrates the slipperiness and fuzzy edges separating phenotypical traits from ethnicity or *natsional'nost'* in vernacular discourses about human diversity. This slipperiness provoked active negotiations by FIO users, whose discussions in the comment threads repeatedly revolved around politics of

(mis)reading, linking physical appearance to ethnic origins and behaviors. It is to these discussions that the next section is turning to trace the effort of contextualizing, adapting, and connecting intersectionality and racial categories that inform it, performed by minoritized Russophone readers in the FIO comment threads.

Practices of ethnoracial discernment: slippery (non)Russianness and racial metonymy of hair

As I argued earlier, localization of the Anglophone idiom of race in FIO comment threads by the readers often links existing ways of speaking and thinking about human diversity with the newer ones: making connections and comparative contrasts, thinking categories through each other and mixing them. Personal experiences narrated in the comment threads also allow entry into everyday conversations that may not use race as a practical category yet describe micro-level daily practices of ethnoracial discernment and misrecognition that helpfully elucidate the problematics of slippages between race, ethnicity, and nation. Following the theorizations that approach post-Soviet discourses of race as a discursive practice and draw on the understanding of indexical functions of the language (Lemon 2002), in this section, I examine several FIO comment threads that offer deeper insights into the everyday operations of ethnoracial discernment and the struggles and anxieties evoked by the possibilities of misrecognition and slippage. Examining the practices of ethnoracial discernment involves looking at ‘who points to whom’ and under what circumstances and where (Lemon 2002:60). A helpful way of guiding this inquiry is to focus on slippages between categories: ‘If boundaries between race and nation are slippery, it makes sense to look for articulations of racial logic where people perceive a danger of slipping, where they struggle over anchoring identities’ (Lemon 2002:60). These two core insights, the focus on the everyday practices of ethnoracial discernment and concern with slippages between race, ethnicity, and nation frame my analysis of the FIO readers discussions in the comment threads. I aim to showcase several conversations concerned with the everyday politics of misrecognition to unpack what they tell about the operation of racial discernment and what role racial metonymy plays in this process.

In May 2014, FIO translated a post called *Курпархат 101: Мы боремся не только с патриархатом* (*Kyriarchy 101' (We're Not Just Fighting the Patriarchy Anymore)*) authored by Sian Ferguson.⁷⁷ This translated post introduced FIO readers to the concept of kyriarchy, aiming to replace the notion of patriarchy within an intersectional feminist framework. Although the translated text was barely adapted, featuring literal translations of figures such as ‘white cisgender heterosexual woman’ and ‘black transgender man from the working class with a disability,’ FIO users in the comment

⁷⁷ everydayfeminism.com/2014/04/kyriarchy-101/

engaged with the post from minoritized locations within Russia. One user welcomed the text, translating the concept of multiple marginalizations into locally familiar idioms of difference. Reworking the figures featured in the FIO text, this user narrates herself as being doubly discriminated against: both as a woman and as a ЛКН (лицо кавказской национальности/person of Caucasian *natsional'nost'*):

User1: Даа, интересный и убедительный пост! Всё что могу добавить о себе...мало быть женщиной, так ещё и лицо кавказской национальности, двойная дискриминация (куда не посмотрю, единственный "аргумент" в споре с кавказцами это.."да что ты знаешь?..молчи вообще, ты же хач/чурка" и т.д)

User2: Вот именно, постоянно тупые мрази делают замечания, типа "хули ты несешь, ты чурка". Некоторые люди до сих пор остаются животными :с

User1: Даа, если бы это ещё хоть имело отношение к делу, вот идёт спор о музыке, и тут объявляется умник, который советует тебе с твоим происхождением не высовываться, и на эти комменты ставят лайки, другие подключаются. ужас просто

User2 Или когда делаешь замечание насчет грамотности оппонента, он перейдет на личности и скажет, что "хач ничего не знает". Животные и только :

User3 to User1, User2: Дорогие мои, это совершенно отвратительно! Шлю вам лучи поддержки! У меня была подруга, бурятка, общение с ней постоянно сопровождалось просто чудовищным чувством стыда от её рассказов, как и сколько раз её оскорбили и предложили валить в свою страну (я уже не говорю о том, что вообще-то Бурятия находится в России, полагаю, для тех козлов это стало бы открытием).

User1: Спасибо за поддержку! Да, обидно, что в других странах так даже к иммигрантам не относятся, я из КБР (Кабардино-Балкарская республика), и я гражданка Р.Ф, но всем плевать, есть такое понятие русский/нерусский у многих, и если ты в первое не попал, хоть из кожи вон лезь, но будешь человеком третьего сорта! Мне как-то женщина в Москве сказала.. "Ничего скоро вам 'чеченям' проведут газ"...я сказала, что мы не чеченцы, но ей было плевать, она сказала.. "а какая разница..?" "Во-первых.. уж с газом у нас проблем нет, всё газифицировано вплоть до сёл!) И вот ещё, я совершенно не религиозна, у меня прогрессивные взгляды, но я всё равно сталкиваюсь с ксенофобией (Но ещё замечу, что всё это я увидела в Москве, в Питере отношение другое!)

User3: Да уж, многим не помешало бы в школе лучше учить географию. И историю. И вообще. Стыдно за них. И страшно, что столько ксенофобов. У меня есть знакомый, который вообще кругом русский по происхождению, но смуглый брюнет и такие черты лица, что тоже часто его принимают за нерусского. Но оправдываться, доказывая, что русский, тоже ему стыдно, потому что получается, что он тогда как бы тоже

User1: Yees, important and convincing post! I can only add that it is not enough to be a woman but also a person of Caucasian *natsional'nost'*. Double discrimination. (Wherever I look, the only "argument" in quarrels with Caucasians is – "What do you know? Shut up! You are a *hach, churka!*" etc.)

User2: Exactly, all the time, stupid scum makes comments like, "what the fuck are you talking about? You're a *churka!*". Some people are still animals :с

User1: Yees. It is not even remotely related to the topic. If you argue even about music, here comes a smart guy who advises you to keep your head down because of your ancestry, and those comments get likes; others join. It is horrible

User2: Or when you comment on your opponent's writing mistakes, he gets personal and says: "*Hach* does not know anything." Animals, that's all:

User3 to User1, User2: My dears, this is entirely disgusting! I send you hugs! I had a Buryat female friend; being friends with her meant constantly feeling shame as she told me stories about how often she was insulted and asked to return to her country. I am not mentioning that Buryatia is inside Russia; I assume it would have been a surprise for those morons.

User1: Thanks for your support! Sadly, even immigrants are treated better in other countries. I am from KBR (Kabardino-Balkariya), and I am a Russian citizen. But no one cares! Many people have this notion of ethnic Russian/ethnic non-Russian. If you don't fit the first, you will always be a third-grade human, no matter how hard you try. A woman in Moscow once told me: "Don't worry, soon you, 'Chechens,' will get gas supply to your houses." I told her we were not Chechens, but she did not care; she said: "Is there any difference?" First, we don't have any problems with gas; even villages have a gas supply). And one more thing, I am not religious and have progressive views, but I routinely encounter xenophobia (i. I need to say that all of that happened to me in Moscow; people treat you differently in Piter)).

User3: Yes, some people should have studied geography in school. And history. And everything. I am ashamed of them. And it is scary that there are so many xenophobes around. I have an acquaintance of ethnic Russian descent, but he is a swarthy brunet and such facial features; he is often taken as ethnically non-Russian. He feels ashamed when he is forced to prove that he is ethnically Russian because that would mean he accepts the legitimacy of such divisions. I

соглашается с правомерностью такого деления. Не знаю, понятно ли объясняю его мотивацию, но ему претит возражать, что он не кавказец. am not sure I explain his motivation enough, but he resists arguing that he is not Caucasian.

User1's initial comment has mobilized others who started sharing their experiences of xenophobic remarks and slurs used against people of the Caucasus in Russia. Such affective exchanges demonstrate how the intersectional idiom of race is made sense of in the comments through narrating local discrimination experiences. When the vernacular ethnoracial idiom - Russian-language realia 'person of Caucasian *natsional'nost'* is activated, it triggers a stream of personal stories and memories, building on each other. By sharing them, FIO users create a space where their experiences get politicized and acquire legitimacy. The politics of cross-context comparison informs some FIO readers' readings of Russia's backwardness, which is indicated in User1's remark about 'other countries' where 'even immigrants' are treated better than some citizens in Russia. Notably, formal equality of Russian citizenship is argued not to translate into actual equality, rendering some ethnically non-Russian citizens 'third-grade humans.' User1, with bitterness, highlights the implicit hierarchy within Russian citizenship, boiling down to the distinction between ethnic Russians/ethnic non-Russians (*русский/нерусский*). User1 also foregrounds the impossibility of treating the Russian Federation as one flat space where dynamics of marginalization function similarly no matter the location. It seems apt to pay attention to where and in what forms concrete practices of exclusion emerge, whether in the Russian majority regions, two capitals, or in the ethnic republics where certain non-Russian groups may be a numerical majority, etc.

Later in the thread, a theme of ethnoracial discernment grew salient. User1 narrates the incident of being taken for a Chechen by a Muscovite woman. The incident illustrates how appearances are vernacularly read to index essences. On both sides, practices of ethnoracial discernment and recognition involve attempts to regulate the danger of slipping and misreading. The Muscovite woman performs ethnoracial discernment to separate 'newcomers' from the Caucasus as 'uncivilized' compared to Muscovite natives. For her, Chechnya stands metonymically for the entire Caucasus, and the entire Caucasus is figured as an 'uncivilized' place of perennial backwardness coded through the presumed lack of infrastructural development (having gas in the village). When confronted with corrective that her act of discernment is erroneous, this does not change much (*а какая разница..?*). The Muscovite woman performs an undifferentiated reading of the Caucasus' inhabitants, transforming everyone into a generic 'uncivilized' Caucasian.

The user who narrates the incident on the FIO comment thread is also concerned with the danger of slippage and misrecognition, protesting for being taken for as a Chechen. This need for correcting the error seems to be motivated by associations between Chechenness and presumed backwardness. In the narrated exchange, both secularity and infrastructures (gasification) stand as signs of modernity and

civilizational advancement. When the user mentions that the villages in Kabardino-Balkaria, where she comes from, have long been gasified, she chronotopically positions the republic as more advanced, civilized, and therefore less backward than Chechnya. Additionally, the danger of slippage is also managed through religiosity, figuring as a metaphor for backwardness. User₁ tries distancing herself from the image of religiosity associated with the region. She emphasizes that although she holds progressive (read secular) views, she still experiences xenophobia in Moscow. That may suggest that xenophobia against religious people is somehow justifiable. This exchange illustrates that attempts to provide the corrective readings of misrecognized 'origins' may be tethered to the investment in reproducing hierarchies of modernity and civilization. These hierarchies appear nesting: within the Caucasus as a region, they may be reproduced by the inhabitants of other republics to distinguish themselves from the parts of the region taken to be more 'wild,' religious, and 'uncivilized' such as dominant imaginaries of Chechnya would put it.

User₃, in solidarity, shares the experiences of two friends who routinely become subject to misrecognition and practices of ethnoracial discernment by strangers. A Buryat friend is regularly misread as a foreigner, receiving repeated calls to go back to 'her country.' Here the attackers practice ethnoracial discernment by denying national belonging to ethnoracial 'foreigners,' placing them outside the Russian nation imagined as exclusively European and Slavic. With another friend, similar reading trouble emerges. This time, the friend is described as 'ethnic Russian by origin,' who is nevertheless repeatedly (mis)taken for a non-Russian because of his darker complexion and facial features (*русский по происхождению, но смуглый брюнет и такие черты лица, что тоже часто его принимают за нерусского*). The confused 'but' in the quote communicates the concern with the instability of boundaries between race and ethnicity. The user insists on the friend's ethnic Russianness despite fuzzy external surfaces offering alternative cues to outsiders. The possibility of misrecognition is a source of worry; the friend is concerned with being read as *нерусский* (ethnically non-Russian). Attempts to pin down phenotypic ethnic Russianness represent an acute boundary-making problem. That some ethnic Russians may look just like Caucasians and some Caucasians just like ethnic Russians suggests that bodily surfaces might be deceptive and racially understood Russianness itself fuzzy. For the friend, the struggle is also an anti-racist one: to correct ethnoracial discerners by insisting on one's ethnic Russianness would have meant that non-Russianness is somehow shameful or that it is legitimate at all to associate Russian ethnicity with narrowly defined phenotypical traits such as blue eyes and light hair. Resistance to these practices of discernment and recognition leads this friend to withdraw from any attempts to confirm who 'they really are.' However, as the concern with sharing practices of recognition in the FIO thread indicates, the anxiety about slippage remains an acute problem.

This discussion opens a venue for interrogating the complex interplay of how phenotypical differences are taken as external signs pointing to assumed citizenship and

natsional'nost', epitomizing the fuzziness of boundaries between race/ethnicity/nation. Indeed, while the Russian word *paca* (race) is rarely used in everyday talks as a practical category, assumptions about people's origins, ethnic belonging, and citizenship are routinely made based on the visible markers of difference, which may have less to do with sharper differentiations in terms of skin color but with gradations of complexion (darker/lighter rather than black/white) and other phenotypical traits. Darker hair, different facial structures, the difference in skin tone, eye and nose shape, and often clothing appear as indexes that allow strangers to perform readings of external markings as manifestations of deeper essences, proclivities, and assign (non)belonging to the Russian state or a particular *natsional'nost'*.

Another comment thread raised similar points about the politics of ethnoracial discernment and misrecognition. User1, motivated by antiracist orientation, puts herself into an epistemic stance of apprentice, acknowledging potential ignorance by framing her question in advance as 'very silly.' She then asks the FIO community how to approach the conundrum of 'being ethnically Russian' but sometimes taken by others for a 'Caucasian girl':

User1: Сейчас будет, наверное, очень глупый вопрос, но как реагировать, если я русская, но меня принимают иногда за кавказскую девушку? даже подруга иногда подшучивает, мамка одно время краситься в чёрный отговаривала. Меня раздражает, когда понапраслину взводят (они может ещё группу крови и роддом назовут??), но я не хочу выглядеть ксенофобски, когда отнекиваюсь.

User2: Если Вас это напрягает - работайте над собой. Меня часто принимают за лесбиянку и иногда - за еврейку, и я с этим не спору. Только если спрашивают, говорю, что ошиблись. Не знаю, зачем отнекиваться, и как это может раздражать. Лучше задайтесь вопросом, как затыкать рот уродам.

User1: This will probably be a very stupid question, but how should I react if I am ethnic Russian but sometimes taken for a Caucasian girl? Even my friend jokes about it; my mom discouraged me from dyeing my hair black. I feel annoyed with this slander; why not mention my blood type and the hospital where I was born? But I don't want to look like a xenophobe when I deny it.

User2: If it stresses you out, you have some work to do. I am often mistaken for a lesbian and a Jew, and I never argue with that. Only if people ask, I say they are mistaken. I don't understand why I should deny it and how it could be annoying. I would instead ask myself how exactly I can shut these freaks down.

The question above points toward the difficulty of defining ethnic Russianness phenotypically. Indeed, as the user observes, even if 'she is an ethnic Russian,' she is persistently misread as a 'Caucasian' probably due to some phenotypical features vernacularly associated with people from the Caucasus (black hair, nose). This misrecognition dilemma points to the need to dismantle the assumptions associating certain phenotypical distinctions with particular *natsional'nost'*, involving a premise about the alleged phenotypical gulf separating 'ethnic Russian' from, let's say, 'ethnic Armenian appearance,' which informs vernacular readings of human diversity in the region.

At the same time, the comment opens a polyphony at the heart of Russianness as a category, which is hard to translate into English and ambiguous even in Russian. The trouble with Russianness as a category is not just that in English, the civic-ethnic distinction is expressed by the same word, Russian; that is, the fact that the difference

between *русский* (ethnically Russian) and *российский* (of the Russian state) is absent in English. The trouble concerns the polyvalence and slipperiness of the category *русский* within the Russian language itself, intimately tied with ambiguities of empire and nation. The category may be employed in Russian in an ethnonational sense as Russian ethnicity. In lay and public discourses, however, ethnic non-Russians are often interpellated through the very same category *русский*, which betrays its routine deployment not as a narrowly ethnic but as a broad imperial/lingua-cultural/supranational category. The constant slippage between several meanings of *русский* may be a significant cause of concern for ethnonationalists of all sorts.⁷⁸ If the boundaries are slippery, one must work hard to separate them. At the same time, the wide phenotypical variety among people who would call themselves *русский* today is inseparable from the legacies of the Russian empire and the Soviet Union, related to the multitude of ways of entering Russianness through elite incorporation, assimilation, acculturation, language, Christianization, identity change, and intermarriage. In some cases, phenotypically, these ‘Russians’ would be indistinguishable from those construed as ‘Caucasians’ for those preoccupied with acts of ethnoracial discernment.

The anti-racist dilemma of the user, much like in the examples earlier, also concerns the awareness that to disidentify from an ‘erroneous’ reading of assumed origins would be morally wrong and would reinforce xenophobic positions:

User1: раздражает не то, что говорят, а тот факт, что люди какие-то такие суждения выносят, не зная меня, не зная о чём говорят, то есть раздражает понапралина. При этом не хочется потакать ксенофобам. Кстати, друзьяшки мои некоторые - из категории людей, которые позиционируют себя как антирасисты, но ни хрена не разбираясь в теме, позволяют себя неполицорректные шуточки и выражения (слово на х и т.д.), что говорить о рандомных посторонних людях. P.S. Когда в Кисловодске местный житель мою маму назвал кабардинкой, мы спорить не стали)

User1: it's not what they say that irritates me, but the fact that people make such judgments without knowing me, without knowing what they're talking about, that is, I am annoyed with slander. But I also don't want to encourage xenophobes. By the way, some of my friends who position themselves as anti-racists but don't understand shit about the topic and allow themselves politically incorrect jokes and expressions (using the h-word, etc.), not to mention random people from outside. P.S. When a local in Kislovodsk called my mom Kabardinian, we did not argue with him)

User2: Это НЕ понапралина. Каждый раз, когда Вас принимают за кавказскую девушку, Вы получаете шанс запихнуть реплику мудака обратно в его глотку. Кроме того, Ваша внешность - отличный детектор мудачества. Одни плюсы. Каждый раз, когда меня принимают за лесбиянку, я всегда держу в голове, что настоящие лесбиянки получают в 1000 раз больше говна, чем я. Мне было бы стыдно не принять этот лёгонький толчок, зная, каким ударам они подвергаются каждый день. Моя обязанность - поставить на место ублюдков. Так же и Вам советую вспоминать о том, с чем имеют дело кавказские девушки каждый день, всякий раз, как Вас примут за одну из них. А друзей всегда можно поправить и аргументированно объяснить им их ошибки.

User2: This is not slander! When you are mistaken for a Caucasian girl, you get a chance to shove the fucker's statement back into his throat. Moreover, your appearance is a perfect radar against dickheads. Only positives here. Every time I get mistaken for a lesbian, I always think that real lesbians receive 1000 times more shit than me. I'd be ashamed not to take that gentle nudge, knowing the blows they take every day. It's my responsibility to put the bastards in their place. Likewise, I advise you to remember what Caucasian girls deal with daily whenever you are mistaken for one of them. And you can always correct your friends and reasonably explain their mistakes to them.

⁷⁸ The case of Manizha, who represented Russia in the 2021 Eurovision entry with the song Russian woman and the scandal around her is a fruitful example of situations when categories are perceived as if in the danger of slipping.

User1: о, да! я думала об этом: что если я легко раздражаюсь, то каково же угнетённым нацменам, если они получают вдесятеро больше on daily basis . Спасибо за совет.

User2: Oh yes, I was thinking about it; if I get irritated that easily, how does it feel for the oppressed *natsmen*⁷⁹ if they receive ten times as much daily. Thanks for the advice.

User3: А почём Вы знаете, что понапралина? (...) То, что Ваши предки за всю мировую историю ни разу не имели сношений(прошу прощения, если некорректно звучит, поправьте меня, если что) хотя бы с одним с лицом нерусской национальности - сомнительно чуть более, чем полностью. "Устоявшиеся" гены(я имею в виду те, которые не мутировали дальше, например, пигмент волос варьируется от светло-жёлтого до инсиня-чёрного через оранжевый и коричневый, а не через голубой или розовый) из неоткуда не берутся. К тому же, русский - это далеко не исключительно "голубоглазый блондин с прямым небольшим носом", как тут уже много раз писали.

User3: How exactly do you know that it is slander? (...)The fact that your ancestors throughout world history have never had intercourse (forgive me if I sound inappropriate, correct me in case I do) with at least one person of non-Russian *natsional'nost'* is doubtful. "Established" genes (I mean those that haven't mutated further, e.g., hair pigment varies from light yellow to blue-black through orange and brown, not blue or pink) don't come from nowhere. Besides, ethnic Russian is not exclusively "blue-eyed blond with a straight little nose," as has been written here many times.

In this excerpt, User₁ acknowledges the affective dimension of misrecognition, perceiving it as an injustice and slander (*понапралина*) but simultaneously senses that exposing the reading as erroneous could reinstate racially read ethnic Russianness as a norm. As an example of inauthentic anti-racism, User₁ mentions her friends, who publicly identify as progressives yet in private do not hesitate to use ethnic slurs. User₂ responds to this anxiety of slippage by suggesting using the acts of misrecognition as a learning experience. Comparing how she herself is misrecognized, sometimes as a lesbian and sometimes as a Jew, she presents the experiences of misreading as anti-racist exercises that would allow one to understand how 'real lesbians' and 'real Caucasian girls' feel. In contrast, User₃ prefers dwelling on the anxiety of misrecognition, destabilizing User₁'s certitude of her ethnic Russianness and broadening its phenotypical scope. Here the possibility of mixing with what is called *лицо нерусской национальности* (person of non-Russian *natsional'nost'*) is evoked as a potential explanation of genes responsible for physical features which lead to the repeating acts of misrecognition in the first place.

Finally, I would like to stop on one more comment thread to a 2013 FIO post, which provides insights into the operation of micro-practices of ethnoracial discernment, illustrating the slipperiness of boundaries between race and ethnicity. FIO users share stories of how dying their hair black affects these micro-practices of (mis)recognition and produces external racializing readings expressed through epithets like 'churka' or 'Gypsy.' Black hair in these readings operates as racial metonymy:

User1: И еще те кто выступают за чистоту "белой расы" они ненавидят мои темные волосы

User1: And those who advocate the purity of the "white race," they hate my dark hair.

User2 to User1: ого!!! это правда??? я в шоке - к темным волосам уже начали цепляться. фашисты

User2 to User1: Wow, is this true? I am shocked. Do they pick on dark hair now? fascists

⁷⁹ Soviet category for members from national minorities.

User3 to User2: да... цепляются не только к волосам от природы темным, но и к тем, кто по какой-то причине сменил имидж и перекрасился... "Выкрасилась под чурку!" (про средне-русую девушку, решившую ради эксперимента стать брюнеткой) - такое довелось встретить, и это уже как раз неприкрытый нацизм.

User4 to User3: а я так развлекалась пару лет назад-закидывала своё фото в Ярусские и славянские группы (внешность у меня не то чтобы очень нерусская, но на этническую славянку не тяну), и наслаждалась возмущенными комментариями, весело было

User5 to User3: моя внешность и раса не имеет ничего общего с кавказской, но при этом не перечить, сколько раз меня называли чуркой из-за цвета волос\глаз\кожи или "не славянских" черт лица. когда я красилась в рыжую, отец мне сказал, что я "похожа на чурку, которая выкрасилась под русскую, чтобы соответствовать", - и даже не увидел в своих словах признаки целой системы, где внешние признаки привилегированной группы возводятся в идеал.

User4 to User1: меня цыганкой называли,когда я красила волосы в черный,и хотели этим обидеть,лол.

User6: Ребят, я вам похлеще случай расскажу. Я цыганка на восьмую часть (с папиной стороны), так вот отец НИКОГДА не говорил мне об этом (случайно узнала от бабушки) и всегда говорил, что "они все конокрады, героином торгуют и т.д." А мама так вообще зовет "нерусской" или "узкоглазой" - "Ты не в нашу породу"

User7: Когда я красилась в чёрный, тоже постоянно называли чуркой или цыганкой, не смотря на то, что глаза серые. Один раз иду по улице, что-то там ищущая в витринах, тут подходит мужик в расстёгнутой рубашке, а на голове у него вокруг лба что-то типа галстука повязано, сразу видно человека постигшего какой-то особенный дзен, ну или славяно-арийскими ведами проникшегося, что не исключено, и начинает мне чесать с великой злобой, что-то там про то что "не долго вам осталось, стрелять вас надо, гнать, как в былые времена". Я тогда даже не нашлась что ответить! И сначала так обидно стало, а потом смешно очень, даже до сих пор смешно вспомнить))

User8 to User7: Знакомо, блин, я когда в черный красилась под любимого персонажа тоже началось про чурка-цыганка, как будто это что-то плохое. Я конечно, на это радостно отвечала - нет, японец. Но что меня больше всего умиляет: почему-то вся эта ботва высказывается тонким-звонким одиноким девочкам, а не группе мужиков кавказской национальности стоящих на другой стороне улицы, громко что-то обсуждающим на своем языке и поигрывающим ножичками? На меня один раз какой-то странный мужик в трамвае ни с фига начал орать, чтоб убиралась в свою Америку (???) почему в Америку O_o), что дескать я разворовала страну. Ога-ога, именно поэтому в трамвае и еду...

User3 to User2: yeah... they're picking on not only naturally dark hair but also those who have changed their image for some reason and dyed their hair... "Looking like *churka*" (about a fair-haired girl who decided to become a brunette for the sake of an experiment) - I've encountered that, and it's just plain nazism.

User4 to User3: I had a lot of fun a couple of years ago, was sharing my photos in I am russkii and other Slavic groups (my appearance is not too non-Russian, but I also don't pass as an ethnic Slavic woman), and I was enjoying enraged comments, it was fun

User5 to User3: My appearance and my race have nothing in common with a Caucasian one, but I cannot count how many times I was called *churka* because of the color of my hair\eyes\skin or for "non-Slavic" facial features. When I dyed my hair red, my father told me that I "look like a *churka* who wants to look like an ethnic Russian to fit in," and he did not realize that he reproduced an entire system where attributes of a privileged group become idealized.

User4 to User1: They called me a Gypsy when I dyed my hair black and wanted to insult me with that, lol.

User6: I will tell you a worse story. I am 1/8th Gypsy on my father's side; my father has NEVER told me about that (I learnt by chance from my grandmother); he always told me: "All of them are horse stealing, heroine selling, etc." My mom even calls me "*nerusskaya*"⁸⁰ or "narrow-eyed"; you are not "of our kind."

User7: When I dyed my hair black, I was constantly called a *churka* or gypsy, although my eyes are gray. Once, I was walking down the street, looking for something in shop windows, and then came a *muzhik* in an unbuttoned shirt, and on his head around his forehead was something like a tie. You could immediately say he reached a state of Zen or was into Slavic-Aryan Vedas or something. He begins talking to me with great anger, saying, "You don't have much left; one needs to shoot you, as it used to be in the past." I did not even know what to say! At first, I was so hurt, and then it became very funny. Even now, it is still funny to remember))

User8 to User7: I recognize this; when I was dying my hair black to look like a favorite character, I was also getting those *churka*-Gypsy, as if it is something terrible. I was enthusiastically responding to that, no, I am Japanese. What strikes me is that all this crap is channeled toward fragile lonely girls and not to the group of *muzhiki* of Caucasian *natsional'nost'* loudly discussing things in their own language and playing with knives. Once a weird *muzhik* was shouting at me in the tram, telling me to get back to my America (!!! Why America?!), saying that I plundered the country. Yes, this is exactly why I use the tram, lol...

⁸⁰ Ethnically non-Russian, can be used as a slur.

Although the reasons for dying one's hair black may be quite different – for some connected with a desire for experimentation, while for others, related to fandom subcultures, black hair color as a sign produces similar effects. Micro-practices of ethnoracial discernment use black hair as racial metonymy mobilizing external readings of appearance expressed in slurs such as *churka*. FIO users in this comment thread become aware of the peculiar possibilities of ethnoracial passing afforded by hair color change. However, they also stress how the ease of slippage is contradictory because the passing relies on only partial matching. User7 highlights that she was read as *churka*/Gypsy despite having grey eyes. User5 claims not to have anything in common with 'Caucasian appearance or race' yet is repeatedly interpellated as *churka* due to darker complexion. The ease of slippage afforded by black hair does not work in the opposite direction. When User5 describes changing her hair color to a lighter shade, her family members generate disapproving discernment conceptualized as failed mimicry of Russianness. Read as an attempt to pass; it is cast as an excessive, unskillful imitation: she is described as a '*churka* that tries hard to appear ethnic Russian' but fails. If darkening the hair results in external racialized readings, lightening the hair produces an effect of overzealous mimicry, easy-to-spot fake, and is recognized as a failed attempt in ethnoracial passing. Therefore, the potential for the transgression of ethnoracial boundaries via hair color change has limits; one can go down in the hierarchy, but moving up may be more challenging.

Often it is family members who perform ethnoracial discernment. User6, for example, shares how the unexpected reveal of 'Gypsy grand grandmother's heritage' from her father's side has been repeatedly disavowed in the family by reproducing clichés about Roma's naturalized proclivities. At the same time, this heritage is reluctantly recognized in her facial features as a haunting presence. This recognition results in ethnoracial rejection, mobilizing the term *порода* as one of the Russian substitutes for race. The daughter is thus paradoxically rejected as racially different from her parents, both of different kind/race (*порода*), with slanted eyes (*узкоглазая*) but also non-Russian (*нерусская*) used as a slur.

In this comment thread, FIO users often describe the acts of ethnoracial discernment as gendered. Those involved in these practices are *muzhiki* in public spaces: Slavic-Aryan internet forums, streets, and public transport. The acts of ethnoracial discernment, however, also operate in both directions. For example, User7 describes a street interaction with a *muzhik* in an open shirt (*мужик в расстёгнутой рубашке*), a description emphasizing his ethnic Russianness/Slavicness. This *muzhik*, said to be preoccupied with Slavic-Aryan connection, in turn, reads User7's hair color as racial metonymy and harasses her with the appeals to extermination: *стрелять вас надо, знать, как в былые времена* (you need to be shot, expelled as before). Black hair as racial metonymy allows performing the act of discernment, while User7 in *muzhik's*

reading is also metonymically connected to the entire group of unspecified racialized others who, in his view, need to be exterminated.

Another *muzhik* performs racial discernment in public transport in User8's account. Black hair here renders User8 not only racially foreign but also nationally foreign. It may be that, in this case, ethnoracial discernment ties post-Soviet fuzzy 'blackness' to foreign US-American blackness, pushing *muzhik* to shout 'go back to your America.' This vernacular anti-Americanism intersects not only with racial discernment but also with associations of capitalism with immorality. User8 is rendered as both ethnoracially and nationally foreign, accused of being responsible for robbing Russia. At the same time, User8 is herself involved in acts of ethnoracial discernment. Highlighting bitterly how ethnoracial street harassment is gendered, targeting only fragile girls like her (*тонким-звонким одиноким девочкам*), she points to another group of *muzhiki* that is highly discernable yet somehow escapes street harassment. These *muzhiki* are coded as decidedly non-Russian: they are interpellated through the peculiar hybrid category 'a group of *muzhiki* of Caucasian *natsional'nost*' that fuses *muzhiki* with the 90s Russian media category *ЛКН* (person of Caucasian *natsional'nost*'). This group is described as discernable both visually and aurally; they are narrated as *loudly* talking on the streets, speaking *their own* language, prone to particular behaviors: gathering in groups, and dangerously associated with temper and criminality (*поигрывающим ножичками*).

Conclusion

In this chapter, dedicated to the localizations of the US 'idiom of race' by FIO moderators and users, I attended to multiple ways this was achieved. This demand for localization was expressed by evoking the word 'our realia' and separating them from the 'American realia' of race, informing intersectionality. Throughout this chapter, I showed how talking about 'our realia' often involved bringing up Russophone ethnoracial categories and narrating localized experiences of ethnoracial marginalization. Doing so helped FIO moderators and users perform the racial translation and localize intersectionality by making it relevant and familiar.

The discussions that unfolded in the comment threads among FIO users not only provide insights into the operation of localized ethnoracial dynamics and underscore the fuzziness of categories, as well as the slippages between race/ethnicity/nation, but also illuminate the role of indexicality and racial metonymy in the everyday practices of ethnoracial discernment. One may therefore need not always use or rely on explicitly demarcated and verbalized ethnoracial categories to perform the acts of racial discernment and racial translation. These processes may as well operate not only through terms but also through deciphering clothes, discerning sounds, and expecting certain types of behaviors from certain bodies. Clothes, sounds, objects, and behaviors may stand as indexes for race. This process was illustrated especially clearly in the last

comment thread I analyzed, showing how ethnoracial discernment may also be performed by those who become its targets. What is narrated there is vernacular associations of men from the Caucasus with clannish solidarity and criminality, alleged proclivity to impulsive behaviors, and violence. Racial discernment and racial translation, it follows, may not only operate across multiple modes but is also profoundly gendered and sexualized.

These ideas are central to the next empirical part of this thesis. I examine the project of racial translation of a highly controversial Tatar/Jewish hip-hop artist and celebrity from Russia, Timati. Building on the close reading of the selection of his hip-hop videos that illuminate Timati's project of racial translation, I interrogate how Timati mediated the foreign and modern US idiom of 'race as resistance' into post-Soviet Russia through commercial hip-hop. In the chapters that follow, I apply the methodology developed through my analysis of FIO's translation praxis to theorize partial equivalences of English 'black' and Russian *чёрный* to explain why 'black' was left untranslated from English by Timati in the context of 2000s Russia.

I go beyond the limits of semantic categories to show how Timati relied on the multimodality of hip-hop videos, using sonic, visual, gestural, and other semiotic modes to translate US black masculinity central to the US discourses of hip-hop authenticity into a more locally familiar post-Soviet idiom of ethnoracial and gendered difference, found in the masculinities from the Caucasus and Central Asia through his project of racial translation.

PART III: TRANSLATING HIP-HOP

8. Antagonizing Russian rap: Timati's chronic inauthenticity

Introduction

He was hated by 90% of the population of Russia in the 2000s. His art was considered mediocre and alien (*бездарным и чуждым*), and his appearances on TV provoked a stream of offensive jokes and sarcasm. Many representatives of the emergent Russian rap scene were against calling Timati a rapper. Still, despite the fierce resistance of the masses, Mr. BlackStar, as he called himself, kept on going. His clothing style, the Americanisms in his speech, the same swag, and the same glamour were firmly attached to the art and lifestyle of the young playboy (Shevchenko 2017).⁸¹

The quote above from the opinion piece posted on the portal rap.ru summarizes well the general attitude of Russian hip-hop fans and the broader public of the 2000s towards Timati. *Зашквар*. Cringe. Not hip-hop. Marrying post-Soviet Russian glamour of the 2000s with US black aesthetics of commercial hip-hop and R&B, Timati remains the main antagonist for the Russian hip-hop scene. Timati's figure generates anything but indifference with his crossing of boundaries between hip-hop and pop, between the USA and Russia, between music and commerce, subcultural style and mass entertainment, and between authenticity and imitation. Timati unsettles all major contradictions within the genre of hip-hop, characterized by the discourse of authenticity or 'keeping it real' (McLeod 1999).

Timati (Timur Ildarovich Yonousov), born in 1983, became widely known via the 2004 Russian edition of the reality TV show *Фабрика Звезд* (*Star Factory*) to most post-Soviet youth whose teenage years spanned the 1990s-2000s. Born and raised in Moscow, he grew up in a well-off milieu: his Tatar father is from a family of Soviet diplomats, turning to big business after the Soviet collapse; his mother - came from an artistic environment of Soviet Jewish composers. Although widely known across post-Soviet countries as one of the top-earning celebrities and rappers, Timati is an intensely despised figure within the Russian hip-hop community. For many Russian fans of hip-hop, Timati represents a stark embodiment of absolute inauthenticity, *полный зашквар*. For numerous Timati's critics and most Russophone rap fans, his hip-hop lacks the skill, flow, and soul; it is too pop, commercial, and banal even to be called hip-hop. Timati's overly commercial party rap was seen as catering to rich kids of the elites, flaunting wealth against the backdrop of stark inequalities devastating the country. His rap is read

⁸¹ rap.ru/reading/20345

as not dedicated to contesting divides produced by the capitalist transition. On the contrary, for many commentators, he represents the obscene opulence of the few who could reap the benefits of this new economic era. Due to his well-off family upbringing, subsequent engagement with reality TV, Russian glamour, pop music, and the jet-setting nightlife of wealthy youth in 2000s Moscow, the stigma of inauthenticity has been firmly attached to his figure.

Timati is often read as a complete sell-out: peppering his music videos with excessive product placements and starring in cheesy TV commercials: from sore throat spray to chips and cat food. With his friends and business partners, Timati constructed a business empire Black Star Inc., combining a hip-hop music label with several lifestyle businesses revolving around the brand name Timati. Black Star music label selects, nurtures, and promotes young aspiring artists, turning them into celebrities; Black Star Burger operates a fast-food franchise selling hamburgers served in black gloves in Russia and across CIS countries, and Black Star Wear stores trade in branded clothing.⁸² All these ventures are soaked in permanent scandals around the celebrity figure of Timati, which fuel the hype-driven PR economy of Black Star Inc. Timati is persistently accused of stealing ideas, tunes, and visual imagery from US hip-hop artists, and there are many YouTube videos dedicated to exposing his 'thefts' and plagiarism. Being the only hip-hop artist in Russia who has recorded songs and released videos with top USA hip-hop and R&B celebrities such as Snoop Dogg, Busta Rhymes, Eve, P.Diddy, Craig David, and Timbaland, rumored to have been bought with his father money, does not help his domestic reputation of inauthenticity. It would be no exaggeration to state that no other hip-hop celebrity in Russia receives a comparable amount of vitriol mixed with condescension.

In the early 2010s, Timati's hip-hop inauthenticity was also bolstered by his support for the current political establishment within Russia. Examples of this include promoting President Putin in the 2011 elections, releasing a series of patriotic songs with L'One in 2014-2015, flaunting friendship with the leader of the Chechen Republic, Ramzan Kadyrov, and collaborating with the Army of Russia for a fashion collection. Finally, the release of the infamous 2019 video *Moskva* that praised its mayor Sergey Sobyenin and criticized opposition protests⁸³ may have led to his decision to leave the Black Star label in 2020. Timati's inauthenticity seems to be chronic, haunting him throughout his career. All these factors led to the ubiquity of narratives framing Timati's hip-hop as trashy, cringy music, not 'real' hip-hop. This framing has been so dominant that I was among many who considered Timati's cultural productions not worthy of

⁸² Timati has left Black Star label in 2020 but preserved financial control over some of its assets. Since in this thesis I write about the period when Timati was part of the label, I therefore use present tense. I also write in present tense about Black Star label ex-artists but make a footnote or commentary about when they left.

⁸³ The video scored a record in dislikes on YouTube and was promptly taken down by the artist himself. Timati's business partner Pashu has subsequently distanced himself from the video, claiming it was released without prior consultation with other partners.

scholarly interest. However, as I hope to convince the reader throughout the upcoming chapters, Timati's peculiar trajectory and racial translation project merit much more analytical attention than it currently enjoys.

Within scholarship and commentary on Russian hip-hop, Russia is imagined as a country with no equivalent to the USA's ethnoracial conflict. Russian hip-hop authenticity is presupposed to be lacking due to the absence of racial authenticity linked to US Black masculinity. Russian hip-hop authenticity gets interpreted in terms of class, relating marginalization primarily to destructive aspects of capitalist transition. According to Osumare (Osumare 2001), connective hip-hop marginalities within Russia are therefore imagined primarily in terms of economic inequality, street credibility, and center-periphery dichotomy or in the apt formulation of music critic and scholar of hip-hop Rondaryov, 'the search for Russian ghetto' (Rondaryov 2018). I, in turn, argue that the figure of Timati is exceptionally well-positioned to destabilize both Russian and US hip-hop's authenticity discourses, allowing us to unpack the fraught relations between the planetary diffusion of the language of 'race as resistance' and its complicated entanglements with the US hegemony, media industries, and capitalist globalization.

This chapter explores how Timati brought commercial US black hip-hop aesthetics to 2000s Russia. I first trace Timati's formational experiences as a teenager in the USA, where he acquired fluency in US hip-hop and the foreign idiom of race to later integrate mainstream hip-hop and R&B culture in Russia through Moscow's elite nightclub scenes and nascent reality TV formats. I review the literature on post-Soviet racialization to contest one of the main assumptions in the scholarly narratives on Russian hip-hop, the alleged irrelevance of the ethnoracial politics for the genre and the country, which overlooks the figure of Timati and Black Star cultural productions. Instead, I argue that harnessing the imaginaries of foreign and cool US blackness represented a symbolic resource for Timati in the context of 2000s Russia marked by neo-Nazi skinhead violence. In the last section, building on the literature that tracks the commercialization of US hip-hop and the emergence of hip-hop moguldom, I argue that Timati's learning experience in the USA included not only getting fluent in the US idiom of race but also in the business models of US hip-hop celebrities as modern examples to be emulated. This model was brought to Russia to build the Black Star music label. This US hip-hop dream came true in Timati's transnational career and the overall commercial success of the Black Star label in Russia but marked Timati with the stigma of foreignness, chronic hip-hop inauthenticity, and accusations of mimicking US rappers.

US hip-hop and R&B aesthetics meets Russian glamour

This section situates Timati in the context of the emergence of Russian hip-hop. It provides a snapshot of the beginnings of his racial translation project, which I loosely locate temporally between 1999 and 2012. This initial stage of Timati's celebrity persona

was characterized by the successful marriage of US black commercial hip-hop aesthetics to Russian glamour, a cultural style of luxury consumption, reflecting what Helena Goscilo and Vlad Strukov call 'the cultural logic of post-Soviet capitalism' (Goscilo and Strukov 2010:1). The origin stories of Russian hip-hop revolve around three narratives: a grassroots narrative of breakdancing youth; a top-down narrative of producer-driven hip-hop, and finally, a version prioritizing cultural brokerage when 'individual performers becoming enamored of hip-hop culture in the West' would bring it to Russia (Feyh 2012:188). Timati's love affair with hip-hop fits the latter story best yet also intersects with the first and the second. It started with the three and a half years he spent in the USA, California, around 1996-to 1999, as a teenager in the preparatory program at UCLA.⁸⁴ This particular timespan corresponds to the transformation of US hip-hop into a mainstream commercial genre. In the first post-Soviet decade, permeated by the idealization of Western cultural forms and lifestyles, very few Russian adolescents could have a direct chance to explore the context of the genre's emergence. The possibility to travel to the USA was a mark of wealth and prestige. With his well-off Muscovite upbringing, Timati was a part of leisured *mazhory* milieux whose family could afford prestigious and costly trips abroad and invest in their children's education. Timati claims in his interviews that his family never financed his romance with hip-hop but always supported the best possible education and language tutors.

Timati's time in the USA with a deep immersion in US hip-hop culture provides a crucial element for a fuller understanding of his hip-hop beginnings and further trajectory. In a 2010 interview with the Estonian website *Postimees* titled *Америка стала для меня школой жизни (America was my school of life)*, Timati described his time in the USA as follows:

I was sent to Los Angeles to take preparatory university courses at UCLA when I was 13. I lived in the dormitory for 3,5 years. As a good student, I attended college classes regularly. But after a year, I got fed up with the pristine boys and girls who had only one joy: buying a beer somewhere and getting drunk at a student party. I started spending all my time on basketball playgrounds, where I met some black guys (*познакомился с чёрными ребятами*) who let me listen to hip-hop, and I got infected with this music (*я заболел этой музыкой*). That's what I associate with the "American way of life" [...] Dark-skinned people are very agile and have inimitable dancing skills (*Чёрнокожие очень подвижны, у них неподражаемая пластика*). When they turned on the boom boxes and started hip-hop dancing, I was fascinated to watch them move, gesticulate, and talk to each other. The amazing thing was that we very quickly found a common language with black Americans (*с чёрными американцами*). The shaping of my brain and my transformation from a teenager to a young man began. There was virtually no pocket money, as my father meticulously kept track of my expenses. I had to earn money somehow. I met some guys who offered me a job as an apprentice in an auto shop for five dollars an hour. The work was not complicated: to fetch tools and bring coffee and tea. I learned the tools' names beforehand and earned thirty-five dollars a day. All in all, without going into detail, it was a school of life, a school that I will remember forever.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ I estimate the time period based on the information available in his interviews: that he was 13 years old when he got to the USA.

⁸⁵ rus.postimees.ee/349932/timati-amerika-stala-dlya-menya-shkoloy-zhizni

The story is narrated as an account of maturation from a teenager into a young man, and hip-hop figures both as a constitutive influence described through the trope of contagion and as a common language that helps bridge distances between Timati and Black Americans, racialized subjects across two imperial formations. What is also noticeable in his narrative is his Russian-English bilingualism, which is evident in his simultaneous deployment of two ways of translating ‘black Americans’ into Russian: as the more common *чёрнокожие* and the more polysemous but also often offensive *чёрные*. Timati’s rare video interviews in English demonstrate not only fluency but also the use of African American Vernacular English, as the video recording from MIDEM 2013 conference in Cannes illustrates. In the interview, Timati narrates the story of his stay in California:

My story started as soon as the iron curtain in Russia fell and communism was done, and Mikhail Gorbachev was replaced by Yeltsin, and people started traveling cause before that, Russia was a very closed country, and even the music industry was controlled by the government. It is a very sad story, but it is a part of the story. So, we started traveling, and I made my way when I was 13 years old to Los Angeles, California, Long Beach, where I started going deeply into hip-hop and R&B, doing graffiti, breakdancing, and MCing skills. Right there, I came up with a problem; being in the hood, being with the people from the ghetto, we talk a lot about Russia, and when it came up to that question niggaz be like: Yo, I heard Stalin is still doing good right there. I was like Yo, whatcha talking about and the others be like: I heard: Russian women drink vodka like crazy, they can drink the bottle and then eat the caviar, and the others be like: you know, I heard bears are walking in the streets and men carry guns. So, I wanted to change that; I wanted people to look at my country from another angle; this is where it all started from.⁸⁶

Upon returning to Moscow in 1998, Timati befriended the late rapper, Detsl, whom he met at a local breakdancing school.⁸⁷ Detsl’s father, music producer Alexander Tolmatsky wielded much power in the industry and played one of the central roles in the commercialization of Russian hip-hop (Feyh 2012:189–90; Frolova 2015:38). He helped to promote his son, Detsl, as the first hip-hop celebrity in Russia. Timati joined as a back MC for Detsl and appeared in his videos, including *Вечеринка (Party)*,⁸⁸ iconic for most of the post-Soviet youth, released in parallel with a Pepsi commercial featuring the earworm phrase *Пенсу, пейджер, MTV (Pepsi, pager, MTV)*.⁸⁹ In his 2012 interview Timati calls Detsl a project entirely ‘fabricated’ by Vlad Valov, pitting it against his authenticity gained through immersion in the US hip-hop culture. Two considerations are in order here. First, by qualifying Detsl as a ‘fabricated project’ in 2012, Timati performs important disidentificatory work that separates himself from the similar accusations of being ‘fabricated’ stemming from his participation in the eponymous reality TV show *Фабрика звезд (Star factory)* through which Timati gained wide popularity. Secondly, Timati constructs his more solid authenticity vis-à-vis Detsl by

⁸⁶ youtube.com/watch?v=lfjTZ7zJlak

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ calvertjournal.com/articles/show/10994/death-of-rapper-detsl-marks-end-of-an-era-for-russias-90s-kids

⁸⁹ youtube.com/watch?v=6y3DxiUeg

invoking proximity to the context of hip-hop origination, specifically, West Coast US hip-hop. Timati attributes the reasons he was invited to join Detsl as a back MC to his direct experience of 'the source': *Поскольку он меня знал, знал мои skills, чувствовал swag, который от меня исходит, знал, что я жил в Штатах, нормально выглядел, во все врубался, то он меня позвал:* (Because he knew me, my skills, felt my swag, knew that I have lived in the States and knew what was on, he invited me).⁹⁰



Figure 4. VIP77 photo. Photo credit: last.fm/music/VIP+77

swag, который от меня исходит, знал, что я жил в Штатах, нормально выглядел, во все врубался, то он меня позвал: (Because he knew me, my skills, felt my swag, knew that I have lived in the States and knew what was on, he invited me).⁹⁰ Timati claims that Tolmatsky promised him possibilities for promotion, but it never happened. Later, their relations became strained, and the rapper was asked to stop working with Detsl. Official reasons mention the dissatisfaction with Timati's performance, but the rapper lists the fear of intense competition as the most plausible explanation.⁹¹

Timati attempted to introduce hip-hop and R&B to mainstream Russian media multiple times, which faced a wall of rejections in the early 2000s when hip-hop as a genre struggled with legitimacy in the country. This resistance to hip-hop led to choosing an alternative strategy. For the next five

years, Timati and his friends were integrating the genre through the Moscow nightclub scene: organizing R&B parties, inviting DJs, and bringing US party rap to the wealthy youth of the capital. One of Timati's earliest projects was a promo band, *VIP77*, performing music and organizing R&B events.⁹² The band included Timati's old friends, some of whom would later become his long-term companions and business partners, and together they created the Black Star label in 2006: MC Walter or Walter Tchassem, son of Cameroonian diplomats stationed in Moscow; Pashu or Pavel Kuryanov; Ratmir Shishkov coming from a famous dynasty of Roma performers, Zhemchuzhny and Shishkov; rapper Deema, Ulya, and Nasty. *VIP77's* major hit *Fiesta* (2003) is described by a hip-hop journalist as a 'banal Russification of Jay-Z's and R. Kelly's hit, which anticipated Timati's creative method, who was never ashamed to look at the West.'⁹³ Similar descriptions of Timati's work, cast in terms of secondary and unoriginal imitation of the US hip-hop artists, will haunt characterizations of his oeuvre for years to come.

Much like Timati, most *VIP77* members stemmed from well-off families, reflecting the links between post-Soviet wealth accumulation, new and old elites, the

⁹⁰ rap.ru/reading/85

⁹¹ rap.ru/reading/85

⁹² It existed in two forms: first iteration 1998-2004; second iteration 2006-2007.

⁹³ the-flow.ru/beatsnvibes/50-sobitij-20

cosmopolitan allure of foreign US hip-hop and R&B aesthetics, and buzzing celebrity and glamour industries in 2000s Russia. This globalized US hip-hop aesthetics provided a source of cultural prestige for the members of wealthy, mostly ethnically non-Russian (except Pashu) post-Soviet kids such as Timati, highlighting the contradictions and entanglements of the legacies of Soviet internationalism, the rising tide of Russian xenophobia, and opportunities offered by the booming show business in capitalist Russia yearning for the excesses of glamour. Post-Soviet Russian media industries underwent a rapid transformation after the Soviet collapse, and Western formats, such as reality TV shows, were storming post-Soviet markets. One such TV show was *Фабрика звезд* (*Star factory*), a localized version of the Dutch TV project *Star Academy*. Timati's involvement in Moscow's buzzing hip-hop and R&B nightclub scenes had got him noticed by music producers, who invited the young rapper to participate in the fourth edition of the show.⁹⁴

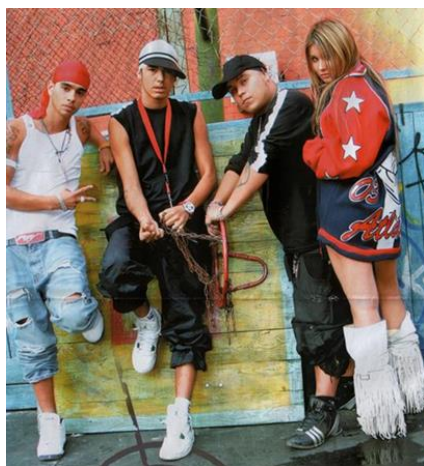


Figure 5. Banda band photo. Photo credit: mega-stars.ru/music_stars/banda.php

As Timati himself remarks, participation in such an openly commercial TV format as *Фабрика звезд* had its drawbacks. By engaging with the reality TV show associated with pop music, he lost the respect of hip-hop fans and discredited his authenticity. At the same time, participation in *Фабрика звезд* helped Timati to gain country-wide visibility on federal TV channels, which dominated music distribution at the time and was the only pathway for reaching broader fame and integrating hip-hop music in major media channels.⁹⁵ As an outcome of the show, R&B and hip-hop band *Банда* (*Gang*) was formed, with Ratmir Shishkov, Timati, Anastasia Kochetkova, and Dominik

Joker among its members. Managed by Russian music producer Igor Krutoy, the band, active from 2004 to 2007, released one album and several hit videos, such as *Плачут Небеса* (*The skies cry*)⁹⁶ and *Новые Люди* (*New People*).⁹⁷

In 2006 Timati broke free from the contract with the producer Igor Krutoy for a considerable sum of money.⁹⁸ No longer constrained by contractual obligations, Timati, together with his friends Walter and Pashu, started converting newly acquired celebrity

⁹⁴ Because of *Фабрика звезд* show Russian word *фабрикант* ('factory owner' in pre-revolutionary Russia) went through resemanticization. Widely used in the context of the 2000s to refer to the graduates of the show, who made it to the end as newly made celebrities, the word still retains pejorative connotations in the Russian language, marking these emergent celebrities as lacking in authenticity because of the overtly commercial format of the show emphasizing industry-like production of music stars.

⁹⁵ the-flow.ru/beatsnvibes/50-sobitij-20

⁹⁶ youtube.com/watch?v=Ks9rWg63-iM

⁹⁷ youtube.com/watch?v=XmWLTtDU2o4&t=22s; youtube.com/watch?v=Ks9rWg63-iM

⁹⁸ youtube.com/watch?v=4nAHIXqWjU4

capital into other ventures: organizing concerts of foreign hip-hop artists and running luxurious DJ parties for the wealthy Muscovite youth.⁹⁹ Together with prominent Moscow restaurateurs, the group of friends opened glamorous R&B nightclubs catering to the *mazhory* kids of new economic elites, unscrupulous in their financial spending and familiar with the most recent US hip-hop trends and aesthetics: first in 2006, *B-Club*, later in 2007, *Black October* and afterward *Black Star Club*.¹⁰⁰

To help promote *B-Club* as 'the place to be' for the affluent Muscovite audiences, Timati recorded a music video *В клубе (In the club)*, epitomizing the peculiar symbiosis of US hip-hop and R&B 'bling' aesthetics with the spirit of post-Soviet Russian celebrity glamour. Apart from featuring a cornucopia of flashy jewelry, attractive models (including famous singer Zhanna Friske), and expensive cars, the video showcases such vital tropes of the 2000s as a glamorous arrogant blonde with a small dog (played by Nastya Kochetkova), Pyotr Listerman, who built himself fame of VIP-matchmaker for oligarchs and gender-bending celebrity stylist Sergey Zverev, inspired, as Timati claimed in an interview to *afisha.ru* by Snoop Dogg's cameo appearance in 50 cent's video P.I.M.P.¹⁰¹ Curiously, when in one interview a music journalist labeled Zverev's participation in the video as 'trash' disapprovingly pointing to stylist's homosexuality and gender non-conformity, Timati, picking up the hint, defended Zverev's presence in the video: *Я занимаюсь шоу-бизнесом. Мне неважно, какой ориентации человек, как он накрашен (I do showbusiness. I don't care what kind of sexual orientation someone is and what makeup he wears)*.¹⁰²

In the song's lyrics, Timati brags that all the best hip-hop parties and best girls are in his club, describing himself as *Mr. Black star золотой ребенок, Привык жить в люксе уже с пеленок / Звезда киноплёнок, король любой party* (Mr. Black star, the golden child. Used to luxury from the cradle / Movie star, king of any party). These lines would prove Timati's privileged financial background, translating into chronic hip-hop inauthenticity for a generation of Russian hip-hop fans. More savvy commentators, however, emphasized Timati's talent for mastering the art of appearances and PR that have helped him sell the images of rich life to wealthy Muscovite youth. In practice, the cars and the flowing champagne featured in his videos were often borrowed.¹⁰³ In one early interview, Timati explained how some of the songs that became emblematic of his hip-hop for wider audiences were conceived by him as targeted PR campaigns to attract gilded youth with money to spend on his R&B parties:

When we started our parties at *Most*, I positioned them as parties for the gilded youth. From the business point of view, these people have the most money. They come in with pockets full of money and are happy

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ bbc.com/russian/features-5081886; meduza.io/feature/2019/11/05/lyuboy-kosyak-obrastaet-sluhami

¹⁰¹ daily.afisha.ru/archive/volna/archive/timati/

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Commentary by Yuliya Posh from the YouTube video: youtube.com/watch?v=nv7RzUOQzSA

to flush it down. They spend money - I make money. And we've made a motto, "No losers belong here." As a lure (*И мы сделали девиз "Лохам здесь не место". Для затравки*).¹⁰⁴

Another representative reflection of the Moscow nightclub ethos of the glamorous 2000s is Timati's collaboration with DJ Smash *Moscow never sleeps*.¹⁰⁵ The video and lyrics are filled with masculine bragging and boasting, peppered with names of luxury brands, reflecting a vital hip-hop practice Mischzynski and Tomaszewski reference as 'spitting brands' (Mischzynski and Tomaszewski 2014). The lyrics in *Moscow never sleeps* reflect the peculiar amalgamation of post-Soviet cosmopolitanism mixed with Moscow's nightclub glamour and glitz:

Bentley, Gabbana, Vertu, bodyguards,
VIP clubs, calls to Listermans
If you can afford such a program,
Then you're the king of Moscow.
If not, why show off?
Sit and jerk off, whom are you trying to impress?
Cheap swag is shitty swag
You don't know the laws of Moscow.
There are Jews, Armenians, Georgians, Slavs,
Tatars, Chechens, Kazakhs, all with us.
Doing things day by day
Solving Moscow's problems

Бентли, Габбана, Верту, охраны,
VIP клубы, звонки Листерманам,
Тебе по карману такая программа,
Значит ты король Москвы.
Если же нет то че ты понтуешься
Сиди и дрой, перед кем ты рисуешься?
Дешевый понт это голимый понт
Ты не знаешь законов Москвы.
Здесь евреи, армяне, грузины, славяне
Татары, чеченцы, казахи, все с нами
Своими делами разными днями
Решаем вопросы Москвы

In the lyrics, the consumption of luxury goods mirrors the freshly emerged post-Soviet order of gender relations. The power of entertainment industries and showbusiness is reflected in new transliterated words entering the Russian language, such as *кастинг* (casting) and feminized names of professions: *Студентка, актриса, проститутка, жена олигарха - это не шутка. Певица или просто модель, как карта России моя постель* (Female student, actress, prostitute, oligarch's wife, singer or simply a model – my bed is like a map of Russia). This strange symbiosis of Russian glamour with US black aesthetics and hip-hop culture epitomized by Timati's early videos in many ways contributed to his lingering domestic reputation of chronic inauthenticity. However, in his performances of proximity to US hip-hop culture, Timati appealed not only to mainstream US hip-hop celebrities but also to such icons as Tupac Shakur, Talib Kweli, and MosDef.

In 2006, Timati released his first solo album, *Black Star*. Its defiant name announces no less than the rise of a new era, claiming immediate celebrity status for the rapper already with a debut album. The title in English constitutes a tribute to US hip-hop culture, referencing the name of the band and eponymous critically acclaimed album recorded in 1998 by Talib Kweli and MosDef, representatives of the US conscious hip-hop scene preoccupied with such themes as social injustice and racial oppression. The cover for Timati's album is a visual homage to Tupac Shakur's cover for the 2001

¹⁰⁴ newsmuz.com/news_3_2338.htm

¹⁰⁵ [youtube.com/watch?v=NoqJ1VdmlcU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoqJ1VdmlcU)

posthumous album *Until the End of Time*. The juxtaposition of the two covers reveals Timati's self-styling on his album cover as a 'Black Star,' approximating the visual

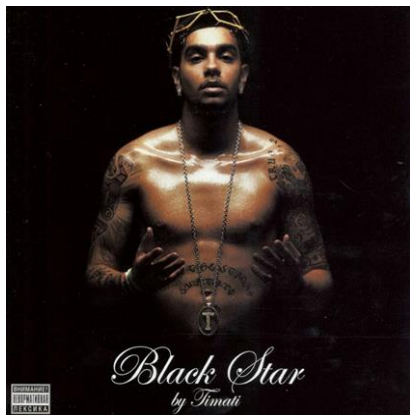


Figure 6. *Black Star* by Timati album cover. Photo credit: Liga-Servis, 2006. Photo credit: ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%A4%D0%B0%D0%B9%D0%BB:Cover_black_star.JPG

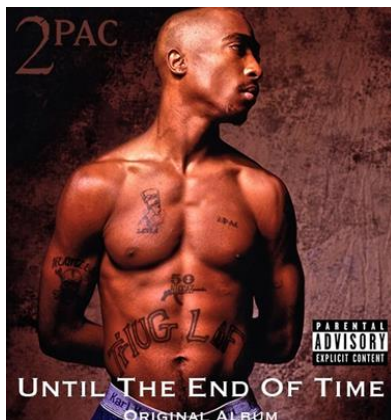


Figure 7. Tupac Shakur's 2001 posthumous album *Until the End of Time* cover. Photo credit: wikipedia.org/wiki/Until_the_End_of_Time_(Tupac_Shakur_album)

aesthetics of Tupac Shakur's album cover and US hip-hop black aesthetics in general. Timati's complexion is slightly darkened through experimentation with lighting, while the cover's background is rendered black. The oiled naked torso of Timati is sparsely decorated with tattoos; he wears only sunglasses and jewelry, including a massive hanging chain with a T-lettered medallion. Timati closely follows the visual codes of US hip-hop black aesthetics, emphasizing his proximity to US racial authenticity and making homages and references to US hip-hop icons.

This affectionate attachment to US hip-hop reverberates across his interviews: Timati constantly acknowledges his indebtedness to US black hip-hop culture as the authorizing signature and the source of hip-hop. Timati constructs his hip-hop authenticity and legitimacy by signaling metonymical belonging to it provided by his own ethnoracial ambiguity and the direct experience of 'the source' during the three and a half years he spent in Los Angeles as a teenager. Timati's taking of a mediating role between the original to post-Soviet Russian audiences became a task that would mark his subsequent career. In one of his 2015 interviews, Timati was asked if, after all the time he spent in the USA as a teenager, he has ever thought of moving there, to which he replied: 'I have lived in America in my childhood and moved back to work here. I look like an average mixture of a Mexican and a black person in America' (*среднестатистический замес мексиканца и черного*).¹⁰⁶ Timati acknowledges his familiarity with the USA's race idiom and can map and name racial readings of his

¹⁰⁶ m24.ru/articles/odezhda/09022015/66062

appearance within that context. He is aware of racial authenticity as one of the fundamental conditions for ‘realness’ within the US hip-hop scenes. The assuredness that he would have succeeded had he chosen to relocate to the USA might be predicated on being marked by the proximity to this racial ‘realness.’

In another interview, he narrated his US experience in the following way:

I was naturally swarthy when I got to L.A., and within a week, I became black (*Смуглый от природы, оказавшись в Лос-Анджелесе, я буквально за неделю стал чёрным*). I bought loose clothes, spoke English without an accent, and was no different from a Latino teenager. No one perceived me as Russian (*русский*). America is like a rainbow; it doesn't matter where you come from or what color you are. From the Philippines, China, Russia, New Delhi - it doesn't matter!¹⁰⁷

Timati stresses that he can pass in the US hip-hop circles not only due to his phenotype, making him look like a ‘mixture of a Mexican and a black person’ but also because of his ability to speak English without a Russian accent. Recent attention within sociolinguistic scholarship has emphasized mutual imbrications of race and language (Alim, Rickford, and Ball 2016; Rosa 2019). Timati’s fluency in English is constructed here not as a mark of class and status distinctions within post-Soviet Russia that afforded him the exposure to the language necessary to achieve fluency in the first place. It is presented as something that fuses seamlessly with his racial authenticity making him naturally apt in the arts of hip-hop and racial translation. However, Timati’s ability to approximate US racial authenticity was utterly lost for his domestic audiences in Russia. Paradoxically, while Timati matched the ideal of US racial authenticity more closely than many other rappers in Russia, this aspect of hip-hop authenticity hardly mattered to domestic audiences. Russian hip-hop authenticity, it seems, followed other criteria of ‘realness.’ At the same time, his open embrace of the consumerist ethos of party rap, flaunting women, jewelry, and cars marked Timati’s career over the following decades with constant allegations of excessive, overzealous mimicking of US-American rap, trying to pass too hard as African American.

Timati’s fluency in English in the context of the 2000s within the Russian music scene and pop culture signaled certain cosmopolitanism and coolness associated with the USA’s musical industries and ‘Western’ way of life, epitomizing modernity. However, his *Black Star* album was marketed to Russian-speaking post-Soviet audiences, with texts written entirely in Russian with occasional English words. Even more intriguing is the use of the English word ‘black’ in both the album’s name and the name of the music label Black Star, which Timati built with his two friends and former *VIP77* buddies Pavel Kuryanov and Walter Tchassem the same year. Timati positioned himself as a Black Star in Russia and beyond. This moment marks a distinct period within Timati’s hip-hop, when ‘black’ in his *Black Star* had to be left untranslated, preserved in the original form in English. In the following two sections, I will explore how focusing on racial translation can help unpack why this was the case. By providing an overview of post-Soviet

¹⁰⁷ 7days.ru/caravan-collection/2013/8/timati-ya-nikogda-ne-by-l-izbalovannym-mazhorom

racialization dynamics that made Timati a target for xenophobic attacks by neo-Nazi skinheads, I explore only partial equivalence of English-language ‘black’ and Russian-language *чёрный*. I suggest that foreign English-language US idiom of race served as a cosmopolitan cultural capital helping Timati alleviate the violence of post-Soviet racialization.

Locating post-Soviet ‘blackness.’ On partial equivalences of ‘black’ and *чёрный*.

*Меня другое волнует. Вот Тимати, он хач, жид или чурка?*¹⁰⁸

(a question from the hip-hop.ru forum)

From early on in his career, Timati’s ethnoracial ambiguity was both a blessing and a curse. As I showed above, it allowed him to blend in seamlessly and approximate US hip-hop aesthetics in the context of discourses on US hip-hop racial authenticity. At the same time, it provoked a sense of profound unease within the Russian context. Myriad comments like the one opening this section posted on a hip-hop.ru forum permeate Russophone online spaces, trying to pin down Timati’s exact origins. Timati’s ethnoracial ambiguity constitutes a puzzle for those trying to decipher his ancestry; he is routinely referred to by different ethnoracial terms and slurs. The ones mentioned in the comment above (*хач*, *жид*, *чурка*) are three pejorative terms referring to men from the Caucasus, Jews, and Central Asians. However, Timati is also often read as African or Roma.

The figure of Timati and the Black Star label is exceptionally well positioned to interrupt the dominant narrative in the scholarship on Russian hip-hop that the ethnoracial dimension had little to no significance for the country and the genre. To reach this goal, I provide an overview of the dynamics of racialization within post-Soviet Russia and trace the meanings of fuzzy post-Soviet racialized ‘blackness’ building upon the works of Alaina Lemon, Viktor Shnirelman, Jeff Sahadeo, and others. By focusing on the transnational and translanguingual malleability of ‘blackness,’ I consider what a translation-centered perspective might add to its understanding. I argue that ‘black’ and *чёрный* as ethnoracial terms are only partially equivalent in English and Russian, which helps explain why ‘black’ in Timati’s Black Star label was left untranslated in the context of 2000s Russia.

Research on transnational meanings of blackness is expanding (Marable and Agard-Jones 2008; Rahier, Hintzen, and Smith 2010; Sansone 2003). One of the fruitful directions this research has taken is reflected in the questions raised in the editorial introduction to the recent book *Blackness in Israel*, asking ‘what to make of blackness

¹⁰⁸ The question from hip-hop.ru/forum/otkrytie-black-star-burger-523172/index8.html

that does not tether upon “conventional” black (read: African) bodies, and what to make of blackness that is aligned with racialized black bodies but not in the same way as those associated with the Black Atlantic’ (Dorchin and Djerrahian 2020:2). The volume demonstrates the elasticity of blackness in Israel, attached to different bodies in distinct ways, framed at times as a symbolic discursive resource:

Competing forms of blackness are thus derived from various aspects such as phenotype, a socially attributed corporeal property, lived experiences of marginalization, the mastering of a cosmopolitan cultural capital and performative skills, to name just a few. Instead of deliberating questions about its “validity” or “authenticity,” this book explores the potential scope of blackness, its “elasticity” so to speak, as various people utilize it. (Dorchin and Djerrahian 2020:3)

It is precisely the intersection between foreign and modern US-American blackness informed by hip-hop and R&B aesthetics, circulating as cosmopolitan cultural capital in the wake of Soviet collapse and localized forms of post-Soviet ‘blackness’ as situated dynamics of marginalization and ascriptive readings of corporeality that inform my understanding of Timati’s case as a project of racial translation between two different but connected systems of racialization. At least three aspects must be kept in mind when we attempt to understand how ‘blackness’ operates in post-Soviet Russia. The first aspect is that it is fuzzy and elastic, ascribed to a much wider range of people than US-Blackness. Secondly, it is symbolic and tied to a phenotype but has less to do with skin color and more with other physical features such as hair, but also with practices and behaviors. Third, and most importantly for my argument: when the term *чёрный* (black) is used towards ethnoracial others in Russian, it refers to the racist register of speech, not a neutral term for self-identification as is the case with the usage of the word ‘black’ in English. I expand on these points below through an overview of scholarship on post-Soviet racialization to argue that a focus on translational aspects and the only partial equivalence in the black/*чёрный* pairing contributes to the understanding of Timati’s project of racial translation.

Elasticity or fuzziness of post-Soviet ‘blackness’ discursively ascribed to bodies of Central Asians, Roma, and peoples from the Caucasus constitutes one of the paradoxes for the scholars studying racism and vernacular racist discourse in post-Soviet Russia. Sahadeo describes this late Soviet racialization of migrants from Soviet Eastern and Southern republics in Moscow and Leningrad as follows:

Newcomers heard calls of “blacks” (*chernye*), “black snouts” (*chernomazye*), or “black asses” (*chernozlopy*). “Black”-themed insults extended to relatively fair-skinned traders from the Caucasus, though they were not applied, as they were elsewhere in the industrialized world, to South Asians, African Americans, or Africans; the latter were characterized as “*negry*,” a moniker that became racialized but lacked the bite of the terms hurled at fellow Soviet citizens. Blackness became a discourse and a category with which to articulate the anxieties of European, or white, Russians toward growing migration from their former colonial peripheries (Sahadeo 2016:797).

Sahadeo wonders about a ‘mystery’ of ‘Soviet racism’: ‘How and where did the idea of and term “black” (*chernyi*) originate and evolve, and how did it become applied to late

Soviet Caucasus and Central Asian migrants? (Sahadeo 2019:115). Historical associations of the semantics of the color *чёрный* (black) throughout the history of the Russian Empire link the words like *чернь/чёрный* and *тёмный* to the lower ranks of society, describing ignorant, uneducated peasants and simple people (Shnirelman 2011:362). At the same time, contemporary slurs related to the word *чёрный*, such as much discussed in the literature on post-Soviet racisms *чёрномазый* (mistranslated by Sahadeo as ‘black-snouts’ although it has nothing to do with animality) can be traced back to the 19th century. The word *черномазый* is constructed similarly to related words *чумазый* and *грязномазый* and the more dialectical Turkic-Russian hybrid *карамазый*, which inspired Dostoevsky to call his heroes Brothers Karamazov. All these terms emphasize negatively coded markedness as contamination, pollution, uncleanliness, and impurity.¹⁰⁹ *Чумазый*, for example, unites both phenotypical meanings (swarthy, dark-haired) with derogatory reference to the lowest classes of society. According to Dahl’s 19th-century dictionary, *карамазый* stands for *чёрномазый*, *чернявый*, *смуглый* (darker hair and shade, swarthy).¹¹⁰ The word seems to have gone through a semantic shift since it was actively used in Russian literature of the 19th century to neutrally describe the appearance of various groups, from the Roma, Tatars, and Arabs to Italians and Africans. The national corpus of the Russian language¹¹¹ tracks the use of the word up to 1825 in Somov’s story *Gaidamak* to refer to a Gypsy character Palivoda, demonstrating the word’s relative semantic neutrality, describing physical complexion, hair color, and shade of skin color.¹¹² In late-Soviet times and contemporary Russia, in vernacular racist discourses, the term *черномазый* has acquired highly derogatory connotations, primarily targeted against people from the Caucasus and Central Asia (Shnirelman 2011:363). Respectively, the connotations of the color *чёрный* have also changed from positive/ambivalent to negative (Shnirelman 2011:363).

The consensus among scholars of post-Soviet racism, summarized by Shnirelman, is that in the mid-1990s post-Soviet Russia, an ethnoracial approach took root instead of communism. One of the marks of this ethnoracial turn was the introduction of a temporary special regime of registration of incomers to Moscow in November 1993, targeted against people from the Caucasus, which inaugurated an era of police raids on peoples of ‘non-Slavic appearance’ of which Chechens were a primary victim (Shnirelman 2011:361). During this period, the reliance on the phenotypical difference in appearance to distinguish ‘the Others’ became a primary mechanism for establishing a symbolic ethnosocial border (Shnirelman 2011:361). In the 1990s, racist attitudes towards people from the Caucasus found reflection in the demeaning slur *чёрные* (blacks). At

¹⁰⁹ However, compare that to positive markedness in the word with the same root *смазливый* (attractive).

¹¹⁰ lexicography.online/explanatory/dal/к/карамазый

¹¹¹ *Национальный корпус русского языка. 2003—2022 ruscorpora.ru*

¹¹² It is important to note that uncleanliness also ties to un-Chrianianness (*грязный* as *нечистый*). I am not a specialist to prove the extent of plausibility of these claims but still find it useful as a mental exercise that could help detach Russian word *черномазый* from the associations linking it exclusively via translation into English to ‘black’ and as consequence to race alone.

the same time, the bureaucratic and media language used the awkward term *граждане/лица кавказской национальности* (citizens/persons of Caucasian *natsional'nost'*), mixing members of diverse nationalities of Caucasus into a single undifferentiated category. Umbrella terms such as 'persons of Caucasian *natsional'nost'* or 'Asians' emerged as categories linked to the morally loaded and mythologized images of Others (Russell 2005:105–6; Shnirelman 2011:362). The racialization of people from the Caucasus in post-Soviet Russia proceeded through distinguishing 'Southerners' by phenotypical features, applying to them the principle of 'collective responsibility,' accusing them of 'criminal inclinations,' 'speculation' and laziness, framing them as creating competition in the job market and competing for social resources designed for the in-group (Shnirelman 2011:363). Through this process, emblemized by media portrayals of Chechens as quasi 'criminal nation,' the racialized term *чёрный* (black) has acquired almost similar connotations in Russia as it has in the West and particularly the USA (Shnirelman 2011:363). The essential dimension distinguishing late Soviet and post-Soviet 'blackness' from the US definitions is a vast array of populations who may be referred to through the slur *чёрный* within vernacular racist discourse in Russia. That includes everyone who cannot pass as a majority Slavic population. This elastic 'blackness' can incorporate numerous others under its umbrella: Turkic, Asian, and Caucasian peoples, Arabs, the Roma, people of African descent, Middle Easterners, citizens, and non-citizens alike (see Fikes and Lemon 2002:507).

Anthropologist Alaina Lemon poses questions on the malleability of blackness in her work on the Roma and race in post-Soviet Russia shortly after the dissolution of the USSR (Lemon 1995). What does it mean to be racialized as 'black' (*чёрный*) in Russia, she asks, emphasizing contextual complexity and the translational interlingual dimension of this category. Lemon highlights how this post-Soviet phenotypical 'blackness' ascribed to a person would be read by a North American observer as an instance of an 'ethnic-looking' appearance (Lemon 1995). This point underlines the transnational malleability of what 'blackness' as ascribed category might mean across contexts and languages and is central to my analysis. For Lemon, post-Soviet 'blackness' not only externally marks the body but is also linked to the tropes of blood, culture, generation, and nation. This kind of slippery post-Soviet 'blackness' is less tied to skin color differentiation but more to other phenotypical markers, including facial features, dark hair, and eyes (Lemon 1995:34) but more to markers such as clothes, items, and behaviors:

In Russia, as in many other places, race is constructed culturally in a way that overlaps it with other categories of social life, and the visible signs of race and kind can be other than complexion. "Blacks" also can be marked by style, by a certain kind of dress. In that year, traders and the new rich preferred silks and rayons cut into baggy pants or long slim skirts; such clothes, especially if worn with gold jewelry or teeth, also marked a person as "black" in both the market and racial sense of the term. (Lemon 1995:36)

Comparing the post-colonial migration patterns in the late USSR and Great Britain, Sahadeo argues, in a similar vein, that in both contexts 'blackness related not simply to

phenotype but also to popular images of migrants from former imperial peripheries whose presence ostensibly threatened socioeconomic hierarchies established by host societies' (Sahadeo 2016:801). Within Anglophone scholarship, describing Soviet and post-Soviet Russia's racialization dynamics, researchers have used English-language categories such as 'dark-skinned non-Russians,' 'Soviet 'blacks'' 'dark-skinned Caucasian nationalities,' and sometimes 'people of color' to refer to peoples of the Caucasus and Central Asia (Roman 2002; Sahadeo 2007a, 2012, 2016, 2019). Often scholars working across languages solve the issue of partial mismatch between Russian *чёрный* and English 'black' by putting 'black' into quotation marks, using a footnote with an explanation, or clarifying the difference in meanings in the text. For example, in the article 'Making Caucasians Black: Moscow Since the Fall of Communism and the Racialization of Non-Russians,' Meredith L. Roman describes an upsurge in racializing media rhetoric in the wake of the introduction of the discriminating system of registration in Moscow in the period between 1992 and 1997 (Roman 2002). In the endnotes, the author specifies: 'throughout this article, the terms 'dark-skinned' and 'people of color' are used interchangeably with 'black' because many Russians use the term 'black' to refer derogatorily to individuals with darker pigmentation than Slavic, Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Baltic peoples.' The paradox is that this post-Soviet racialization of people of the Caucasus or Central Asia to whom the epithet *чёрный* may be applied has less to do with skin color. It may be a distinction of shade, but not always. Lemon remarks, writing specifically about the Roma, although it is equally applicable to many other groups stigmatized as *чёрный* within vernacular racist post-Soviet discourses: 'Roma — are no darker in complexion than are some Russians' (Lemon 2000:69). Shnirelman reviewing Meredith Roman's article, points out that in the Russian context, the term *чёрный* (black) was attached not to the actual color, but rather to the symbolic status (Shnirelman 2011:363).

The most undertheorized aspect within these discussions is that the ascriptive epithet *чёрный* is used in Russian as a highly pejorative slur, not as a term for neutral self-identification as it is in the USA. English 'black' and Russian *чёрный* mobilize quite different affects and circulate in disparate ways. There is no mobilized anti-racist collective identity around the term *чёрный* in post-Soviet Russia, and there has not been a process of reclaiming and resignifying the category as a term of pride and dignity as has happened to the term 'black' in English through Black power movements. What kind of implications does only partial overlap between 'black' in English and *чёрный* in Russian have for the Anglophone scholarship studying post-Soviet racisms? Can translanguaging and translational reflexivity around the pair 'black' and *чёрный* offer new insights to scholars working on racialization across the two contexts and languages? Glossing over linguistic differences, affective connotations, and the context of their use across languages may erroneously make Anglophone readers who are not familiar with post-Soviet xenophobia believe that *чёрный* in Russian works just like 'black' in English, but it does not. Moreover, people from the Caucasus, who may be interpellated in

everyday racist discourse through the deployment of the slur *чёрный*, do not necessarily accept the stigmatizing definitions of themselves as *чёрный* and might exhibit ethnocentric and racist stereotypes to distinguish themselves from the allegedly 'darker' Middle Easterners, Central Asians or Africans (Souleimanov and Schwampe 2017). They may also emphasize phenotypical whiteness to reject the stigma of racializing slurs such as *чёрный* (Rabinovich 2021:397). Others to repair the stigma of the insult may refer to racialist constructs, claiming belonging to the 'white race' since the people of Caucasus, in line with racialist taxonomies of Johan Blumenbach, who notoriously coined the category 'Caucasian' in the 18th century, symbolize the pinnacle of whiteness (Baum 2006).

When it comes to the term 'black' in English, it is also essential to bear in mind the historical evolution of ethnoracial categories in the context of the USA. Their valuation and connotations change over time as a result of political struggles and collective mobilization, such as the US Civil Rights movement. Tom W. Smith, in tracking the arguments for the replacement of the category 'Colored' with that of 'Negro' in the early 20th century and later in the 1960s with that of 'Black,' highlighted how this project was underpinned by the struggle for positive self-affirmation and redefinition of the identity of the group that has been historically uprooted through enslavement. The ascendancy and redefinition of the category 'black' included its association with radicalism, future orientation, racial pride, power, and militancy (Smith 1992:499). In other words, the US Black Power movement 'had turned the concept of black on its head, divested it of its pejorative connotations in racialised discourses and transformed it into an expression of a confident and assertive group identity' (Brah 1991:55). 'Black,' like the category 'Negro' before, has undergone a process of reclaiming, transforming from a slur with negative connotations into a term that 'helped to instill and maintain a sense of group consciousness, racial pride, and a hope for racial justice' (Smith 1992:503). However, the change of meanings and connotations of ethnoracial categories is an ongoing process, allowing Smith to posit in 1992 the loss of radical connotations of 'black' along with its general acceptance and register the ascent of the category 'African American' emphasizing cultural origins and ethnicity. One may think of the language ideology of baptismalism, which presumes that the meaning of the words is static and is not subject to change when speakers use them (Hill 2009:64).

When translating English 'black' to Russian, the situation becomes fuzzier. It would present a difficulty (although not impossibility) to render the English 'black man,' referring to an African American man in Russian simply as *чёрный мужчина* because of the pejorative connotations of *чёрный* as a slur in Russian. A more conventional and neutral way to translate such a phrase would be *тёмнокожий/чёрнокожий мужчина* (literally dark-skinned/black-skinned man). In recent years, anti-racist and feminist activists, inspired by the influence of USA social justice movements, have been experimenting with directly translating expressions like 'black feminists' as *чёрные*

феминистки.¹¹³ Russian linguists such as Krongauz suggest that such literal translations of black may be unfortunate, pointing to the different connotations of the term *чёрный* (black) in Russian and its embeddedness in racist vernaculars.¹¹⁴ Activists solve this by capitalizing the word on the model of capitalization of Black in English. However, this does not solve the problem that the contextual meaning of *чёрный* in Russian may still evoke the charged racist idiom targeted against Caucasians, Central Asians, the Roma, and others.

'Black' in English and *чёрный* in Russian are, therefore, only partially equivalent. They index distinctive features, have varying connotations (although this might change in the future due to collective mobilizations), and refer to diverse groups. It seems fair to argue that 'Black' in English as a racial category has much more positive connotations linked to group self-determination and racial pride. In contrast, *чёрный* in Russian, when not used to translate 'black' from English, is part of far-right discourses and a highly pejorative charged term, featuring in racist slogans and incitements to violence among skinhead gangs' group actions in the 2000s resulting in multiple people being killed or wounded. According to the statistics gathered by the human rights organization SOVA, the primary victims of such violence were people from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Moreover, English 'Black' in non-Anglophone contexts like post-Soviet Russia has a ring of prestige and modernity associated with the superpower status of the USA and the hegemony of the US cultural industries.

US Blackness as cosmopolitan cultural capital. Why 'black' in Black Star was left untranslated

The backdrop I outlined above and the highly pejorative connotations of the term *чёрный* in Russian allow a much better understanding of why, in the context of the upsurge of xenophobic and racist violence in the post-Soviet Russia of the 2000s, it would be unfathomable for someone looking like Timati to attempt to launch a debut album and an eponymous label called in Russian *Чёрная звезда* (*Black Star*). Timati's figure paradoxically embodies all the incarnations of post-Soviet elastic 'blackness.' His ethnoracial ambiguity and visible non-Russianness remain the main reason for the continuous flux of racist comments overabundant on the internet, comparing him to a monkey, calling him a *цыган* (Gypsy) or *negr*. I have collected a list of slurs from 2004-2008 user comments on the hip-hop.ru forum through which Timati was described. The list illuminates the vernacular readings of his ethnoracial ambiguity. 2004-2006 period yields characterizations such as *афротатарин* (AfroTatar), *мажор* (*mazhor*), *хуесос* (dicksucker), *пидорас* (fag), *псевдо-негр* (pseudo-negr), *понсовик* (pop musician),

¹¹³ See, for example, FEM TALKS project: femtalks.moscow

¹¹⁴ sova-center.ru/hate-speech/discussions/2006/11/d9621/; see also svoboda.org/a/410217.html

косит под/закос (tries to pass as), *пиздабол* (talks shit), *цыган* (Gypsy), *выскачка* (upstart), *долбоёб* (dickhead), *золотая молодежь* (gilded youth). Throughout 2007-2008 Timati was hailed as *понса и позор русского рэпа* (pop music and a disgrace to Russian rap), *бесит* (annoying), *высокомерный* (arrogant), *пидор* (fag), *выскачка* (upstart), *метис недоделанный* (half-baked metis), *цыган сраный* (fucking Gypsy), *полный отстой* (total shit), *мажор* (*mazhor*), *пафос* (pretentious), *гондон ебучий* (fucking dickhead), *клоун и олень* (clown and deer), *лох/лошара* (looser), *понторез* (douchebag), *татарин* (Tatar), *чернокожий татарин* (black-skinned Tatar), *клубная херня* (night-club bullshit). This list of slurs and expressions circulating in the comment threads by hip-hop.ru users can be read to emphasize Timati's liminality, excess, and visibility. The slurs repeatedly qualify his music as overly pop, inauthentic nightclub entertainment for rich kids, and his hip-hop swag as ridiculous, annoying, and excessive. The second string of slurs distinguishes Timati for his phenotype and complexion, stressing his hybridity and in-betweenness. There is also a focus on his mimetic practice and a perceived desire to imitate African Americans or to present oneself as one. Finally, Timati is often interpellated through homophobic slurs, which are also often used more broadly in Russian to describe an opponent derogatorily. Thus, Timati is seen as someone who sticks out too much, is too visible, and transgresses the boundaries between musical genres and ethnoracial collectivities.

It was not only Timati's ethnoracial ambiguity coupled with the name *Чёрная Звезда* (*Black Star*) that would have made him a direct target of xenophobic attacks in the 1990s-2000s, not likely to lead to wide commercial success, but also the fact that rap as a genre Russia at the time was still struggling with legitimacy. Rap fans at concerts were often attacked by neo-Nazi skinhead groups, whose emergence, in turn, was propelled by the crash of the communist project and the dismantling of the official Soviet ideologies of internationalism and anti-racism. Scholar of Russian youth subcultures, Elena Omelchenko, remarks:

For rappers, the skinhead movement was associated with fascism and racism; it was considered to be anti-Russian, and the rappers' proximity to African-American hip-hop culture gave an additional meaning to the conflict. Among the advanced cultural forms, rap occupied a place among the music and dance movements rooted in hip-hop street culture, typical for the New York scene of the 1970s. It attracted young Russians from the city's outskirts: rap combined a strategy of locality, proximity to the street, 'tough' masculinity and an interest in 'alternative' music and style. (Omelchenko 2021:9)

In the early 2000s, these allegations of hip-hop's inherent foreignness to Russia and its lack of authenticity as the borrowed, essentially American genre made the figure of ethnoracially ambiguous Timati embodying US black aesthetics a perfect target for the skinhead neo-Nazis.

In one of his interviews, Timati described his hip-hop youth in Moscow as persistently marked by the attacks from skinheads:¹⁵

¹⁵ 7days.ru/caravan-collection/2013/8/timati-ya-nikogda-ne-byl-izbalovannym-mazhorom/4.html

Rappers, skateboarders, and *neformaly* hung out at Manezhnaya (square). I got into fights with Nazis more than once. They didn't care if you were Russian or not: if you wore baggy pants and a cap, you were a rapper, a fucking *negr*, and you had to pay for it (*Они не разбирались: русский ты, не русский — раз надел широкие штаны и кепку, ты рэпер, негр поганый, и за это придется расплачиваться*). Skinheads with screwdrivers, knives, and chains, wearing boots with iron noses that crushed our ribs, attacked us. Whoever could run away, whoever stayed, fought. In the subway, you could suddenly be hit from behind. I turned around, and there was a bald guy! I fought back with everything I had, both with my skateboard and my fists. It was a matter of life and death. They were so "brave"; they never walked alone, only in groups of ten or fifteen. I had been to the hospital more than once, and I had been lucky - the knife hadn't nicked any vital organs, but someone had bad luck, and someone's mother had lost her son. Mine had been through a lot. She already knew: if I called her cell phone after midnight, something had happened, and I had to go to the emergency room, where they were stitching and bandaging me up [...] I knew for sure that our grandfathers had not shed blood for their great-grandchildren to wear German uniforms and continue Hitler's cause. It's a shame! These guys either didn't learn history, or they are stupid scumbags. I would like to believe that there is less of this filth now. Back then, I rode public transportation with an eye out until I made enough money to get around by cab.

Similar stories, evoking the exposure to skinhead violence, emerge from other early interviews, when, for example, a music journalist asked Timati if he got beaten on the streets because of his darker complexion: *А бьют тебе морду на улице из-за цвета кожи? [...] Ну вот подходят и говорят: 'Ты, гнида черножопая'* (Do you get beaten on the streets because of your skin color? [...] I mean do people approach you and say 'black-assed worm').¹¹⁶ The journalist referenced a memetic expression indexing post-Soviet xenophobia from the iconic Aleksey Balabanov's movie *Брат* (*Brother*). In the same vein, in a piece on the Black Star music label, journalist Maria Kuvshinova ironically describes the situation of the early 2000s, at the beginning of Timati's career, when the young rapper encountered multiple assaults from neo-Nazi skinhead groups. Kuvshinova writes that these groups 'in the absence of real *negry* were mutilating rappers.'¹¹⁷ In this interview, Timati reflected on the recent past as follows:

It was pretty scary. They (skinheads) were catching, beating, and cutting. Now we don't experience such strong problems. Putin made it hard. And now there are so many other peoples (*такое количество стало других народностей*). Skinheads know that any rally, any riot, would end up in the twice as big crowd of 'blacks' (*чёрных*). The number of bearded ones has grown, and the fiercest bald ones are either murdered or in prison (*Бородачей стало больше, всех самых буйных лысых вырезали*). It is not good or bad, but there is a balance.

In this interview snippet, Timati constructs an opposition between persecuted racialized *бородачу* (the bearded ones) and persecuting neo-Nazis *лысые* (the bald ones). Notably, in Timati's quote, *бородачу* (the bearded ones) are also referred to as *чёрные* (blacks). In this context, the word points to the men from the Caucasus and Central Asia, who were the primary victims of skinhead attacks in the 2000s.

Another example that reflects on the post-Soviet skinhead violence comes from a 2015 interview¹¹⁸ of Timati by a Russian celebrity, socialite, and journalist, Ksenia

¹¹⁶ daily.afisha.ru/archive/volna/archive/timati/

¹¹⁷ daily.afisha.ru/archive/volna/archive/rus_rap_timati/

¹¹⁸ youtube.com/watch?v=xP-GN_Jc394

Sobchack. In response to Timati's aversion to the word 'tolerance,' Sobchack explicitly brought up his encounters with the xenophobic skinhead violence prevalent in Russia in the 2000s:

S: I think if you, looking the way you do, with your tattoos and skin color, would go somewhere in the Birulevo area late in the evening, you would learn many new things about tolerance. (smiles)

T: I often come to Maryino, Butovo, and Birulevo and can find a common language with any person.

S: It is only a semblance. I think when there was a pogrom in the vegetable warehouse, it is not likely that you would have found a common language with someone there.

T: But this was, how many years ago?

S: Very recently. It was when people with nationalist beliefs went out to smash everything in their way.

T: I think this whole skinhead movement stems from the simple fact that people are uneducated.

S: Yes, but you sit here and say that "tolerance is a contested notion," as a *тёмный человек* (swarthy human), let's go outside the city center where there is no police, you will be the first victim of this "tolerance."

T: I never divide people, never say this is *rusaki*,¹¹⁹ this is *hachi*.¹²⁰

S: I also don't divide. But do you know that many people in our country divide precisely because of the lack of this tolerance? And you will be the first victim of this division. You, not me

Sobchack calling Timati a 'person with your skin color' or, later in the interview, a *тёмный человек* (dark/swarthy human) reminds him of his ethnoracial malleability and visible non-Russianness that made him the target of the extreme far-rights' attacks in the past. The intolerant past, narrated by Timati in these interview fragments, is well reflected in scholarly research on neo-Nazi skinhead violence in Russia (Arnold 2010; Laruelle 2010; Laryš and Mareš 2011; Pilkington 2010; Shnirelman 2011; Verkhovsky 2018; Zakharov 2015). Based on this research and reports of Sova center monitoring xenophobic violence since 2003,¹²¹ the scholarly consensus is that the timespan between 2005 and 2009, the very time Timati released his debut album, has witnessed the highest number of racist violence in Russia (Arnold 2015:243). Neo-Nazi skinhead violence in Russia targeted primarily two main groups: Caucasians and Central Asians, and thirdly people with 'non-Slavic' appearance, encompassing people of African and South Asian descent and others. The government tried to suppress the activities of neo-Nazi and white supremacist groups, yet race riots and pogroms marked recent Russian history (Avrutin 2022; Zakharov 2015). It is vital to return to this context of 2000s racist violence in Russia because it helps better locate Timati's trajectory and his racial translation project.

¹¹⁹ Colloquial for ethnic Russians.

¹²⁰ Offensive slur for people from the Caucasus.

¹²¹ sova-center.ru/racism-xenophobia/publications

Cosmopolitan value and prestige attached to US-American culture and hip-hop specifically provided sources of inspiration and identification for post-Soviet youth. Alaina Lemon, whose anthropological work focuses on the racialization of the Roma in post-Soviet Russia, has emphasized how the Roma negotiate ascribed racist categories, including their attempts to reverse pejorative connotations attached to 'blackness' in post-Soviet Russia through appeals to the USA and traffic of 'cool' US American culture, where blackness is loaded with more positive connotations and used as a term for self-identification:

Younger Roma display a fascination with the music and dress of American "Blacks" on MTV that rivals their fascination with Russians. Those of wealthier, merchant Lovari families, especially, trace their identification with American Blacks not in terms of defeat or second-classness, as did the Keldelari metalworker, but in terms of an "attitude" that they say they can detect in expressions and movements of American musicians that renders them "like us." They also equate blackness with America (as in, "the statue of liberty isn't that where Michael Jackson dances in the video?") and see America as "better than Russia." Thus, they reverse the valence of blackness and shift their own place in racial hierarchies: Roma, if more like American blacks, and thus more like Americans, must be better than Russians. (Lemon 1995:35-36)

Similarly, in her study of hip-hop in Ukraine, Adriana Helbig argues that within post-socialist contexts, 'African American musical genres create fissures in cosmopolitan ways of being' offering 'links to U.S. cultural products and the status invoked through cultural access' (Helbig 2014:10). Because of 'hip hop's historical association with African Americans, music indexes a specifically "American" experience within the broader "West."' (Helbig 2014:10). This resonates well with the research of Maxim Matusевич on the status of postcolonial African students in the late USSR. Matusевич conceptualizes them as 'Soviet moderns': becoming 'conduits of dissent' and modernization, challenging 'Soviet status quo' and parochialism by having access to Western cultural commodities through travel between Western metropolises and the Second world and having more cosmopolitan lifestyles and more money than their Soviet hosts (Matusевич 2012:324).¹²² This cultural backdrop informed Timati's racial translation choices in the 2000s, a period paradoxically characterized by the aesthetics of glamour and neo-Nazi skinhead violence, two manifestations of post-socialist Russian culture. Timati harnessed the cosmopolitan prestige of the US-American idiom of hip-hop blackness to manage the racialized stigma attached to the Russian slur *чёрный*. This is why the English language 'Black' in Timati's 'Black Star' was left untranslated.

In the 2006 album of Timati's early project *VIP77*, recorded in French, Russian, and English in Germany, one song illustrates particularly well how the foreign and modern idiom of race provided by US hip-hop offered a language to address the problems of racism and xenophobia locally even within the most commercial and mainstream versions of the genre. The most intriguing song on the album is called *Расовая Дискриминация* (*Racial discrimination*), referencing the rampant neo-Nazi skinhead

¹²² For alternative interpretations of such cultural encounters see Guillory (Guillory 2014).

violence permeating the 2000s in Russia and particularly the 2002 pogrom at Tsaritsyn market which resulted in three deaths and multiple wounded.¹²³ Performed in three languages, with a section in Russian by Timati, English by Deema, and French by MC Walter, the narratives of a personal encounter with skinhead violence unite the song. Thus, Deema raps in English about his ‘strange face,’ being ‘part Black, part Russian living in a cold thing’ and ‘having no space on this planet because I am different.’ Song’s lyrical chorus reiterates the sense of non-belonging stemming from looking different: *Найди мой дом родной, / найди то место, где я свой /и объясни мне кто к чему /и почему я везде чужой, /почему прохожий, судит по цвету кожи, / нехочу страдать, о Боже, открой им глаза /и скажи, что я не чужой* (Find my native home/ Find the place I belong /Explain to me what’s what / Why I am a stranger everywhere? / Why a passerby judges me by my skin color / I don’t want to suffer / God, open their eyes / Tell them, I am not a stranger).

Black Star label deliberately played with the dynamics of post-Soviet racialization by recruiting emerging hip-hop and R&B artists who embodied this elastic post-Soviet ‘blackness.’ DJ M.E.G. (Eduard Magaev), born in Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia republic, joined the label as a DJ in 2006. After the 2007 R&B and soul festival *Версия о.1*, Black Star invited two participants to join the label: ethnic Armenian R&B performer Music Hayk (Gayk Movsisyan) and an Ossetian singer and DJ from Georgia B.K. (Boris Gabaryov) who would join their efforts in a duo called Tom’n’Jerry.¹²⁴ The band’s perhaps most well-known hit is an explicitly anti-war love song with an anti-fascist message *Любовь и Мир (Love and Peace)* soundtrack to the parodic 2008 comedy *Hitler Kaput!*, featuring Timati and actress Anna Semenovich.¹²⁵ Another telling example is the DJ pseudonym of Timati’s brother, Artyom Yonousov, known within Moscow’s club scene under the moniker DJ Temniy (DJ Swarthy), which points toward both their acute awareness and play on the dynamics of post-Soviet racialization.¹²⁶

In a rare example of cultural criticism that does not overlook this important aspect of the Black Star label, Maria Kuvshinova comments on the translocal play with race and the legacy of socialist internationalism by describing the newly hired artists from the Black Star label in the following way:

Goroziya – a Georgian who grew up in Yakutsk. Doni from Tashkent, Djeegan – a beefcake from Odessa with a giant Magen David on his neck and inked on the back Torah scrolls, looking like The Bear Jew from *Inglorious Basterds*. Twenty-three years old Mot, the only one without tattoos yet, from Kuban, Krymsk. The recent acquisition of the label is Kristina C, from the Russian-Armenian-Azerbaijani family. ‘Yes, we are hot-blooded,’ laughs L’One; there is a presence of temperament in all this.’ ‘This eclecticism, this mix

¹²³ [youtube.com/watch?v=FPeCHHOpG5U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPeCHHOpG5U)

¹²⁴ web.archive.org/web/20151208202548/http://indarnb.ru/mainstream/artists/?artistId=700D4EC5602A0B88

¹²⁵ [youtube.com/watch?v=UujrSL9zhBA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UujrSL9zhBA)

¹²⁶ vokrug.tv/person/show/1621688451

makes music diverse, says Timati; we are for raising the toleration levels. We live in a multinational country; let's not forget that.¹²⁷

Throughout the 2010s, the Black Star label made space for ethnically non-Russian artists from Russia's 'Eastern borderlands' embodying fuzzy post-Soviet 'blackness.' In 2013, Natan Mirov (Natan) from Kazakhstan was signed to the label after winning hip-hop and R&B casting *Молодая кровь* (*Young blood*). In 2018 after the TV project, *Песни* (*Songs*), the Black Star label signed Nazima Djanibekova (Nazima) from Kazakhstan and Oleg Ternovoy (Terry) from Uzbekistan.¹²⁸ New Black Star artists would receive stage names slightly adapted from their own, making them simultaneously appeal to local, national, and transnational audiences. Thus, Dostonbek Islamov got a stage name MC Doni while Kristina Sarkisian's Armenian surname was shortened to Kristina C. The Black Star label's strategy of foregrounding ethnically non-Russian artists allows the label to harness broader and more ethnically diverse post-Soviet audiences within and beyond Russia. By selecting artists who would appeal to audiences not only within Russia but also post-Soviet countries, such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, Black Star could significantly expand its cultural reach and open new markets not only for its artists but also for its products such as Black Star burger and Black Star Wear. Crossover into Central Asian markets resulted in Black Star Wear producing patriotic apparel with Russia's and Kazakstan's national symbols.

However, to argue that Timati' harnessed the US idiom of race as a cosmopolitan resource to alleviate the violence of post-Soviet racialization is to tell only half of the story. His case is so intriguing because it helps illuminate the mutual diffusion of hip-hop with capitalist globalization and neoliberalism. The following section contends that Timati brought from the US not only the idiom of race but also the business model of hip-hop moguls with the dream to emulate it locally.

Hip-hop moguls, business empires, and post-Soviet capitalist realism of Black Star Inc.

I spent my childhood in America, USA. I spent 3-4 years there. My mindset has radically changed there. I saw completely different patterns, how the entertainment industry works, and how show business works there. Celebrities are just a tip of the iceberg, under which you have clothing brands, branded water bottles, headphones, and overseeing other artists. In other words, how musical label works. I always wanted to replicate that.¹²⁹

In this snippet from the 2015 interview with Kseniya Sobchak on the liberal oppositional TVrain channel, Timati acknowledged that what fascinated him about USA

¹²⁷ daily.afisha.ru/archive/volna/archive/rus_rap_timati/

¹²⁸ Ternovoy has a Russian father and Azerbaijani mother. He left Black Star label in 2021.

¹²⁹ tvrain.ru/teleshov/sobchak_zhivem/timati_ksenii_sobchak_o_druzhbe_s_kadyrovym_ramzan_ahmatovich_vsegda_rjadom_chtoby_dat_mne_sovet_v_kakoj_to_slozhnoj_situatsii-380319/

hip-hop during his three and a half years stay there as an adolescent was not only music and dance, rhythm, or the inherent rebelliousness of the genre, but also the business model of US hip-hop moguls, such as P.Diddy and Jay-Z. Such a model is concerned not only with music production per se but with developing additional business ventures around the celebrity persona of hip-hop performers associated with lifestyle consumption – clothing brands, beauty salons, fast food chains, and partnerships with brands. Music within this model is only a marginal part of the business. This entrepreneurial ethos and stories of the success of US hip-hop moguls served as an inspiring example for Timati and his partners, driving the development of Black Star Inc. in the context of Russia's emergent entertainment industries. In this section, I first turn to how the figure of the US hip-hop mogul has been discussed in the academic literature and then provide a snapshot of Black Star Inc.'s entrepreneurial success in Russia inspired by this model. I show how Timati, through his strategic mediation between US hip-hop celebrities and Russian elites yearning for glamour, has secured himself a transnational career using his ethnoracial malleability and capacity for mediation as a resource.

Scholars of US hip-hop locate the figure of the hip-hop mogul as central to the cultural redefinition of the genre at the end of the 1990s-early 2000s. Christopher Holmes Smith argues that 'the emergence of the hip-hop mogul as a visual signifier for the "good life" identifies growth-mediated forms of social uplift as rapidly normalizing black political discourses, as opposed to the support-led communal development blueprints from the civil rights era' (Holmes Smith 2003:71). The hip-hop mogul's 'upward mobility becomes emblematic of the aspirations of a largely disenfranchised constituency', while he 'inspires his more downtrodden constituents to "buy in" to the emerging paradigm of accessible luxury and social status and in the process assumes an influential role as social mediator' (Holmes Smith 2003:71). The hip-hop mogul's lifestyle both represents opulence, glamour, and aspiration and serves 'as a symbolic proxy for the more mundane strivings of those with whom the mogul shares an apparent racial or ethnic affiliation' (Holmes Smith 2003:70). Adam Coombs analyzed how hip-hop artist and billionaire Jay-Z participates in the 'cultural tradition of black entrepreneurs who commodify their narratives as a form of uplift and testament to financial accumulation,' while Jay-Z's music 'describes a rags-to-riches story, implicitly offering an inspirational and aspirational model to others' (Coombs 2019:360). For Coombs, in the narratives advanced by hip-hop moguls like Jay-Z, 'pursuit of billions' is framed as a 'contribution to racial uplift' and 'the economic achievements of the black elite are meant to serve as a marker of social change' (Coombs 2019:361). In his piece on entrepreneurial ethics and what he calls 'black vernacular neoliberalism,' Paul Gilroy traces the political shift which has reconfigured 'the relationship between black and migrant communities and the neoliberal thematics of uplift, self-responsibility, and self-improvement' (Gilroy 2013:23). For Gilroy, hip-hop artist 50 Cent (Curtis Jackson) and his business entrepreneurialism make him a 'popular avatar of the demotic neoliberalism that is both steeped in and

warranted by several generations of uplift and self-reliance narratives that supplied ideational ballast to earlier versions of the proposition that liberation from racial hierarchy could be achieved through the medium of black capitalism' (Gilroy 2013:31).

Important for my work is Gilroy's acknowledgment of the 'significance of African American culture as both a conduit and a source of these enduringly powerful examples of progress and uplift thanks to business acumen and financial gain' (Gilroy 2013:28). He argues that 'unique seductions and pleasures of the US black vernacular' become part of the USA's cultural and military diplomacy which gets diffracted globally (Gilroy 2013:28). The story of Black Star Inc's dazzling success in post-Soviet Russia and beyond, which revolves around the brand name and celebrity persona of Timati is part of the process of this global diffraction built on the ruins of post-socialism.



Figure 8. Walter Tschassem in Black Star office with 50 cent's portrait on the wall. Photo credit: Unidentified

Timati, together with his business partners and childhood friends Pavel Kurianov and Walter Tschassem, have been diligent students following in the footsteps of and learning from the business practices of US hip-hop moguls. The portrait of 50 Cent decorates the Black Star office walls of Walter Tschassem. It is crucial to note that the transfer of these business practices occurred in the epoch of Russia's so-called 'fat 2000s', characterized by sky-high oil revenues and unscrupulous spending of the elites yearning for excesses of glamour. When in the late 2000s, Black Star ran several luxurious nightclubs in Moscow, part of the revenues came through the mediation between global and regional markets:

organizing concerts and private performances of top US hip-hop celebrities in Russia.¹³⁰ The fruits of this mediation were visible already on Timati's second album, *The Boss* (2009), comprised of a mixture of tracks both in Russian and English, with several hit songs recorded with top US hip-hop and R&B celebrities such as Xzibit, Busta Rhymes, and Mario Winans. Several of them were later released as videos: bilingual *Forever* with Mario Winans in a chinchilla coat dancing in the snow in front of Saint Basil's Cathedral on the Red Square in January 2009;¹³¹ English-language *Groove On* with Snoop Dogg in March 2009¹³² and *Love You* with Busta Rhymes and Mariya in December 2009.¹³³

Such dazzling transnational success, however, hardly helped alleviate Timati's domestic reputation of chronic inauthenticity in Russian hip-hop circles. The music critic of Russian hip-hop Nikitin characterized Timati's album *The Boss* as 'offensive

¹³⁰ [youtube.com/watch?v=lfjTZ7zJlak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfjTZ7zJlak)

¹³¹ [youtube.com/watch?v=aVBe3O1zALk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVBe3O1zALk)

¹³² [youtube.com/watch?v=3TDnoUWKuuU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3TDnoUWKuuU)

¹³³ [youtube.com/watch?v=eSQDcyQskzE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSQDcyQskzE)

secondariness' with empty texts, too easy to trace parallels to the Western hip-hop artists, and outdated sonic trends. Timati's borrowings from Kanye West are seen as shameless appropriations and thinly veiled adaptations of the original to 'Russian realia':

Timati was not ashamed to take the instrumental Clipse on the previous album and present it as his own composition, "Zombie." But here, there is a very shameless and, at the same time, revealing case. The song "Alone" turns out to be the translation of Kanye West's "Welcome To Heartbreak," or rather a close-to-the-lyrics adaptation to the Russian realia arranged and performed in the close to the original manner.

In this review, potential domestic audiences for Timati's album are mockingly described by Nikitin as people active on the social network Odnoklassniki.ru (back at the time, *vk.com* was considered more modern and *odnoklassniki* backward), who are content to listen to the second-rate *переделки песен* Kanye West (alterations of Kanye West's songs).¹³⁴ Russian hip-hop fans who comment on Timati's video with Snoop Dogg repeatedly joked that Timati must have drugged the US rapper to make him agree to record the video together or fooled him into believing that Timati is considered a 'real' rapper in Russia.¹³⁵ The explanation for the willingness of top US hip-hop celebrities to record tracks and videos with Timati is much simpler, being openly acknowledged in the rapper's interviews.

In one of the interviews, Timati explains to a journalist that the US mainstream hip-hop industry is a commercial endeavor, and no one is expected to record songs for free: *Никто в Штатах не скрывает, что они пишутся за бабки. Все завязано на кэше* (No one in the States is hiding the fact they record tracks to earn money. It's all about the cash).¹³⁶ Timati reveals the workings of the peculiar barter economy he was able to secure through the mediation of the global fame of US hip-hop celebrities to wealthy post-Soviet audiences who were willing to pay. After recording tracks and videos with Timati, US hip-hop celebrities could access the lucrative possibilities and exaggerated honorariums for concerts and private shows for post-Soviet economic elites ready to pay double or even triple to have a hip-hop celebrity performing at their parties. The scope of honorariums is described in Timati's interview excerpt below:

Snoop, strange as it may seem, had never been to Russia before doing the feat with me. After that, he did five shows: two public and three private. Busta Rhymes came here four times after our track. But Puffy (P. Diddy) said he wouldn't come to Russia unless he was paid more than Jennifer Lopez. And his ex-wife was once paid \$2 million to perform at Telman Ismailov's anniversary party. Puffy heard about it and did not want to go for less.¹³⁷

If, in early Soviet times, US black pilgrims, to use Baldwin's terms (Baldwin 2002), were traveling to the Soviet Union inspired by anti-racist promises of socialist internationalism, post-Soviet pilgrimages of US hip-hop celebrities to capitalist Russia, such as Snoop Dogg and Busta Rhymes were instead informed by possibilities to earn

¹³⁴ rap.ru/review/160

¹³⁵ hip-hop.ru/forum/timati-feat-snoop-dogg-groove-on-klip-219880

¹³⁶ rap.ru/reading/86

¹³⁷ rap.ru/reading/86

millions at private performances for post-Soviet oligarchs. There were strange excesses of these travelings, such as when Snoop Dogg starred in Pavel Houdyakov's 2013 feature movie *Odnoklassniki.ru* as a computer repair guy with a hidden marijuana-growing facility in the back of his Moscow repair workshop.¹³⁸ By securing feats with US hip-hop celebrities, Timati received access to Western music markets with much more significant revenues based on legal sales of ringtones, tracks, and digital distribution of his music through European labels.

The stream of transnationally oriented cultural productions culminated with Timati's third album, *SWAGG*, released in June 2012 and recorded entirely in English. The album's biggest hit is a dance remix of *Welcome to St. Tropez* by DJ Antoine, which topped the European music charts in 2012, surpassing Lady Gaga.¹³⁹ US hip-hop celebrity presence on the album was bursting with top names. Most of the songs were released as videos as well: *Money in the Bank* with Eve in April 2011,¹⁴⁰ *I am on You* with P.Diddy, and DJ Antoine in January 2012,¹⁴¹ *Sex in the Bathroom* with Craig David in October 2012,¹⁴² *Not All About the Money* with Timbaland, La La Land, and Grooya in June 2012¹⁴³ and *I Don't Mind* with Flo Rida in September 2013.¹⁴⁴ Almost all of these videos were shot by Timati's long-term collaborator, director Pavel Houdiakov in tandem with his wife and producer Kornelia Polyak.

Timati characterized his collaboration with P. Diddy as the highest career achievement: 'In the urban industry, he is one of the top five headliners, next to Jay-Z, Eminem, 50 Cent, and Kanye West. These people are the absolute leaders of the global hip-hop movement today.'¹⁴⁵ P. Diddy, a hip-hop mogul and a multi-millionaire, has long inspired Timati with his business acumen and ability to generate financial opportunities. In one interview, Timati calls P.Diddy a 'money-making machine,' a person who can 'monetize everything' and who is crazy about the business.¹⁴⁶ In collaboration with Timati in the video *I am on You*, P. Diddy describes himself as a 'black Russian': I am the black Russian / We poppin' bottles, we spend the cash/ And I ain't nothing, so bring your friend.

Throughout the 2010s, the Black Star music label grew in size and became professionalized, but not without the help of hired business coaches such as Ilja Kusakin. In 2012 Timati described the primary mission of his label as 'helping young talents promote their content on the market and monetize themselves, but also to break Russian stereotypes that money-making is bad and being a successful entrepreneur is

¹³⁸ youtube.com/watch?v=QF7gLjMui7o

¹³⁹ youtube.com/watch?v=Kh2FRFhS7QY

¹⁴⁰ youtube.com/watch?v=CrkoTK-K_oU

¹⁴¹ youtube.com/watch?v=owZ8sUllVag

¹⁴² youtube.com/watch?v=rrA1lZ6aQ7g

¹⁴³ youtube.com/watch?v=o_YUjXHGsoU

¹⁴⁴ youtube.com/watch?v=aupA8iyP7iY

¹⁴⁵ rap.ru/news/484

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

shameful for the musicians.¹⁴⁷ The effort to modernize the Russian music industry propelled the need to eliminate the outdated relics from the socialist past, such as associations of money-making with immorality. This also entailed creating more modern types of personhood, openly commercial Black Star music artists who would not be ashamed to earn money and approach music as a business, in line with the realities of capitalist transition and new rules of the game in the entertainment industries. By the mid-2010s, Black Star label's business ventures expanded into new markets, following the footsteps of hip-hop moguls like P. Diddy. A range of lifestyle businesses around Timati's celebrity persona appeared: an eponymous clothing line catering to post-Soviet youth, a chain of tattoo studios and barbershops, and multiple other companies such as gaming studios, a marketing agency, car washings, fitness studios, and carting.¹⁴⁸

In 2016 a fast food chain called Black Star Burger was opened, co-owned by restaurateur and entrepreneur Yuri Levitas, who was behind the signature concept of serving burgers in black gloves. Before emigrating to the USA prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Levitas engaged in ad-hoc commercial trade, which characterized the late-Soviet perestroika spirit.¹⁴⁹ Much like Timati, who epitomizes the transfer of US business practices as more modern models to implement on post-Soviet soil, Levitas opened a glitzy restaurant, One More Club, upon relocating back to Russia in the mid-2000s, which became popular among the Moscow elites. Levitas describes how the idea of Black Star Burger came about:

In 2015 I realized that the world has changed. A good example is Kardashian/West family, monetizing their Instagram subscribers. I started analyzing who out of Russian celebrities has the biggest and most loyal audience.¹⁵⁰

Black Star Burger, like BlackStarWear, operates through a franchise business model, selling licenses to local entrepreneurs in the regions and abroad to operate under the brand's name. Black Star owns only a few restaurants in Moscow. The expansion of Black Star Burger to Russia's neighboring CIS countries indicates the reach of the cultural influence of the Black Star label: there are no restaurants in Ukraine where the entry of Black Star artists is forbidden, but there are restaurants in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.¹⁵¹ The case of successful localization of such quintessentially American food as burgers through the Black Star label brand and celebrity capital of Timati maps well on the quest to produce 'high-quality products' musical or otherwise, using the business templates of US music industries.

¹⁴⁷ rap.ru/reading/85

¹⁴⁸ meduza.io/feature/2019/11/05/lyuboy-kosyak-obrastaet-sluhami

¹⁴⁹ youtube.com/watch?v=AnToT931SFk

¹⁵⁰ rap.ru/reading/20515

¹⁵¹ Several artists from Black Star label were banned from entering Ukraine in 2016 for their visits to Crimea and general support of the Russian government, vesti.ua/kultura/209076-za-hto-pevitse-kristina-si-zapretili-vezd-v-ukrainu



Figure 9. Timati's commercial for Tantum Verde. Photo credit:facebook.com/timatimusic/posts/1657659387588065

Timati and the Black Star label have become notorious for peppering the music videos with the label's artists with product placements, which has resulted in substantial advertising revenues. While many hip-hop fans in Russia despise Timati for selling out and for the overly commercial spirit permeating Black Star label's artists' cultural productions, the rapper proudly calls himself an entrepreneur who does mainstream commercial rap and is not ashamed to approach hip-hop as a business. In his interviews, when asked about the excessive commercialism of the Black Star label, Timati refers to US hip-hop artists as the authorizing examples to follow, stressing that they are not ashamed to earn money and cross over into

genres such as pop to generate higher profits:¹⁵²

We all look up to America because that's where hip-hop came from; they're the lawmakers. And in their country, it is considered shameful not to make money... After all, it's great if you can afford to buy your wife the latest model of a car or if you can send your family on a trip abroad. It's cool to make money. It's not cool to sit with a beer or chug joints and rap about how life sucks, the cops are corrupt, and there is no future.¹⁵³

This spirit of capitalist realism is worn as a badge of achievement and even sincerity: music is business and should bring profit, claims Timati in his interviews, proudly calling his rap for Tantum Verde spray commercial his 'most important song.'¹⁵⁴ The fact that the Black Star label generates a stream of promotional offers from high-profile brands is construed by Timati through a managerial ethos: as a sign of quality, efficiency, and an indicator of the professional maturity of the company.¹⁵⁵ Throughout his interviews, Timati claims he is learning from the best in the global music industry, pointing out that such top US hip-hop labels as Def Jam work with sponsors and that the top-selling US hip-hop artists integrate product placements in their videos.¹⁵⁶ Black Star label is first and foremost a 'commercial organization,' explains Timati, where art involves monetization, and the bigger the revenues, the more can be invested in the future projects of the label: 'the cooler our products and content.'¹⁵⁷ This expansionist drive into

¹⁵² rap.ru/reading/20105

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ meduza.io/feature/2017/11/07/timati-i-oksimiron-drug-za-drugom-vystupili-v-olimpiyskom-kto-by-luchshe

¹⁵⁵ rhyme.ru/timati-osnovnaya-ideya-poluchit-albom-goda-2016

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

broader markets results in Timati's and Black Star label artists' commercial integrations, crossovers into pop music, and forays into Russian TV industries. In the 2010s, Timati appeared in several high-profile TV shows, such as the talent show *Песни (Songs)*, and after quitting Black Star in 2020 *Холостяк (Bachelor)* on the TNT TV channel.

Few scholars or commentators on Russian hip-hop have managed to grasp the broader implications of Timati's business empire-building drive and commercial instinct. Phillip Ewell is incisive in his elaboration, suggesting the following interpretation of Timati's 2012 support of Putin's presidential campaign:

Timati's involvement in politics does not endear him to Russia's cultural elite, but it needs to be said that he, more than others, is a true hip-hop artist. By this I mean that he uses all available channels at his disposal to further his career and achieve his goals. To be sure, there are those who would call this opportunism as well as those who might call him a sell-out, and that might be a fair judgment for Timati. But no one can deny that, in the face of "keeping it real," the most successful hip-hop artists in the United States are, to one extent or another, opportunistic. That Timati has branched out to start his own line of clothing (Black Star by TIMATI) and his own production company (Star Factory 4) is in line with many of the biggest names in American hip hop, such as P. Diddy or Jay Z. (Ewell 2017:58–59).

Although the figure of Timati often overshadows the label's co-founders, Pashu Kuryanov and Walter Tchassem, the lavish imaginaries of hip-hop moguldom also inspire their lifestyles. The financial director of Black Star Inc., Walter Tchassem, known by the French nickname Walter le Russe, playing with the imaginaries of malleable Russianness, has over a million followers on Instagram.¹⁵⁸ Tchassem provides his subscribers with sneak peeks of his luxurious lifestyle as a hip-hop mogul, which he shares with his wife, Cindy Tchassem (aka Cindy La Russe¹⁵⁹), and their kids. Sporting luxurious clothing items, private jets, vacations in Portofino and St. Tropez, and other conspicuous consumption attributes, the couple is inspired by US celebrity power couples such as Beyonce and Jay-Z in their lavish display of wealth and opulence. On the African francophone media pages, Walter Tchassem is celebrated as a 'Russian billionaire' who built a 'burger empire,'¹⁶⁰ a model of success to follow for young Africans dreaming of economic uplift.¹⁶¹ In the interview given to *Le Monde*, the couple narrates their business success in Russia as: 'We want to make other young Africans dream' and 'there is this idea that the African is born to suffer, but this isn't true, you have to believe in yourself and work!'¹⁶² Similar ideas of uplift, self-sufficiency, and economic empowerment for 'African brothers and sisters' through hard work were expressed in Walter Tchassem's interview¹⁶³ on the YouTube channel *Nzwamba*. In the interview, the Tchassem couple reports to have never suffered racism in Russia despite the

¹⁵⁸ [instagram.com/walterlerusse](https://www.instagram.com/walterlerusse)

¹⁵⁹ [instagram.com/cindy_la_russe](https://www.instagram.com/cindy_la_russe)

¹⁶⁰ voaafrique.com/a/v%C3%A9ritable-r%C3%A9ussite-d-un-couple-camerounais-%C3%A0-moscou/5138252.html

¹⁶¹ lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/10/23/ici-tout-est-possible-a-moscou-la-success-story-d-un-couple-camerounais_6016603_3212.html

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ [youtube.com/watch?v=hR5Tor6LV9s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hR5Tor6LV9s)

country's bad reputation on this ground domestically and internationally: 'I have never felt that; the new generation of Russians travels, they understand things.' Similarly, the lack of Russia's colonial legacies in Africa is stressed when Walter Tschassem comments on the ease of having a business in Russia as a person from Africa and becoming rich: 'I think it is less difficult here than in a country that colonized Africa.'¹⁶⁴ Ironically in 2021, the Black Star label officially opened a label branch in Paris, France, a country with a rich legacy of colonization of Africa, where the Tschassem family spends much of their time.



Figure 10. Timati, Pashu and Walter, Black Star label founders.
Photo credit: tntmusic.ru/4962-black-star-nachal-podpisyvat-pervykh-artistov-v-ssha/

The spirit of inclusive celebrity elite cosmopolitanism or capitalist internationalism, allowing for ludic ethnoracial malleability as the moniker LeRusse indicates (much like P.Diddy's calling himself 'Black Russian'), is highlighted by Cindy Tschassem, who stresses that the Black Star label was found by 'an African, a Jew, and a Russian.'¹⁶⁵ Russian journalists routinely describe the branched network of

Black Star businesses using the borrowed English expression 'business empire.' According to the data provided in 2021 in Forbes Russia journal, Timati earned 10.4 USD million between June 2020- and May 2021.¹⁶⁶ The lavish lifestyles of Black Star label founders inspired by the ethnoracially diverse transnational capitalist class of entertainers and celebrities illustrate the entangled process of simultaneous dissemination of the 'US model of racial categorization and racism' and the 'dual globalization of neoliberalism and black symbols' (Bonnett 2021:21–22). This dissemination is not a passive process: it is enacted through the entrepreneurial agency of local actors inspired by the templates of US cultural industries and hip-hop moguldom construed as culturally advanced and modern examples to follow.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tracked how Timati, enamored with US hip-hop via his direct experience of the subculture in the USA, has brought the aesthetics of US hip-hop to Russia as a cosmopolitan cultural capital which helped him alleviate the violence of post-

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*

¹⁶⁶ forbes.ru/rating/434657-50-samyh-uspeshnyh-zvezd-rossii-reyting-forbes

Soviet racialization. His integration of mainstream US hip-hop and R&B into post-Soviet markets was closely intertwined with Russia's capitalist transition, building onto emergent entertainment industries such as reality TV, elite nightclub scenes, and the private shows of US hip-hop celebrities for the new economic elites. His ability to mediate between markets and ethnoracial malleability allowed him to approximate US racial authenticity, achieve transnational success and build a domestic urban music label based on the examples of US hip-hop moguls and US business practices. Paradoxically, all this hardly helped Timati's reputation of chronic hip-hop inauthenticity within the Russian hip-hop scene. Timati's hip-hop seemed forever haunted by derogatory accusations of being too foreign, mimicking US rap too closely, and showing off his swag too excessively. In the next chapter, I will trace how from 2012 onwards, in the attempt to manage the domestic stigma of imitation of US hip-hop, Timati began his pursuit of Russian hip-hop authenticity, searching for a common language with his domestic, post-Soviet audiences. This search relied on racial translation strategies that would allow him to achieve more solid hip-hop realness and translate the US black masculinity into a locally familiar idiom of racial and gendered difference.

9. From mimetism to memetics: Caucasian regional originals, vicarious realness, and hip-hop homophobia

Introduction

Although between 2012 and 2013, Timati continued recording songs and videos for Western markets and collaborating with US hip-hop celebrities, this period also inaugurated the beginning of the reorientation of his hip-hop towards domestic post-Soviet audiences. This process came to full fruition only several years later, resulting in the cultural production discussed in chapters 10 and 11. As I argued earlier, Timati's reputation among Russian hip-hop fans made him a champion of inauthenticity. His struggle for authenticity also relates to the broader issue of Russian hip-hop's search for its identity vis-à-vis the US model intimately tied to US Black masculinity. In this chapter, I conceptualize Timati's quest for domestic hip-hop authenticity as a move away from mimetism to memetics, a process that harnessed the emergent power of social media in 2012. Envisioned as a way to negotiate the stigma of chronic inauthenticity and manage the perennial accusations of mimicking US rap, this memetic turn relied on several interlinked translation strategies: hip-hop homophobia, virality, vicarious realness, and regional originals, all of which were further developed from 2014 to 2016 during Russia's geopolitical turn away from the West. The search for 'regional originals' concerns Timati's attempts to manage the stigma of inauthenticity by translating US black hip-hop realness into the local idiom of ethnoracial and sexual difference found in Caucasian masculinities. In this chapter, I argue that two specific videos are central to the understanding of this emerging shift: the 2012 hip-hop cipher inspired by viral Azerbaijani-Talysh *meykhana* #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ and the 2013 video *Что видишь ты* (2013) shot in Argun Gorge, Chechnya mountains.

Building on the scholarship on queer and camp aesthetics in Russian pop music and academic discussions of hip-hop homophobia, this chapter aims to trace how in an attempt to boost his domestic hip-hop authenticity, Timati relied on proximity to Russian rappers with more established street credentials, using a strategy I call 'vicarious realness.' Deploying homophobia central to hip-hop discourses of authenticity, Timati exploited the memetic capital of viral *meykhana* and translated it into homophobic hip-hop diss against the star of Russian pop music Phillip Kirkorov. I show how Timati instrumentalized homophobia to distinguish Russian hip-hop as a genre from Russian pop music and position himself firmly within the former through disidentification with the latter. The strategy of vicarious realness also informs Timati's friendship with Ramzan Kadyrov as an embodiment of Caucasian masculine warrior realness. I provide a reading of the video shot in Argun Gorge. I argue that in this video, paradoxically

informed by Russian Imperial tropes, the Caucasus figures as a space for Timati's masculine maturation.

What I suggest needs to be grasped at this stage is the semi-autonomous logic of these processes, which cannot be reduced to Russian political, state-sponsored uses of homophobia alone and might be better understood as an intricate play of differentiation and distinction within and between Russian music scenes. Throughout the chapter, I suggest placing Timati's use of homophobic rhetoric at the intersection of hip-hop masculinities, social media virality, hype-driven celebrity PR industries, and the hip-hop genre of beef.

Translating South Caucasian homosociality of *meykhana* into a homophobic hip-hop diss

Within hip-hop culture, the term 'beef' means a feud between hip-hop artists. Beefing may result in fights, hip-hop battles, the production of 'diss' tracks (disrespect), and in rare cases, murders. Battle rap constitutes one prominent example of beef culture. The rise of social media in the 2010s made Twitter and other platforms a fertile ground for hip-hop beefs and feuds. Some scholars have even called the coming together of hip-hop and social media 'the deadly symbiosis' (Patton, Eschmann, and Butler 2013:A57). The rise of social media platforms coincided with the digitization of musical consumption, introducing streaming instead of CDs as the primary mode of music distribution. Timati, who openly positions himself as a representative of mainstream commercial hip-hop, is rather understandably rarely seen as a battle rapper, having never accepted public invitations for hip-hop battles. This stance predictably supports his image of profound hip-hop inauthenticity among Russian hip-hop fans. However, I aim to show that since 2012 Timati, like no other rapper in Russia, has been actively involved in beefing and dissing. However, to see what kind of battles and beefs were involved, one needs to widen an analytical perspective: shifting from an exclusive focus on the genre of Russian hip-hop to a broader look at Russian music industries and the emergent power of social media at the time.

Timati's hip-hop reorientation towards both memetics and domestic audiences relied on a peculiar adaptation of the hip-hop culture of beefs. This adaptation operated through the nascent social media economy of hype and scandal, boosting Timati's domestic hip-hop authenticity. Timati's highly unorthodox beefs crossed the borders of the music genres: he often beefed with closeted Russian gay male pop stars, not Russian rappers.¹⁶⁷ Timati's beefs sometimes involved songs and videos but mainly boiled down

¹⁶⁷ For an account of the prolonged beef between Timati and Oxxxymiron consult these Russian rap video-essays: youtube.com/watch?v=PE5xd8xiTKc; youtube.com/watch?v=YqdulhmuEBI. Although interpreted as a beef, it is a matter of debate to what extent this term adequately describes more subtle dynamics described in the videos.

to prolonged public feuds with Russian celebrities, constantly generating media attention. Such scandals stretched over the years, spread like fire through social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube, and sometimes made it to TV screens. Like no other Russian celebrity, Timati harnessed the emerging power of social media virality and memetics as early as 2012. Converting virality into profits, he strategically used hyped media scandals to boost his career and improve the reputation of the Black Star label as a 'real' hip-hop label. Other Russian celebrities and pop stars later followed that model. An especially prominent example is rapper Morgenstern, generating profit-bringing media scandals almost daily between 2019 and 2021. Unsurprisingly, Morgenstern has repeatedly publicly called himself the 'new Timati' and opened a fast-food burger chain and a restaurant to monetize his fame.¹⁶⁸ The sections below analyze Timati's first beef based on an outing and homophobic bashing of famous Russian pop and *Estrada* icon Phillip Kirkorov, where the logic I sketched above first crystallized.

In June 2012, Timati released a YouTube video with the hashtag name #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ (*Piss off!/Get out!*), a homophobic diss on Kirkorov. The video was released shortly after a Twitter scandal between two artists. On his Twitter account, Timati publicly criticized what he read as an unfair distribution of the 2012 music awards at the yearly ceremony on the Muz-Tv channel, where Kirkorov was nominated as the best performer of the year.¹⁶⁹ Kirkorov dismissed Timati's criticism casting it as unprofessional. The Twitter exchange quickly escalated: Timati questioned Kirkorov as an artist and released a tweet with a homophobic slur and a hashtag from the viral *mevkhana* video circulating on YouTube at the time: *Берега не путай, я не из твоей петушиной обоймы,*¹⁷⁰ *запомни это!!! И ДАВАЙ ДОСВИДАНИЯ* (Don't mess with me, I am not of your fag kind, remember! Goodbye!).¹⁷¹ Later, Timati launched a Twitter hashtag incorporating Kirkorov's name: #филлиппдавайдосвидания (Phillip, piss off!/Get out!), which quickly trended and gained broad public and media attention. The heated social media scandal involving the music celebrity of Kirkorov's caliber prompted the Muz-Tv channel to record a talk show discussing the confrontation.¹⁷² Timati did not appear on the show, preferring to reply to Kirkorov via a memetic homophobic video diss. The diss was filmed as a remake of the original viral video from a rural Azerbaijani wedding which initially generated the #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ hashtag.¹⁷³ Before I describe the original video and its peculiar adaptation by Timati, I would like to set the scene for this chapter by contextualizing queer expression in the mainstream Russian pop scene.

¹⁶⁸ Later, Morgenstern was forced not to return to Russia and was labeled a 'foreign agent.'

¹⁶⁹ The award was granted to Dima Bilan, with whom Timati will later have another beef relying on homophobia in 2014.

¹⁷⁰ From Russian word *nemyx* (rooster), offensive slur for male homosexual.

¹⁷¹ tjournal.ru/news/46658-timati-kirkorov

¹⁷² youtube.com/watch?v=icftC1zTcVI

¹⁷³ youtube.com/watch?v=UFUtDdgEYwk

Kirkorov is among many Russian pop stars who explicitly shatter norms of masculinity and heteronormativity in their costumes, videos, and scene performances and embrace camp aesthetics (Amico 2014; Brock and Miazhevich 2021; Zhaivoronok 2018). Contemporary Russian pop music is also known as *эстрада* (*Estrada*), the word which can refer both to the genre and metonymically to its representatives.¹⁷⁴ The visually oriented genre of *Estrada* originated in the USSR, with features such as ‘sentimentality, theatricality, aesthetic excess and “lichnost” (star power, persona)’ as well as elements of ‘homoeroticism and corporeality’ (Brock and Miazhevich 2021:3). Post-Soviet sexual openness in the 1990s, or as some scholars put it, the ‘first queer revolution’ (Engström 2020), found its articulation through Russian popular culture and music. In the 90s and early 2000s, many mainstream pop stars produced dazzling video performances that embodied ‘queer’ or ‘camp’ aesthetics and established themselves within post-Soviet *Estrada*. Many of them became canonical and influential figures in Russian celebrity culture. Challenging the norms of gender and sexuality but not publicly claiming any forms of Western-style LGBT identities, these pop celebrities illustrate the paradox of post-Soviet LGBT subcultures (Essig 1999). Some scholars may celebrate them as more fluid forms of affiliation than Western-style identity-based LGBT politics. Others have argued that such a celebration of sexual fluidity contains potential elements of the exoticization of non-Western societies. According to Baer, this stance may be read as ‘no less colonizing, and one might even say the orientaling gesture of imagining non-western societies as utopias – in particular, queer utopias’ (Baer 201b:185). However, the paradox remains - the coexistence of vernacular and political homophobia with a vibrant transgressive pop scene. Stephen Amico framed this conundrum a ‘baffling contradiction: if homosexuality was truly anathema to the vast majority of Russians, how could so many embodied examples of a “*netraditsionnaia seksual’naia orientatsiia*” be found in the mass media, and why, specifically this form—this musical form—of popular culture?’ (Amico 2014:66).

Recent retrospective cultural trend, perhaps facilitated by the ‘conservative turn,’ looks with fascination into how ‘untraditional’ the early post-Soviet 1990s Russian pop scene has been, compiling lists of videos showcasing this creativity.¹⁷⁵ For Maria Engström, it is the nostalgia for the mythologized queer 1990s that, in many ways, informs what she calls the new ‘Russian queer renaissance,’ expressed by the younger generation of cultural producers such as Alexandr Gudkov, Shortparis, Cream Soda, and intersecting in many ways with neo-camp aesthetics of the mid-2010s embodied by music bands like Little Big and many other performers (Engström 2019, 2020). In the contemporary context of the post-2013 conservative turn in Russia, where the Russian government has framed queerness as a Western threat to Russian cultural sovereignty,

¹⁷⁴ There is also a distinction between the two, partly generational. *Estrada* as applied to Russian pop music is associated with more established performers such as Alla Pugacheva, Phillip Kirkorov and others.

¹⁷⁵ See for example wonderzine.com/wonderzine/entertainment/music/226286-russian-queer-pop or bok-o-bok.com/rubrikblog/kvir-estetika-v-rossiyskikh-muzikalnykh-videoklipakh-chast-1

it is somewhat counterintuitive to witness the proliferation of queer aesthetics. Engström acknowledges its potential to normalize queerness and argues that ‘the mass production of queer visibility as a new norm and new natural order appearing even on Channel One also frames queer populism as a neoliberal entertainment industry’ (Engström 2020). Engström’s argument regarding the recent neutralization of queerness through patriotic/populist seems worth exploring. When it comes to the ‘older’ generation of Russian pop celebrities in the closet, with few exceptions (see Zhaivoronok 2018 on Kirkorov), they rarely publicly step forward against LGBT discrimination out of fear of losing the support of their predominantly female audiences. When one of the pop gay icons and Eurovision contender Sergey Lazarev was asked in a 2013 interview why Russian pop stars like Kirkorov do not come out and do not speak out against the LGBT propaganda law, he quite straightforwardly replied that they are afraid.¹⁷⁶ At the same time, in their art and public performances, they openly transgress normative gender and sexuality scripts.

Brock and Miazhevich’s analysis of Kirkorov’s persona, exploring the translatability of Western camp and queer neo-camp into Russian *Estrada*, investigates to what extent the non-normativity of Russian pop music might have the attenuating potential vis-à-vis state homophobia (Brock and Miazhevich 2021:2). The authors’ conclusion retains the ambivalence, claiming that Kirkorov both deconstructs heteronormativity through his flamboyance, yet his neo-camp married to Russian *Estrada* fails to step beyond aesthetics into the realm of political, being too deeply immersed into establishment discourses and commercial demands (Brock and Miazhevich 2021:12–13). Despite public rhetoric of ‘traditional values,’ homosexuality persistently haunts the public imagination in Russia. Rumors and allegations of homosexuality and alleged fake cover-up marriages of closeted Russian pop stars permeate tabloid media,¹⁷⁷ homophobic commentary,¹⁷⁸ and LGBT subcultures¹⁷⁹ alike. Among recent examples worth mentioning is Alex Nazarov’s video called *Forbidden Love. Prominent gays of Russia* published in 2019 on his YouTube channel.¹⁸⁰ Scoring over 2,5 million views, it is an example of a rare foray into the subject performed from LGBT-friendly and insider perspectives (Nazarov worked as a journalist on an NTV TV channel). In this video, Nazarov closely addresses the phenomenon of cover-up marriages of well-known Russian celebrities, hiding their sexual orientation for fear of audience backlash. Colloquially, a woman entering such a relationship is called in the Russian language *борода* (the beard), an expression borrowed from English.¹⁸¹ The term emphasizes the deceptive nature of such alliances, built around the dialectics of exposure and concealment: the beard covers up something hidden not to be revealed. Nazarov ends his video, taken down by YouTube several times

¹⁷⁶ archives.colta.ru/docs/15410

¹⁷⁷ [youtube.com/watch?v=AjH64g4mjWE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjH64g4mjWE)

¹⁷⁸ [youtube.com/watch?v=QrO-DJLUcsw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrO-DJLUcsw)

¹⁷⁹ [youtube.com/watch?v=_FsnE8vvSFk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_FsnE8vvSFk)

¹⁸⁰ [youtube.com/channel/UCCnWgIv221UsNVuhGJZgQlg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCCnWgIv221UsNVuhGJZgQlg)

¹⁸¹ The significance of the beard and beardedness for my PhD project will be revealed later.

due to alleged copyright complaints, with a passionate plea towards Sergey Lazarev and other Russian celebrities to come out of the closet for the sake of ordinary Russian gays. Turning the usual heteronormative hierarchy of normality upside down, Nazarov claims that it is not homosexuality that is abnormal but Russian gay pop stars that lie to infatuated female fans, profiting from manipulating their feelings. For Nazarov, one of the reasons why Lazarev lost the 2019 Eurovision song contest¹⁸² was ‘people sensing the falsehood,’ juxtaposing him to an openly gay Dutch singer who has ended up as a winner by not concealing his homosexuality. ‘Being true’ for Nazarov is read as sincerity and openness about one’s orientation, while being ‘fake’ and ‘false’ is interpreted as hiding behind ‘the beard’ and not publicly coming out.

When the Twitter controversy erupted between Timati and Kirkorov in 2012, Nikita Jigurda, a hypermasculine celebrity, was one of the few stars who publicly supported Timati. In the 2012 interview with the journal *Sobesednik*, titled *Nikita Dzhigurda: I dream of leading a gay pride parade!* Jigurda explained his reasons for this support, which somewhat paradoxically unites homophobic rhetoric, a quest for sincerity, pushing Russian celebrities to come out, and even gay friendliness, suggesting he would be the first to lead a pride parade if they would come out publicly:¹⁸³

Jigurda: What did Timati and his friends say? They don’t like that gays are in the guise of men, seize show business channels and don’t let heterosexual youngsters in (*геи, прикрывающиеся обликом мужчин, захватывают каналы в шоубизнесе и не пускают туда молодняк гетеросексуальной ориентации*). Lads resent seeing how everything is glamorized and fucked up (*огламурено, прилизано и все через позу раком*). I have been saying what Timati said for a long time, but my words were cut. I will continue insisting that gays should start playing openly. [...]

Journalist: What do you think makes our stars hide their orientation?

Jigurda: Business. They fear losing money because they understand that the mass consciousness is not yet ready to accept them. Kirkorov, for instance, if he admits he is gay, his circle of admirers will be smaller. But at the same time, he will continue to perform on the stage. Of course, many people, such as housewives, will be shocked by this revelation of Filly. But he has nowhere to go. Kirkorov has a choice to make: either confess or back down. The gay pop king, as I call him, needs to take the confession step and become the Russian Elton John. He can get Alla Borisovna involved as the patroness and mother of the gay movement in Russia. She had, by the way, promised that to a Swedish producer that she knew who died of AIDS.

Journalist: Not everyone will be able to admit their non-traditional orientation.

Jigurda: But now is the time to do it! It’s 2012. The cosmic order, the Mayan calendar, and the apocalypse. By the way, the word translates as “raising the curtain.” That is, the time has come when all secrets become clear. We need to have a serious conversation about the idea of the man-creator. I’m even willing to lead a gay pride parade, but only if the whole band (*вся эта обойма*) admits their orientation [...] I am not a homophobe. I support gay men. After all, the fewer of us real men exist, the more valuable we are to girls.

The most important claim in Jigurda’s eccentric narration is the perception that gays, disguised as men, have invaded Russian show business and prevented straight

¹⁸² Lazarev has represented Russia in Eurovision two times: 2016 and 2019.

¹⁸³ sobesednik.ru/skandaly/20120628-nikita-dzhigurda-mechtayu-vozglavit-gei-parad

youngsters like Timati from finding their place in it. Unmanly gayness gets metonymically tied to both Russian *Estrada* and Russian glamour (*огламурено, прилизано и все через позу раком*). It is precisely this metonymic association that constituted one of the reasons for which pre-2012 Timati has often been homophobicly called *нидорок* (fag), especially among Russian hip-hop fans. Timati's participation in the reality show *Star Factory*, as I described before, tied him to the imaginaries of show business, glamour, and Russian pop music, perceived as a perverse abode of closeted gayness. Having set the scene for the broader understanding of sexual politics in Russian pop music and the stakes which were involved in the scandal between Timati and Kirkorov, including the fight for power, distinction, and access to resources within Russian media industries, I now turn to the more detailed analysis of how virality, memetics, and homophobic bashing intersect in Timati's disidentification with Russian pop music and *Estrada* in his #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ video.



Figure 11. Screenshots from the original *meykhana* video *Ti kto takoy, davay dosvidaniya!* Source: youtube.com/watch?v=UFUtDdgEYwk

The original viral video that inspired Timati is titled *Ты кто такой, давай до свидания!* (*Who do you think you are? Get off!*), a low-fi recording of a *meykhana* performance at a wedding in November 2011 in Tangerud village of Astara district of Azerbaijan. *Meykhana* is an Azerbaijani spoken-word folk tradition, a genre that has deep roots in Azerbaijani history, spanning several centuries. Having transformed along with the changing socio-political circumstances, some of which included being banned during Soviet times, *meykhana* is currently considered a source of national pride (Strzemzalska 2020). Originally widespread on the Apsheron peninsula in Azerbaijan, the genre has gained popularity among the Talysh ethnic minority living in the south of Azerbaijan and north of Iran. The trilingual performance in Azerbaijani, Talysh, and Russian languages stages a confrontation between two groups of *meykhana* artists, Bakinian *meykhana* celebrities and Talysh *meykhana* performers, engaging in a competitive improvisational multilingual verse battle. The original video went viral across the post-Soviet space, scoring more than 20 million views on YouTube by 2021. Subsequently, the hook from the song was reused in various ways, becoming a hashtag #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ and a meme of its own, referring to the iconic *meykhana* performance. The hashtag was actively reused on social media: from opposition protests in Russia, Armenia, and Georgia to Timati's homophobic diss dedicated to Kirkorov.



Figure 12. Screenshots from 2012 hip-hop *meykhana* #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ (OFFICIAL VIDEO). Source: youtube.com/watch?v=M9RcdLCJkw4

Timati's video recreates the low-fi aesthetics of the VHS camera used when filming the original *meykhana* performance. The homosocial male-only atmosphere of the original is preserved. Instead of two groups of *meykhana* performers battling each other, in the video, Timati features together with a group of rappers (L'One, ST, Nel Marselle, Misha Krupin, Jenee, 5 Pljukh) performing a rap cipher around a restaurant table. Several men behind them play the role of the cheering audience who enjoy the performance and applaud the rappers. The tables are full of food and drinks, playing on the imagery of Caucasian feasts and hospitality, unlike in the original video, which focuses less on food. The rappers impersonating *meykhana* artists perform an ethnoracial drag. They are dressed in characteristic garments, indexing exaggerated sartorial codes of Caucasian masculinity: beige-grey blazers, exposed watches, knitted V-shaped vests, or pullovers over shirts. The outfits are accented with details, such as shoulder pads on the oversized blazer worn by Timati, excessive neck chains, and signet rings. Rappers either have short haircuts or shaven-off hair, while several are sporting short-shaven beards or exaggerated thick mustaches, evoking the tropes of Caucasian men as 'mustached Southerners' (Draitser 1998: 37).

Adapting the aesthetics of the *meykhana* video and Caucasian male homosociality as this genre's distinctive feature constituted a vital departure point in Timati's overall project of reorienting his hip-hop. Russian hip-hop fans often frame Timati's earlier hip-hop videos as excessive mimicking of US rappers and overzealous emulation of US mainstream hip-hop aesthetics. #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ (*Piss off!/Get out!*) may be seen as the first attempt in Timati's prolonged search for hip-hop localization and racial translation. Perhaps, for the first time, the source of inspiration was found much closer to Russia, in the South Caucasus, a region marked by a long and complicated history of relations with the Russian Empire, USSR, and contemporary Russian Federation. Timati's hip-hop *meykhana* translates the racial authenticity of US hip-hop black masculinity into a post-Soviet idiom of racialized and gendered difference, Caucasian masculinity. The homosociality of *meykhana* transforms into the homosociality of hip-hop, performed by Timati and other rappers, including Georgian L'One.

The virality of the original *meykhana* video in Russia was facilitated by familiar tropes of Caucasian masculinity, evoking the Soviet tradition of ethnic humor about

different nationalities. One of the frequently occurring tropes within this tradition is that of a man from the Caucasus (*кавказец*) or a distinct region in the Caucasus speaking the Russian language with a strong accent, perhaps inspired by Joseph Stalin himself, who spoke accented Russian. In a short essay dedicated to the cultural imaginary of speaking the Russian language with a Georgian accent, Gasan Guseynov interprets the humorous effect of such tropes, permeating anecdotes about different Soviet nationalities, through the postcolonial lens of mimicry. The imperfect linguistic mimicry of the subaltern speaking bad Russian becomes an object of a joke (Guseynov 2018:59). Monolingual ideologies of the Russian language underpin the memetic virality and humorous effects of the Caucasian accent in Russian. They operate by valorizing native-like language proficiency, where speaking Russian without an accent is ideal. The USSR's lingua franca, the Russian language, construed as the great and mighty language of supra-national communication and mediating language of Western classics, connoted Soviet modernity and culturedness. The trope of *кавказец* (Caucasian man) with poor command of Russian features widely in late-Soviet and post-Soviet ethnic joke lore (Draitser 1998:48), films, TV series, comic shows, and broader popular contemporary Russian culture. Widely recognizable, this sonic and visual trope represents a locally familiar idiom of ethnoracial difference, helping to understand the mechanism behind the viral spread and popularity of the original *meykhana* video in Russia. Importantly, this trope is gendered; *кавказец*, who speaks accented Russian, is male.¹⁸⁴ Timati and other rappers build upon the established memetic capital of the original *meykhana* video but fill their version of rap *meykhana* with novel content, where inadequate proficiency in Russian features rather minorly, but instead, homophobic rhetoric is central. At the same time, in the video's backstage footage that shows the rappers' transformation into 'Caucasians,' they draw on the imaginaries of accented Russian.¹⁸⁵ While the original *meykhana* video constitutes a rather joyful and innocent translingual play between Talysh, Russian, and Azerbaijani languages, Timati's version builds on an entirely different authentication strategy within hip-hop: masculinity and homophobia.

The translation strategy of vicarious realness was first employed here. In this regard, one can view #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ (*Piss off!/Get out!*) as an attempt at redefining both Black Star and Timati as 'real' hip-hop away from the imaginaries of homo-friendly Russian glamour.¹⁸⁶ Timati's quest for higher hip-hop authenticity required disidentification with the Russian pop scene and *Estrada*, to which the rapper was

¹⁸⁴ Madina Tlostanova plays with this gendering of Caucasian as male in Russian as *кавказец* and ensuing absence of Caucasian women in the provocative title of her article 'All the women are Russian, all the Caucasians are male' (Tlostanova 2015). Alaina Lemon in her book on Roma in Russia highlights how the dominant imaginary of Roma in Russian public discourse is that of the figure of Roma woman (Lemon 2000).

¹⁸⁵ Back-stage footage video: youtube.com/watch?v=YtUWUKPb2dw

¹⁸⁶ One month after signing L'One, Black Star label hired new creative director Viktor Abramov with solid credentials within Russian hip-hop scene. Abramov mentions accepting the position partly by being convinced that L'One would not make a bad choice. See more: the-flow.ru/features/kto-razvivaet-leybl-timati-black-star

metonymically attached due to his associations with the *Star Factory* show and Russian glamour. Several months before the video's release, Black Star signed an ethnically Georgian rapper from Yakutsk L'One (Levan Goroziya). L'One participated earlier in a rap duo Marselle (with rapper Nel), and had a much stronger reputation of hip-hop authenticity and street credibility among Russian hip-hop fans.¹⁸⁷ Several music critics contend that signing L'One helped the Black Star label move away from its overtly commercial reputation.¹⁸⁸ Signing the rapper L'One into the Black Star label, which had the more established reputation of being 'real' within Russian hip-hop circles, helped separate the figure of Timati from being too strongly associated with Russian pop music, glamour, and *Estrada*. Lacking hip-hop realness, Timati could build up on the hip-hop authenticity and street credibility of L'One and other Russian rappers through the strategy of vicarious realness. Homophobia as an authenticating strategy within hip-hop was wielded to boost Timati's authenticity and dis-identify from his past, which was too closely tethered to the Russian pop scene and glamour in the late 2000s. Homophobic diss in a genre of rap-*meykhana* cipher inaugurates a move towards 'regional originals' in Timati's emergent struggle of translating US hip-hop black masculine realness into the locally accessible idiom of ethnoracial difference.

Sexual and gender deviance of Russian *Estrada* vs. masculine realness of Russian rap

Being 'real' within hip-hop discourses of authenticity often means acting like a 'true' masculine man: "To claim one is a real man, one is defining himself not just in terms of gender, but also sexuality, that is, not being a "pussy" or a "faggot." (McLeod 1999:142). The discourse of authenticity, which has a vital role in hip-hop, is also gendered as male, heterosexual, and hyper-masculine (Means Coleman and Cobb 2007). As Hill contends in his study of hip-hop outing practices in the US hip-hop, the politics of outing is linked to hip-hop homophobia (Hill 2009). US hip-hop celebrities widely employ lyrical outings together with dissing and name-calling. It is connected more broadly to 'the African American rhetorical practice of signifying or "playin' the dozens," where verbal jousting is engaged to humiliate an opponent and generate laughter' (Hill 2009:38). Accusations of homosexuality can be used more generally to spoil the reputation of straight rappers relying on the pejorative connotations of gayness as a signifier in hip-hop culture (Hill 2009:39). Timati and other rappers' beef with Kirkorov, structured in the shape of a hip-

¹⁸⁷ the-flow.ru/beatsnvibes/50-sobitij-31

¹⁸⁸ the-flow.ru/beatsnvibes/50-sobitij-42; daily.afisha.ru/music/16412-davaydosvidaniya-chto-horoshego-uspel-sdelat-timati-za-14-let-na-black-star; daily.afisha.ru/music/12137-lone-soobschil-ob-uhode-s-black-star-eto-konec-epohi-i-plohoj-piar-dlya-leybla-timati/

hop cipher,¹⁸⁹ took the form of a homophobic outing of the artist and, vicariously, via Kirkorov, of the entire Russian *Estrada* in the closet. As I will show throughout this thesis, Timati has repeatedly instrumentalized and profited from the hype around homophobic rhetoric in his struggle for authenticity both subculturally, nationally, and transnationally. I now turn to the detailed analysis of the song's lyrics to provide an overview of the discursive strategies used by the rappers, who transformed *mevkhana* into a homophobic diss on Kirkorov:

Тимати
 Болгарский перец на измене - не следил за тронем
 Не фильтровал трассу - трамбовал прессу
 Хотел померяться хуями с новой школой
 А оказалось - хуй то маленький, король - голый!
 То гавно, что засохло - больше не всплывет.
 Открой рот - получишь туда свежий Твит.
 А ты пока своди дружков на свидание,
 А мы тебе споем: "Давай до свидания!"

ST
 (...) ¹⁹⁰ Я не номинант и не номинал.
 Ты, видимо, колдун, если ты дуешь кал.
 Как ты, тарелки любят нищие и инопланетяне.
 Ты не тянешь! Давай, до свидания!

L'One
 В этой битве престолов кого-то явно посадят на кол.
 Филипп, будь в тренде, уже носи юбки в пол.
 Поставь Азиза Мразиша на рабочий стол,
 Хотя, стоп, вальните с ним совместку вальтом.
 Джигурда, Джигурда, Джигурда,
 Как заклинание, чтоб ваша мода не коснулась меня.
 Вы все поете, как мужик, что поймал язя.
 Ты кто такой? Давай, до свидания.

Timati
 Bulgarian pepper is worried - he did not watch his throne
 Did not filter his words – pressed the media
 Wanted to play 'who has a bigger dick' with a New School
 But it turns out that his dick is small, and the king is naked!
 The shit that has dried up won't come out again.
 Open your mouth, and you'll get a fresh tweet in it.
 In the meantime, take your buddies on a date,
 And we will sing to you: "Come on! Farewell!"

ST
 (...) I am neither a nominee nor a nominal.
 You must be a wizard if you inhale shit.
 Only the poor and aliens like plates as much as you do!
 You don't fit! Farewell!

L'One
 Someone will be impaled in this game of thrones.
 Phillip, stay on top of trends, and wear long skirts already!
 Put Aziz Mrazish on your desktop,
 Oh, wait! Roll with him in the 69 position.
 Djigurda, Djigurda, Djigurda,
 Like a spell so that your fashion would not touch me.
 You all sing like a man who caught a Yaz fish.
 Who do you think you are? Farewell

In Timati's verse, Kirkorov, referred to as 'Bulgarian pepper' (hinting at Kirkorov's roots in Bulgaria, while *перец* is a Russian slang word for 'lad'), is constructed as an embodiment of excess, someone who cannot control his speech acts, and behavior. Homosexuality is construed as uncontrolled juxtaposed to heterosexual masculinity, imagined as governed by rationality and discipline. Kirkorov is presented as foolishly believing himself to be a king of Russian pop, yet when it comes to manhood, he cannot compete with the masculine realness of Russian rappers: his manliness is lacking (*хуй то маленький, король - голый!*). In the last lines, Kirkorov is compared to dried feces, echoing vernacular homophobic rhetoric where homosexuality is often associated with horrible smells and anal sex. It is hinted that Kirkorov dates men, and his attempts to battle with Russian rappers are cast as futile, compared to oral sexual assault through

¹⁸⁹ A type of communal hip-hop performance in a circle, where a group of rappers improvise together on a certain topic.

¹⁹⁰ I excluded less analytically rich fragments from my presentation of the lyrics, full text can be accessed here: genius.com/Timati-davidosvidaniya-lyrics

the metaphor of Tweet. Verbal confrontation thus gets imagined in terms of forced sexual acts, punishing the opponent through sexual violence.

ST's verse reiterates the visceral imagery of unpleasant smells saturating vernacular homophobic rhetoric: playing with Russian homophones *кал* (feces) – *колдун* (wizard). He also hints at Belarusian singer Dmitry Koldun, who won 2006 Russia's TV show *Star Factory* and represented Belarus in the 2007 Eurovision Song Contest. Kirkorov served as Koldun's Eurovision producer and wrote a song for him called *Work Your Magic*,¹⁹¹ playfully hinting at the wizardry qualities of Koldun, whose surname stands for 'wizard' in Russian. Ironically, Timati himself first carved his nationwide celebrity image through participation in the 2004 edition of *Star Factory*. However, this fact is conveniently forgotten to dis-identify from the Russian pop scene with which Timati himself was perhaps too closely associated.

L'One's section is full of metaphors about homosexuality and sexual acts. Impaling is cast as a sexualized punishment. Homosexuality is perceived as compromising masculinity: L'One advises Kirkorov to start wearing skirts, hinting at the feminization implied by his sexuality, and compares homosexuality to a fad. Kirkorov's homosexual desires are revealed by his presumed surreptitious admiration of openly bisexual Bulgarian singer Azis, whose song *Mrazish* (*You hate*) was popular in 2011.¹⁹² Building upon the linguistic play on the title of the song *Mrazish* and the slur *mraz* in Russian, L'One advises Kirkorov to engage in sexual acts with Azis. Performative invocations of Nikita Jigurda, whose interview snippet I quoted earlier, play the role of the anti-gay spell in the cipher, which is supposed to protect the rappers from the curse of homosexuality. Homosexuality is compared to fashion (*чтоб ваша мода не коснулась меня*), and this fashion has a potential for contagion, spreading like a disease but also being hard to hold in one place. On the one hand, referring to fashion this way delegitimizes homosexuality by making it seem like a fad. On the other hand, it construes it as hyper-transmittable, spreading via air and requiring the protection of the Jigurda spell. L'One also relies on the deictics such as 'you all' when he metonymically makes Kirkorov stand for the entire Russian *Estrada* in the closet. Evoking the famous 2011 meme of the time *Язь - рыба моей мечты!*¹⁹³ L'One insists on the questionable qualities of Russian *Estrada*'s singing skills.

Nel Marselle

Мы, в русском рэпе не лезем в шоу-биз,
Он слаще чем доктор Пеппер, сосется как барбарис.
Все наши мужские звезды напоминают красоток в
Паттае.
Я уйду из рэпа, если Рома Желудь зачитает.
Мы - неформат, и знаешь, я этому рад!
Не радует наша эстрада, будто бы ей дали под зад!
А может и в зад, - дабы найти понимание.
Ты кто такой? Давай до свидания!

Nel Marselle

We, in Russian rap, don't get into showbiz,
It is sweeter than Dr. Pepper and tastes like candy.
All our male stars look like beauties from Pattaya.
I will quit rap if Roma Jelud starts rapping.
We are non-format, and you know, I am happy about it!
Not happy with our *Estrada*; it seems kicked in the ass,
And maybe not only kicked - to find an understanding.
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

¹⁹¹ [youtube.com/watch?v=PxON-jTcBPA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PxON-jTcBPA)

¹⁹² [youtube.com/watch?v=jkDZP5ZisYI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkDZP5ZisYI)

¹⁹³ [youtube.com/watch?v=TY1ymotPoPo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TY1ymotPoPo)

Jenee

Шоу-биз постарел будто Машины ляжки.
И ты не станешь моложе после пятой подтяжки.
Тут пахнет цирком, и всем им не страшно!
Тут завоняло калом! Фил, не пеняй на Запашных!
Все они знают, куда гонит стадо.
Эстрада любит плату, но открытый рот на Запад.
Знай, ты не Другой, а скорее Другая
Ты кто такой? Давай, до свидания.

Миша Крупин

Давай до свидания, с микрофоном дядя.
Бля, определяю я тебя не глядя.
Это же тебя целовала Алла, так что завали, завали
ебало.
Так или иначе: кто круче, кто кляча.
У кого волосня, и кто плачет и клянит.
И я всем желаю приятного питания!
Ты кто такой? Давай до свидания!

Jenee

Showbiz has aged as Masha's thighs.
You won't get any younger after 5th face tuck,
It smells like a circus here, and they all are not afraid!
It reeks of shit! Fil, don't blame it on the Zapashny
brothers!
They all know where the herd is going,
Estrada likes getting paid but open mouth to the West
Know, you are not the Other, but rather the Other woman
Who do you think you are? Farewell.

Misha Krupin

Farewell to you, uncle, with a microphone.
Fuck, I can tell who you are without looking.
Alla kissed you, so shut up, shut the fuck up,
One way or the other: who is cooler, who is a nag,
Who is hairy, and who cries and begs.
I wish everyone a nice meal!
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

Nel Marselle's verse is dominated by the boundary work pursuing the separation of Russian rap from Russian *Estrada* through the deictic 'we' sprinkled around his lines. As was stated in the interview with the current director of the Black Star label Pavel Kuryanov aka Pashu,¹⁹⁴ Timati has had to do much work to distance his public persona from his earlier stage image, firmly associated with being a rich spoiled kid (*золотой ребёнок*). Nel Marselle's verse helps with Timati's boundary work of dis-identification from Russian mainstream show business and its key figures; Timati is included in the 'we' of Russian rap separate from Russian *Estrada*. It is achieved through the mechanism of double authentication with the central role played by sexual and gender politics. The 'sweetness' of Russian show business is a metaphor for gender and sexuality, where Dr. Pepper's drink connotes Kirkorov (Bulgarian pepper earlier), and sweet candy *barbaris* refers to fellatio. This ever-sweetness of Russian *Estrada* hints at the pervasiveness of male homosexuality among closeted Russian male pop stars. Their gender-bending stage personas and performances are likened to the 'beauties of Pattaya,' a resort in Thailand known for its ladyboy scene. Russian rap acquires a quality of being 'true' in terms of masculine hip-hop realness, authenticated through distancing from mainstream pop scenes imagined as gender and sexually deviant, symbolized by Kirkorov (*Мы - неформат, и знаешь, я этому рад!*). The imagined spread of homosexuality and gender transgression positions it as a norm within Russian pop music, whereas the uncontaminated heterosexuality of male rappers stands as the last bastion of sanity in the sea of *Estrada*'s perversion.

Jenee's verse detects homosexuality viscerally through bad smells, capitalizing on the imaginary of the Russian pop scene as a freaky twisted circus. In this excerpt, Russian *Estrada* is presented as emanating an unpleasant odor, affecting those present and allowing the possibility for visceral detection. At the same time, its members are not

¹⁹⁴ [youtube.com/watch?v=4nAHIXqWjU4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4nAHIXqWjU4)

afraid (*и всем им не страшно!*), pointing out the perceived unbridled nature of perverse homosexual bestiality, flaunting it in the open without hiding. The corrupt, immoral nature of Russian *Estrada* is communicated through metaphors of fellatio; it is portrayed as holding its mouth open to the West, reinforcing associations of homosexuality with foreignness and a morally corrupt, sexually deviant West, although in 2012, these associations did not yet gain a geopolitical currency they have acquired around 2013 with the passing of countrywide anti-propaganda law. In the end, the homophobic tone of the verse slides into transphobia (*Знай, ты не Другой, а скорее Другая*), once again emphasizing the liminality of male homosexuality.

Misha Krupin's verse emphasizes how the closeted homosexuality of Kirkorov is an open secret known to everyone. If Jenee detects homosexuality through the alleged smells emanating from the *Estrada* celebrities, Krupin's labor of discernment relies on the technology of vision. Homosexual inclinations can be read off easily from Kirkorov's body, long hair, mannerisms, 'unmanly' behaviors, and costumes (*У кого волосня, и кто плачет и кланчут*), despite the marriage of convenience between Kirkorov and another superstar of Russian *Estrada* and gay icon Alla Pugacheva.

ST

(...) Какой страшный сон. MC вышли на ринг,
Тон убавь и иди вон
Твой голубой вагон бежит для...
Ты кто такой? Давай до свидания!

5 Плюх

Не новая волна, Мейхана. У нас тут пей дна,
Вы тупей говна, устройте гей-парад
И кто пизды вам дал? Вы блядский криминал
Мы трэш метал, орудие летал,
Вместе со ртом зашей себе анал и ляг в пенал
Сколько я вас не видал,
Вы смотрите как бабл гам изо рта Ветлицкой Наталии
Повесь на себя все свои медали
Ты кто такой? ? Давай до свидания!

Nel Marselle

(...) Филипп неплохо дерется, но лишь с одним
нюансом:
Чтобы драться с мужиками, нужны хотя бы яйца.
И после треков вся эстрада пишет завещание:
Ты кто такой? Давай, до свидания!

ST

(...) What a horrible dream. MCs on the ring,
Turn down the volume and leave
Your blue wagon is running...
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

5 Plukh

Not a New wave, *Meikhana* here. Bottoms up!
You are dumber than shit; make a gay parade
And who gave you shit? You are fucking criminals
We are thrash metal, lethal weapons,
Sew your mouth and your anus up, and lie into a coffin.
I saw many of your kind,
You look like bubble gum from Natalia Vetlitskaya's mouth
Hang up all your medals
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

Nel Marselle

(...) Fillip fights well, but with one nuance:
You need at least some balls to fight *muzhiki*.
After this track, the entire *Estrada* writes a will.
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

ST's verse mentions 'blue wagon' referencing an eponymous Soviet song for children.¹⁹⁵ The word 'blue' (*голубой*) is one of the conversational ways to call a gay man in Russian and is used condescendingly, inviting Kirkorov to run after the disappearing wagon, thereby suggesting to him where he belongs (*Твой голубой вагон*) and stressing that in the battle with 'real' masculine rap MCs, he is doomed from the start.

¹⁹⁵ [youtube.com/watch?v=XVDkdvEplRQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVDkdvEplRQ)

5 Plukh's verse reuses established references evoking images of feces. Urging members of Russian *Estrada* to get out in the open and organize a gay pride parade, he compares them to criminals. Disidentification with this perverse pop scene is staged by juxtaposing the famous post-Soviet pop song contest *Новая Волна (New Wave)* to the Caucasian *meykhana* feast with flowing wine. The former is imagined as an abode of sexual perversion, and the latter figures as a place of true, authentic masculinity tied vicariously through Caucasian men to the rappers in Caucasian drag. 5 Plukh laments the exhaustion of seeing too many gay people around, expressed by the indexical of 'your kind' (*Сколько я вас не видал*) and invites the singers to sow down their orifices, implicitly reinforcing the imaginary link between homosexuality and relentless sex without end.

Nel Marsell's snippet casts doubt on the realness of Kirkorov's masculinity, imagining homosexuality as emasculation/castration, which would not make him a dignified opponent for a fight with authentic men (*с мужиками*) such as Russian rappers. The beef with 'real' Russian rappers constitutes a final blow to the entire perverse *Estrada* that would be forced to perish after rap *meykhana*.

L'One

Вы не стоите кокошника бурановских бабушек,
Вашу музыку давно пора прописать бы на кладбище.
Ко-ко-ко=ко... Ctrl-Alt-Delete нажать на клавишах,
К черту прикрыть всю вашу пеструю лавочку.
Запах нафталина порядком раздражает ноздри
Звезды, ваш голый эпатаж — единственный козырь
И как повторяли неоднократно мы ранее:
Эй, ты кто такой? Давай, до свидания!

Jenee

Я уже просто в полном ахуе! Кто кого тупо трахает.
Щелкая по каналам, я стал путаться в Малаховых.
Одна проблема по ТВ, мне хочется взяться за сердце.
Голый король не соизволил здесь даже одеться.
Его глаза упорно ищут перца, но перца нет
Филя расстроится, прикроет дверцы.
Все это кара в твоё наказание.
Эй, ты кто такой? Давай, до свидания!

L'One

(...) Будем откровенны, это не эстрада.
Это даже не поп, но твоя попа рада
Ты так далеко, а я без понимания
Кто ты такой? Давай, до свидания!

Тимати

(...) Шоу-биз! Поднимись! Хватить стоять раком!
Медияресурсы полируют тебя лаком!
Пришло время поменять сознание.
На фразу «Неформат» — ответ: «Давай, до свидания!»

L'One

You're not worth a single kokoshnik of *Buranovskie babushka*,
Your music should belong in the cemetery.
Co-co-co-co...Ctrl-Alt-Delete pressed on the keyboard,
Let's shut the hell down this colorful shop.
The smell of mothballs irritates my nostrils
Stars, your naked epatage is your only trump card
And as we've said many times before:
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

Jenee

I get the fuck confused! Who fucks whom?
Clicking through channels, I get confused by Malakhovs.
One problem on TV makes me want to grab my heart.
The naked king did not even deign to put some clothes on.
His eyes search for pepper, but there is no pepper
Filya will be upset and shut the doors.
All this suffering is punishment for you.
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

L'One

(...) Let's be frank; this is not *Estrada*.
It is not even pop, but your ass is glad
You are so far away, and I don't understand
Who do you think you are? Farewell!

Тимати

(...) Showbiz! Rise! Stop offering your ass!
Media polish you!
It is time to change consciousness.
To the phrase "Non-format," the answer is "Farewell,
Goodbye!"

L'One's lines emphasize the unworthiness of the Russian *Estrada* by juxtaposing its homosexual perverse inauthenticity to 2012 Eurovision contenders from Russia, a folk

group *Buranovskie babushki*, embodying Russian-Udmurt rural folk wholesomeness. The idiomatic expression of ‘colorful shop’ (*пеструю лавочку*) is used here to emphasize the flamboyance and excess linked to homosexuality. At the same time, the onomatopoeitic imitation of the rooster’s sound *ko-ko-ko* hints at another colloquial slur for male homosexuals in Russian, *petuh* (rooster). A pun on the keyboard shortcut *ctrl alt delete* alludes to the need to eliminate such perversion by erasing it permanently. L’One also positions the Russian *Estrada* as an outdated relic of the past, offering the audiences only shock-value camp aesthetics.

The image of swarming homosexuality that has overtaken major Russian TV channels and cultural industries is brought up in the verse of Jenee. Jenee admits that he gets confused seeing too many Malakhov-like people. The rapper references the alleged closeted homosexuality of the TV host Malakhov and metonymically ties him to the entire *Estrada* in the closet, thereby creating a person-type, a representative of a social kind. This snippet also uses the metaphor of ‘open doors’ to evoke relentless sex 24/7 and aching orifices. Kirkorov is presented as obsessed with sex, naked, desperately searching for a male lover (pepper), and ready for sexual acts with him.

L’One’s verse revolves around a pun between the word *pop* and *popa* (‘ass’ in Russian), hinting at the sexual predispositions of Russian pop stars. Timati’s final lines, closing the rap cipher, frame the entire Russian *Estrada* as being in a state of perverse decay, offering yet another metaphor for anal sex in a receptive position. The need for a complete overhaul of the Russian pop scene is imagined in terms of rising from a state of humiliation, requiring a change in consciousness. Russian rap and Timati securing his entry into it offers a new, modernized, and heterosexual music genre for the country.

Shot as a homage to the original viral *mevkhana* video #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ (*Piss off!/Get out!*) deploys homophobic bashing as a strategy of authentication to index masculine hip-hop realness of Timati as a rapper. It inaugurates the search for a more locally familiar ethnoracial idiom in Timati’s ongoing project of translating US hip-hop. The authenticating realness of *mevkhana* ties to the image of hard Caucasian masculinity imagined as hyper-virile, oversexed, and homophobic. The hip-hop ‘realness’ of Timati, whose past reputation was too imbricated in Russian glamour, pop, and celebrity industries, is boosted through explicit, homophobic bashing of Russian *Estrada* and its prominent representatives such as Kirkorov. Through #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ (*Piss off!/Get out!*) Russian pop scene is tethered to homosexuality and gender perversion, embodied by closeted gay male celebrities. The Russian pop scene is constructed as fake, corrupt, immoral, feminized, and sexually perverse. In contrast, Russian rap gets imagined as authentic and wholesome music for ‘real’ (i.e., straight) men. All this is achieved through the omnipresence of deictic pronouns in rappers’ lyrics, referring to the in-group as ‘we’ and othering Kirkorov through metonymical tethering to the gay community and Russian *Estrada*, referred to through deictic ‘you,’ ‘yours’ followed by negative epithets. What is striking is that there was not a single mention of the words like ‘gay’ or ‘homosexuality’ throughout the lyrics.

In #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ, gender and sexual deviance identified as Kirkorov's and Russian *Estrada*'s 'open secret' appears as an internal problem of the Russian pop music scene with only one textual reference linking this presumed perversity to the imaginary of 'the West.' In later cultural productions of the Black Star label and Timati's videos, this pairing will acquire a geopolitical dimension in the context of Russia's post-2013 shift away from 'the West.' Sexual and gender deviance will be projected on the Western musical scene through the 2014 Eurovision song contest, personified by the victory of Conchita Wurst. Eurovision song contest, mediating global queer aesthetics and discursive (non)belonging to Europe, will link the Russian pop scene, Russian hip-hop, and sexual geopolitics.

Many representatives of the Russian *Estrada* and the pop scene took part in the Eurovision song contest, including early entries of Kirkorov (1995), Pugacheva (1997), t.A.T.u (2003), Dima Bilan (2006, 2008), Sergey Lazarev (2016, 2019). Participation of Russian pop stars in Eurovision can thus be approached as a "dialogue" with Western camp aesthetics' (Brock and Miazhevich 2021:4). As Miazhevich convincingly argued, commenting on this trend: 'the Russian state is also capable of using nonheteronormative sexuality for its own purposes' (Miazhevich 2017:202). Throughout the years and early failures of *Estrada* performances of Kirkorov and Pugacheva, Russia learned to speak the language of the Eurovision camp, resulting in the 2008 victory of pop singer Dima Bilan (Cassiday 2014; Miazhevich 2010). Moreover, Kirkorov has repeatedly acted as a music producer for Russia's Eurovision entries and has an 'excellent commercial instinct' (Brock and Miazhevich 2021:12). In 2006, for example, he staged Dima Bilan's performance; in 2007, he authored a song for Dmitry Koldun, a contender from Belarus; in 2008, he wrote words and directed a performance of Ani Lorak, a contender from Ukraine. This dialogue did not interrupt even after Russia's post-2013 conservative turn: Kirkorov was a musical producer of Russia's 2014 contenders Tolmachevy sisters. Together with Greek composer Dimitris Kontopoulos, he wrote songs for Sergey Lazarev's Eurovision entries from Russia in 2016 and 2019.¹⁹⁶

Little known is that aspirations to participate in the Eurovision song contest, which would later figure in Timati's oeuvre as a metonymy of sexually perverse Europe, involved Timati himself. In spring 2012, just several months before rap-*meykhana*, Timati presented a rap-opera *Fantasy* in the Russian national finals for the 2012 Eurovision contest, performing with the renowned Tatar soprano Aida Garifullina.¹⁹⁷ The song landed in third place, losing to Dima Bilan's *Back to Her Future* and the Udmurt winners, Buranovskiye Babushki.¹⁹⁸ Timati presented the US-recorded song in his interviews as *качественно новый по уровню российский продукт* (drastically new in quality Russian product) aimed to change Europe's ideas and stereotypes about

¹⁹⁶ He also was a musical producer of Moldova's 2018 and 2020's entries: DoReDos and Natalia Gordienko.

¹⁹⁷ [youtube.com/watch?v=8uxG-QdoJz8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uxG-QdoJz8)

¹⁹⁸ eurovisionworld.com/national/russia/evrovidenie-2012

Russia. To illustrate this quality, Timati positions himself in the interview as educated in the USA, and Kazan-born opera singer Aida Garifullina as educated in Vienna, two modernized Western-educated ‘global Russians’ (and also ‘global Tatars’), capable of creating the best possible fusion building on the most modern templates of quality from the USA and Europe.¹⁹⁹

Before I turn to the detailed analysis of the 2013-2014 nexus between East-West sexual geopolitics, Eurovision, and Timati’s hip-hop, I explore another video that is as central for the understanding of Timati’s search for regional originals as hip-hop *mevkhana* described earlier: the 2013 video *Что видишь ты*, shot in the Caucasus mountains. This section will also explore the role of Timati’s friendship with the leader of the republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, which is significant for understanding Timati’s project of racial translation, relying on the strategy of vicarious realness. I will argue that the Caucasus figures in the video as a space for Timati’s masculine maturation and will also concentrate on its embodied aspects, providing a reading of the beard as sexual and racial metonymy, which will be deployed in Timati’s subsequent videos.

Masculine maturation, politics of friendship, and poetics of the Caucasus in *Что видишь ты* (2013)

*Хочешь быть молодцом, так будь джигит, а не мужик*²⁰⁰

Лев Толстой, Казаки

Around 2008 Timati first met and several years later developed a friendship with the leader of the North Caucasian Republic of Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, a relationship that has received much attention in Russian and international media. Timati and Kadyrov have made numerous appearances on each other’s Instagram accounts and repeatedly commented publicly on this bond, calling each other ‘brothers.’ In a 2015 interview with the hip-hop portal rap.ru, Timati explains the mechanism behind this unconventional friendship:

It was the masculine principle (*мужское начало*) that brought us together. A real man feels a real man (*Настоящий мужик чувствует настоящего мужика*). We are also united by our shared views on life, friends and acquaintances, and our love of shooting and sports. In general, there are a lot of decent men (*достойных мужей*) in the Caucasus, men with character, not metrosexuals, but testosterone guys (*тестостероновые ребята*).²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ test.loveradio.ru/new/39249.htm

²⁰⁰ Epigraph from Leo Tolstoy, *Kazaki*: If you want to be daring and bold, be a *dzhigit*, not a *muzhik*.

²⁰¹ rap.ru/reading/20105



Figure 13. Photo of Ramzan Kadyrov and Timati in the gym from Kadyrov's Instagram account, no longer active. Photo credit: styler.rbc.ua/rus/zhizn/stalo-izvestno-skolko-stoit-chastnyy-samolet-1491417404.html

This friendship between 'real men' opened up new commercial opportunities for the Black Star Inc. related businesses: in 2017, Timati extended his restaurant chain Black Star Burger and opened a new venue in Chechnya's capital Grozny. The implications of this friendship stretch far beyond the sensationalized media attention given to it. I aim to demonstrate that this friendship has influenced the project of racial translation within Timati's hip-hop, affecting his search for a local equivalent of US Black hip-hop authenticity. Inspired by this friendship, the imagery of strong hyper-virile Caucasian masculinity shaped Timati's cultural productions, already hinted at in the previous 2012 work where the South Caucasian homo-sociality of Azerbaijani *meykhana* was translated in

homophobic hip-hop diss. I analyze the 2013 video shot in the Chechnya mountains and demonstrate its reliance on Russian imperial tropes of the Caucasus. I theorize how the Caucasus figures in the video as a space of masculine maturation where the lyrical hero of Timati undergoes spiritual transformation under the guidance of a mysterious mountaineer, personifying strong Caucasian masculine realness.

In June 2013, the video *Что видишь ты* (*What do you see*) shot by the director Rustam Romanov appeared on YouTube to introduce the first single from Timati's fourth album, *13*, entirely recorded in Russian (the album itself was released the same autumn).²⁰² Filmed in Argun Gorge, Chechnya, part of the Caucasus Mountain range, the video showcases the scenic beauty of local rugged landscapes. One of the video's primary goals is a touristic PR for Chechnya to promote a mountain ski resort Veduchi. The resort is a big tourist project developed by Chechen businessman Ruslan Baysarov and supported by Kadyrov to tap into the tourist potential of Chechnya's nature, fitting into a bigger vision of the post-war reconstruction of the republic. Timati describes the decision to shoot the video in Argun Gorge by the unique masculine energy surrounding the mountains: *Исторически именно эти горы хранят очень много серьезных мужских историй. Поэтому мной были выбраны, допустим не Карпаты и Приэльбрусье, а горы Чечни. Я почувствовал, что эта энергетика гор мне близка, поэтому принял решение снимать именно здесь* (Historically exactly these mountains keep many serious manly stories. This is why I chose the mountains of Chechnya, not the Carpathians or Elbrus. I feel that the energy of the mountains is very close to me, so I decided to film here).²⁰³ 'Manly stories' referenced by Timati in the

²⁰² See review of the album by Lyosha Gorbash on rap.ru/review/605

²⁰³ 7days.ru/news/timati-snyal-novyy-klip-v-gorakh-chechni.htm

snippet refer to the Russian Empire’s attempts to subjugate the Caucasus resulting in several prolonged wars as part of the region’s tumultuous history. Argun Gorge had a reputation of unassailability among Russian generals aiming to subjugate the area. However, Argun Gorge also mattered greatly in the post-Soviet period during Russian Federation’s wars against Chechnya. By making a transhistorical link establishing continuity between pre-Soviet and post-Soviet times, Timati construes the Caucasus as the space of perennial masculine warrior ‘realness.’

Musically, the song uses the structure of the rock anthem, rather Americanized in its sonic aesthetic, approximating the genre of rock-rap. Driving a black jeep through mountainous Caucasian roads, in the lyrics, Timati takes a retrospective reflection on his past as an artist, creating a narrative of existential quest and perseverance:

Посмотри мне в глаза, что видишь ты
 Ты видишь этот мужчина за три десятка лет
 Что одержал немало поражений и побед
 За горизонтом рассвет моей мечты
 Каждый день иду к цели, будто препятствий нет
 И только перед Богом несу строгий ответ

Look into my eyes; what do you see
 You see a man above thirty
 Who had a lot of failures and victories
 Over the horizon, the dawn of my dreams
 Every day I walk toward my goal like there’s no obstacle
 I am only responsible to the God



Figure 14. Caucasian sublime. Screenshots from the *Что видишь ты (What do you see)* video. Source: [youtube.com/watch?v=oD4H-ZcR48w](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oD4H-ZcR48w)

The textual narrative presents Timati’s lyrical hero as an experienced man in his thirties, an age that marks a threshold for personal maturation. Overcoming daily hurdles on his way (scenes of the jeep crossing the bustling mountain river), he is moving steadily towards his goals, being responsible only to God alone. On the word ‘God,’ a scenic panoramic shot of Caucasus mountains emerges in front of our eyes, linking the masculine quest for maturation with a sublime, awe-inspiring landscape of the Caucasus, which, as will be evident later, will serve as a testing ground for Timati’s passage into manhood. Timati’s car suddenly stops on one of the sandy roads to let a mysterious mountaineer cross the road.



Figure 15. Mysterious mountaineer and Caucasian wilderness. Screenshots from the *Что видишь ты (What do you see)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=oD4H-ZcR48w

Seeming to be the only human around, apart from Timati, this local dweller with greying hair and a beard (!) is dressed in a black shirt and black pants. Close-up shots follow the silent exchange of glances between Timati and the stranger, lingering on the man's facial features tinted by the weight of time but exuding an aura of masculine wisdom and Caucasian realness. As the man slowly crosses the road, Timati maintains, *Сильные духом бояться лишь потерять честь / Достоинство мужчины это главное, что есть* (The strong in spirit are only afraid to lose honor / Man's honor is the most important thing). Words 'man's honor,' 'dignity,' and 'strong in spirit' invite us to tie them up to the figure of a mysterious mountaineer, creating links to the warrior ideal of Chechen masculinity. The next shot presents a team of horses metonymically standing for Caucasian wilderness and raw nature. Afterward, Timati, positioned in front of characteristic ancestral Chechen towers, raps about his 'brown eyes' (brown or dark eyes have been associated with Orient within Russian poetic tradition).

Reaching a stone fall, which prevents driving further, Timati must continue on foot. The journey becomes more dangerous as it progresses. Timati unpacks the alpine climbing gear and starts the mountain's upward climb. The camera follows the rapper doing tricks with the rope, crossing alpine rivers, and maneuvering the rocky terrain as if being tried by the unbridled rugged nature of the Caucasus.



Figure 16. Caucasus as a space for masculine maturation. Screenshots from the *Что видишь ты (What do you see)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=oD4H-ZcR48w

The textual narrative of Timati's hero's journey, portrayed as overcoming adversarial obstacles in business, is juxtaposed and narrated visually through his ascent to the Caucasus mountains. The harshness of Chechnya's landscapes serves as a testing ground for the hero wandering through, trying to climb the mountains, symbolizing overcoming adversity. When Timati almost slips, being on the brink of falling, a hand is stretched

towards him - a mysterious stranger from the earlier segment of the video saves the rapper from falling off the cliff. Afterward, both sit in silence in the dark around the fire, drinking tea, while the close-up shot lingers on the mysterious face of the mountaineer. Suddenly Timati wakes up, but the man has disappeared. Trying to search for him in vain, Timati washes his face with mountain water and looks around. Panoramic shots of the Caucasus indicate how much higher up in the mountains he has climbed. Timati's figure is shown standing against the snowy mountain tops and the spectacular views that emphasize the sublime beauty of the Great Caucasus.



Figure 17. Timati is saved from falling off the cliff. Screenshots from the *Что видишь ты (What do you see)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=oD4H-ZcR48w

That this textual and visual narrative of maturation is filmed in the Caucasus with overwhelming nature shots showcasing the power of rivers, waterfalls, mountains, horses, and ancestral towers is not occasional. What makes the narrative intriguing and somewhat counterintuitive is how deeply it is immersed in the Imperial tropes of the Caucasus emanating from the classical Russian literature canon.



Figure 18. Imperial sublime meets touristic promotion. Screenshots from the *Что видишь ты (What do you see)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=oD4H-ZcR48w

The bird-eye views of snow-covered mountains evoke the imagery of the sublime Caucasus, characterizing romantic Russian literary canon in the works of Pushkin and Lermontov. Layton's scholarly work has traced how Pushkin's 1822 narrative poem *The Prisoner of the Caucasus* 'expressed a romantic preoccupation with wilderness disjoined from its local population,' as a 'restorative tourism focused on the self: as a site of inspiration and rejuvenation, the land acquired meaning primarily in terms of its impact

on the poet' (Layton 1995:37). Tlostanova writes about 'romanticization of topos' in Russian literature's Romantic orientalist tradition where 'the territory was regarded separately from its inhabitants,' a move that builds upon established tropes from Western orientalist tradition (Tlostanova 2010:71). Scenic shots in *Что видишь ты* repeatedly reiterate such romantic portrayals of Caucasus through an almost exclusive visual focus on nature: mountains, wilderness, cliffs, bustling rivers, horses, and waterfalls. Timati's journey to Chechnya's mountains is a visual metaphor for the narrative of the lyrical hero's transformation and masculine maturation: overcoming obstacles through arduous work and everyday labor. In that sense, the empty of people landscapes of the Caucasus in the video stunningly resemble personal searches of lyrical heroes of Pushkin and Lermontov, more preoccupied with the sublime beauty of the mountains rather than the destiny of the local populations. The only person seemingly inhabiting these mountains is a mysterious mountaineer who crosses Timati's path and later saves his life by preventing him from falling off the cliff. It may only be speculated who this man might be. A generic personification of the Caucasus' inhabitants? An embodiment of strong, 'real' Caucasian masculinity? An allusion to the republic's leader, who saves Timati from the lifestyle of deviant glamour? Or, considering the man's subsequent mysterious disappearance and the dreamlike quality of Timati's visions, a Godly presence?



Figure 19. Ending scenes. Screenshots from the *Что видишь ты* (*What do you see*) video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=oD4H-ZcR48w

A phrase that reoccurs throughout the song's lyrics is *Но ты не должен бояться высоты* (You shouldn't be afraid of heights). It metaphorically connects Timati's business success to his ascent to the Caucasus mountains in the video. To reach success, one should shun the fear of heights, which requires masculine courage and responsibility in the face of God: *Каждый день иду к цели, будто препятствий нет / И только перед Богом несю строгий ответ* (Every day I walk towards my goal as if there are no obstacles / I am only responsible to God). The journey to the Caucasus mountains brings a redemptive possibility to reevaluate Timati's lyrical hero's past life and fully understand his 'true' values. Layton traces how the Caucasus figured in 'quasi-religious terms' in Russian literary imagination as a space where a 'traveller experiences spiritual uplift and a sensation of escape from the vanity of the world' (Layton 1995:48). Indeed,

in multiple interviews, Timati constructs a radical break with his past of a jet setter associated with celebrity glamour and the Russian pop scene, where he discards this past as a preoccupation of silly youth. The Caucasus becomes a redemptive space that allows Timati to reimagine his past as a spiritual journey and shun away his previous image associated with an obsession with the materialist world. It is important to note that honor, manliness, religiosity, hard work, overcoming adversariness, and ultimate success figure prominently in the song's lyrics and reflect romanticized notions associated with the imaginaries of Caucasian masculinities. The Caucasus becomes reconfigured as a space of not only bewildering mountainous landscapes but also of 'true,' authentic masculinity inhabited by 'real' men. Thus, in the *Что видишь ты* video, the Caucasus figures as a space for masculine maturation that tests Timati's lyrical hero's passage into being a 'real' man.



Figure 20. Photocollage savouring Timati's masculine maturation. Photo credit: vladtime.ru/shou_biznes/711084

Ironically, this is precisely how Russian officers have often imagined the Caucasus, taking inspiration from local military leaders who led a military resistance against the Russian colonization of the Caucasus in the 19th century, adopting their dress and behaviors as signs of admiration for Caucasian masculinity. Mikail Mamedov traces the 19th-century practices of Russian officers and soldiers 'going native' in the Caucasus, incorporating local clothing as military uniforms, riding horses as dzhigits, and borrowing cultural and warfare practices and weapons (Mamedov 2008). The war in the Caucasus became a possibility for the Russian youth to test their military strength and prove their manhood (Mamedov 2008:282).

If Chechnya in the video is a metonymy of the Caucasus, and the Caucasus is a school of masculine maturation, then the mysterious figure of a noble life-saving mountaineer might have an exact source of inspiration in real life. This insight helps contextualize the stark shift in Timati's physical appearance, which occurred throughout the early 2010s and was savored by the media for the expressive power of its visual contrast. The journey of masculine maturation found a direct expression in Timati's body. He has achieved a much more muscular build, grown a longer, bushier beard, and changed his clothing style.

In January 2015, Timati was interviewed by a Russian socialite and celebrity, Ksenia Sobchak, on the oppositional TVrain channel.²⁰⁴ In this interview, amongst other things, his friendship with Ramzan Kadyrov was discussed. After narrating hunting and boxing

²⁰⁴ [youtube.com/watch?v=xP-GN_Jc394](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xP-GN_Jc394)

together with Ramzan Kadyrov during his regular visits to Chechnya, Timati explained his changed visual style and the personal significance of the beard for him:

S: Can you remember a phrase or a talk with Ramzan Kadyrov that stayed with you or inspired you? What did he teach you as your friend?

T (smiles): We released a track recently. Have you heard it? You have a beard, and I will say yes to you. (Smiles). Played all over the country.

S: So you started having a beard because of Ramzan?

T: No, I always had it; if you remember, I had it when I was 18-19; it was not growing very intensely. Now it grows lush. He told me that beard is a very manly feature; beard is Sunna. But the real man is made not only by the beard. The real man is embellished not by glory but by his deeds.



Figure 21. Timati and Kadyrov hunting together. Photo credit: glavred.info/stars/244502-kadyrov-uchil-timati-strelyat-iz-avtomata.html

This interview excerpt suggests the need to read beardedness as a racial and sexual metonymy for non-Russian masculinities, visible both in Timati's later cultural productions and in the general refashioning of his physical appearance. In the interview snippet, the intensified lushness of the beard signals a passage into maturity and 'real' masculinity, where a man from the Caucasus, a bearer of this virile Caucasian masculine realness, serves as Timati's mentor in the process, teaching him how to hunt mountain goats in Chechnya mountains, how to box, in other

words, how to be a 'real' man. Scholars studying Kadyrov's social media presence and his notorious Instagram account shut down in 2017 highlighted its militarized character and central focus on representations of his manliness, male power, and prowess (Avedissian 2016; Rodina and Dligach 2019; Scicchitano 2021). Apart from that, much of the content featured Caucasian wilderness: 'the leader shares a video of himself wrestling an alligator into submission, one of gigantic armored trucks navigating through the Caucasus mountains, and another of Kadyrov planting the Chechen flag on a rocky mountain peak, further evidence that he views nature as something that can and should be dominated through masculine, military force' (Scicchitano 2021:1556). Social media virality plays a crucial role in the circulation of these messages: 'Kadyrov himself has been remarkably savvy in his understanding of the nexus of celebrity and power' (Avedissian 2020:420). Avedissian argues that 'Instagram became a powerful tool for Kadyrov to project his power and promote a prosperous image of Chechnya both domestically as well as abroad. On Instagram, Kadyrov featured construction projects, celebrated Chechen culture and sport, and promoted government enterprises'

(Avedissian 2020:420). This celebritification trend is perhaps best exemplified by the 2016 reality TV show *Команда* (*Team*) released on Rossiya 1 channel, where several contenders competed to win the possibility to become Kadyrov's assistant.²⁰⁵

Social media declarations of mutual support often figure in the public displays of friendship between the rapper and Chechnya's leader. In 2014, Timati received a special status of a Renowned Artist of the Republic of Chechnya. This title is generally awarded to artists later in their careers for their unique contributions to the musical genre or for committing themselves to the region. However, it is less known that granting this status to Timati in 2014 has been linked to another viral homophobic 'beef' involving social media. Timati, on his Instagram, reproached the music producer Yana Rudkovskaya, claiming that her artist, famous pop singer Dima Bilan, who represented Russia two times in Eurovision, performed on stage while being high and used a homophobic slur (*заднеприводный*) to hint at Bilan's alleged homosexuality.²⁰⁶ In this narrative, homosexuality and drug use merge as two equally dangerous addictions prone to corrupting vulnerable Russian youth. Dima Bilan was described by Timati as follows: *не стесняясь выходит на сцену, обнюханный в хлам, к молодой аудитории на вечерних концертах, где полно детей в зале* (without any shame appears on stage completely high to perform in front of a young audience full of kids). Shortly afterward, Timati received the official status of the Renowned artist of the republic, as announced on Kadyrov's Instagram:

Dear Friends! I am closely watching the dispute between Timati and Bilan with Rudkovskaya in tandem. Timati is my friend! I respect him for his creativity, stance on life, and patriotism. Timati leads a healthy lifestyle. He does not drink or smoke, and he plays professional sports. Timati sets an example for millions of young people in our country. We should thank him for that! Unfortunately, some representatives of our show business are not distinguished by similar qualities. In the pursuit of audiences, they try to imitate Western musicians, many of whom are openly proud of their so-called non-traditional orientation, spending years in drug clinics and, in the end, dying of an overdose or an infection. Actors and artists who claim to be idols of young people should have the moral right to do so and not lead young people toward a lack of spirituality (*бездуховность*). This is the path to national degradation, which is unacceptable to Russia and its peoples. Timati is a strong-willed man; he cares about honor, conscience, and decency! Otherwise, I would never call him my friend.²⁰⁷

Homosexuality, much like in 2012 rap-*meykhana*, is positioned in the quote above through the imagery of fashion and contagion, this time by Western trends, something so alluring and addictive that makes Russian pop celebrities too eager to emulate Western stars foolishly, not realizing more disruptive consequences of this mimicking. Homosexuality is projected outside of the healthy multi-national body of the Russian Federation. At the same time, local *Estrada* and Russian pop celebrities are not irredeemable. Instead, they should stop mimicking Western pop too closely, copying the worst excesses of foreign music. The tethering of homosexuality to drug addiction makes

²⁰⁵ smotrim.ru/brand/60699

²⁰⁶ tjournal.ru/news/52973-timati-bilan

²⁰⁷ tjournal.ru/flood/53002-kadyrov-timati-bilan

it doubly immoral and highly dangerous for the youth who must be protected. The lack of spirituality (*бездуховность*) that is said to characterize Western pop musicians who engage in 'non-traditional' sexual practices is construed as a pathway to multinational degradation, something inherently foreign to the ethnic diversity of Russia's peoples. The discursive linkage connecting Eurovision with its global gay aesthetics to Russian pop stars actively partaking in its circulation acknowledges the seductive power of Western cultural forms. Indeed, in 2014 Eurovision as a symbol of sexual modernity will become involved in a much more significant nexus of geopolitical contestations reflected in Timati's cultural productions.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I traced how Timati, attempting to repair his chronic domestic hip-hop inauthenticity, relied on translation strategies I called regional originals and vicarious realness but also actively used the viral potential of homophobia. Searching for the local equivalents of racialized US black hip-hop realness closer to 'home,' Timati found it both south and north of Caucasus: in homosociality of Azerbaijani *meykhana* and Russian imperial tropes of the Caucasian sublime and Caucasian warrior masculinity. I analyzed how Timati's lack of domestic hip-hop authenticity was alleviated through his proximity to vicarious masculine realness: the hip-hop 'realness' of L'One and the Chechen warrior 'realness' of Kadyrov. Translation strategies deployed in *#ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ* (2012) and *Что видишь ты* (2013) will find further development in Timati's later works.

If in 2012-2013, this search for regional originals was incidental and inward-oriented, it would become instrumentalized after 2013 in the broader context of Russia's geopolitical turn away from the West and struggles over sexual geopolitics and 'traditional values.' Both viral homophobia, vicarious realness, and regional originals will coalesce around racial and sexual metonymy of the beard deployed in the videos *Борода* (2014) and *Ты такой* (2015), thoroughly involved in the circuits of East-West sexual geopolitics.

10. Racial/sexual metonymy of the beard

Introduction

This chapter examines the racial and sexual metonymy of the beard as a strategy of racial translation developed in Timati's and MC Doni's videos in 2014-2015. Drawing on the literatures on East-West sexual geopolitics and Russian masculinities, I provide an analysis of two videos: Timati's and MC Doni's *Борода* (2014) and MC Doni's and Natali's *Ты макоў* (2015). Demonstrating these videos' profound imbrication in East-West sexual geopolitics and their engagement with both the 2014 Eurovision song contest and Sochi Olympics, I argue that in the videos, the beard operates as sexual and racial metonymy. I show how *Борода* (2014) performs the work of revalorizing racialized masculinities of non-Russian men as cool and desirable, able to safeguard the multi-national future of the Russian Federation against corrupt Western sexual perversity personified by Conchita Wurst. I demonstrate how *Ты макоў* (2015), filmed in post-Olympics Sochi, stages two interrelated fantasies: the Central Asian economic uplift in Russia and the translated fantasy of ethnoracial mixing. In *Ты макоў* (2015), revalorized non-Russian masculinities are elevated from post-Soviet abject into the realm of cool through hip-hop modernity and entrepreneurialism, interpellated through the promise of Central Asian migrant economic uplift in Russia. The fantasy of ethnoracial mixing exploits Russian ethnonationalist anxieties about contamination, flaunting the sexual desirability of the non-Russian bearded man vis-à-vis ethnic Russian masculinities, which, as I argue, are ambivalently positioned in this body of work.

Racialized non-Russian masculinities against Western sexual perversion in *Борода* (2014)

Scholars of gender and sexuality mark 2013-2014 as a period of increased polarization between Russia and 'the West' in the aftermath of so-called Russia's conservative turn to 'traditional values' (Gradszkova 2020). This polarization has often been understood through the metaphor of a 'new Sexual Cold War' shaped around sexual economies and the confrontation of ideologies of homosexuality and heterosexuality (Essig and Kondakov 2019:79). The passing of the notorious LGBT 'propaganda' law in Russia in 2013 (Wilkinson 2014) marked 'the year of political homophobia' (Healey 2017:6). Subsequently, Sochi Olympics in February 2014, Crimea/Donbas crisis in Ukraine, and the Eurovision song contest in May 2014, as well as discursive links between these events, formed what Baker calls Eurovision-Olympics convergence, a 'node in popular geopolitics about LGBT rights based on symbolic oppositions first of "Western Europe"

and “Eastern Europe,” and later of “Europe” and Russia’ (Baker 2017:99). Throughout the 2000s, the Eurovision song contest became a key site for negotiating the relationships between LGBT equality and Europeaness (Baker 2017:101). Eurovision as a site of LGBT politics is linked to the sexual modernity paradigm, where inclusivity towards LGBT issues becomes a marker of Western European civilizational superiority, tolerance, inclusion, exceptionalism, and progressiveness. The sharpening of the geopolitical phase in Eurovision (Baker 2017:107) was manifested in popular Western geopolitics of protesting the Sochi Olympics and Russia’s treatment of LGBT populations (Davidson and McDonald 2018; Essig 2014:47–48; Healey 2017:17–18). Often such popular geopolitics was reduced to constructing a binary opposition between progressive, tolerant, and LGBT-friendly West engaged in LGBT solidarity campaigns and inherently homophobic and backward Russia (Baker 2017:107). Additionally, some scholars framed the symbolic acts of protesting the treatment of Russian LGBT citizens during the Sochi Olympics as engaging in a ‘very particularistic version of Western queer visibility’ serving ‘cosmopolitan narcissism’ of Western LGBT citizens (Davidson and McDonald 2018:70). The figure of Conchita Wurst came to represent the ‘symbolic moral geography of Europe versus Russia’ (Baker 2017:109).

One central tenet of the sexual modernity paradigm is that this LGBT-friendly Western civilizational superiority is constructed on the backs of external and internal racialized populations framed as inherently intolerant, backward, and homophobic (Ammaturo 2015; Puar 2015). Puar has described this process as ‘shoring up of the respectability of homosexual subjects in relation to the performative reiteration of the pathologized perverse (homo- and hetero-) sexuality of racial others, specifically Muslim others’ (Puar 2015:321). Scholars have tracked how LGBT tolerance is mobilized as a benchmark of Europeaness, sustaining the reproduction of distinctions between Western Europe and Eastern Europe (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014; Gressgård and Husakouskaya 2020; Sloomaeckers 2020). Drawing on these insights, recent scholarship has suggested that Russia’s project of political homophobia and traditional values, far from being an outlier to ‘the West,’ has been entangled in the ethnonational ideals tied to whiteness, Eurocentrism, and Christianity (Moss 2017; Suchland 2018):

In the context of Russia this means that a distinctly Russian population has symbolic meanings tied to both a heteronormative and ethnically ‘white’ population. Political homophobia, or heteronationalism, cast as a Russian project of exceptionalism to Gayropa, is a discourse that entangles Russia with Eurocentrism (namely, as ‘white’ Christians) but also as its critic (i.e., against LGBT rights). The refusing of queerness, as with the ban on so-called ‘gay propaganda’, is an artifact of heteronationalism – a project invested in an ethno-national idea that is articulated through a European/ Christian episteme. Thus, political homophobia in Russia should not be only viewed as opposed to the West or as illiberal. I suggest that political homophobia and heteronationalism are not just measures of illiberalism in Russia, but symptoms of a post-Soviet imperial project that is not opposed to Eurocentrism but entangled with it. (Suchland 2018:1075)

Building on these debates, I suggest that Russian popular culture and, specifically, the genre of mainstream hip-hop constitute a vital site that both fits and challenges some of

the assumptions informing the understanding of Russia's rhetoric of 'traditional values' and East-West sexual geopolitics. In principle, I agree with Suchland that the 'post-Soviet imperial project' plays a role in articulating East-West sexual geopolitics, but my position also somewhat differs from hers. I contend that if we conceptualize Russian political homophobia, heteronationalism, and sexual geopolitics as exclusively invested in the reproduction of the Russian nation understood as a community of 'white Christian ethnic Russianness' or as tied exclusively to Orthodox Christianity, we might overlook several key insights linked to how 'traditional values' and 'nation' are conceived.

Firstly, the rhetoric of 'traditional values' deployed by the Russian government is deliberately fuzzy, expansive, and imprecise. It is a populist construct, invented tradition, or, as some scholars argue, an 'ethnographic phantasy' (Muravyeva 2014:631) and 'empty signifier' (still Eurocentric in its rejection of Europe imagined as perverse) (Morozov 2015:121). Morris and Garibyan have urged researchers not to overuse 'culture wars' models pitting tropes of Gayropa against allegedly deeply conservative Russian masses. They have instead called for recognizing the gaps and incongruities between elite-sponsored political homophobia and everyday vernacular conservativisms, reappropriating state discourses (Morris and Garibyan 2021). Moreover, the rhetoric of 'traditional values' has provided a storyline under which very diverse groups could mobilize, from Muslim clerics to Russian ethnonationalists (Edenborg 2021:3). The term 'traditional values' is strategically loose enough, an empty container, allowing various groups to fill it up with suitable meanings and therefore having the potential to diffuse the dangers of both ethnic Russian and non-Russian ethnonationalist mobilizations while uniting around loose religious signifiers, which can accommodate both Christianity and Islam as two of Russia's four traditional religions (Laruelle 2019).

Secondly, it is essential to specify what exactly is meant when the term 'nation' is used concerning Russia, which historically has not developed as a nation-state. Relatedly, what does state-sponsored 'nation-building' entail for Russia, an ethnically heterogeneous society? Construing Russia as a 'white' Christian nation can easily ignore how the different varieties of state-promoted nationalisms oscillate between commitment to Russia's multi-nationality and multi-confessionalism and nationalizing impulses, the dialectics of empire and nation-state (which do not need to be imagined as polar opposites) that has informed much of Russia's history (Condee 2009; Kivelson et al. 2017). Although many scholars have highlighted the instrumentalization of Russian ethnonational sentiment in connection with the annexation of Crimea and the war against Ukraine, the official rhetoric is characterized by strategic ambiguity, selectively activating convenient narratives depending on circumstances. Recent typologies of Russian nation-building discourses have distinguished an interplay of four discursive strands in elite political discourse such as civic, multicultural, imperial, and civilizational nationalisms (Aksiumov and Avksentev 2022:1). While elite political discourse is characterized mainly by civic and multicultural nationalism, the authors contend that in practice, it is the vector of imperial nationalism with a blend of two others used to

narrate the historical past which does the main work of contemporary integration and consolidation of the ethnically diverse population of Russia (Aksiumov and Avksentev 2022:14; Kolstø 2019).

Perhaps, the most well-known example that illustrates the mutual imbrications of the rhetoric of 'traditional values' with Russia's ethnocultural heterogeneity is the persecution on the bases of sexual and gender non-conformity in Chechnya in 2017 which gave the republic international media visibility and reinforced the geopolitical narrative of Russia's inherent sexual backwardness. These repressions were informed by the double dynamics of disclosure/exposure of the victims as queers and their simultaneous erasure (including literal annihilation): the republic's authorities' denial of queer existence (Brock and Edenborg 2020:675). Brock and Edenborg highlight that Chechnya's antigay purges should be considered in the context of Russia's state homophobia and the project of the invention of 'traditional values' ongoing in Russia since 2010, which culminated in the nationwide notorious anti-LGBT 'propaganda' laws in 2013 (Brock and Edenborg 2020:679). However, the Russian president and other politicians have also referred to Muslim and Chechen traditionalism as an argument for introducing the nationwide 'propaganda' ban (Brock and Edenborg 2020:679). Thus, paradoxically while denouncing LGBT 'propaganda' as Western cultural hegemony and positioning itself through the appropriation of the anti-colonial discourse as a victim, Russia simultaneously used the colonial discourse of backward Eastern others to speak about its regions with Muslim populations and their 'inherent' intolerance of LGBT lifestyles to justify the introduction of the nation-wide ban (Edenborg 2017:95). This curious case of using one minority in the name of the majority to marginalize another minority (Edenborg 2017:95) points to the potential for the instrumentalization of Russia's ethnocultural diversity in the service of government projects, including the role of Russia as a leader in protecting 'traditional values' in the global arena (Moss 2017:195). The above scholarship points to the need to explore how Russia's ethnic minorities could be instrumentalized on the side of state-promoted homophobia in the name of traditional national cultures and religions. Moreover, I would add that these considerations also problematize the claim that Russia is 'refusing queerness, claiming whiteness,' understood as promoting Russian ethno-nation at the expense of racialized others (Suchland 2018).

As Wiedlack suggests, Western coverage of anti-gay purges in Chechnya folded into pre-existing condemnations of Russian state homophobia post-2013 through the sexual modernity paradigm proclaiming the cultural and political superiority of the West (Wiedlack 2018:12). Anti-LGBT persecutions in Chechnya were often characterized as 'medieval,' 'barbaric,' 'backward,' establishing the contrast between secular Western modernity and tradition, religion, and authoritarianism. Western condemnation of Putin's political support of Kadyrov reestablished the notion of Russia's wrong geotemporal direction and resignified Islam through homophobia and backwardness (Wiedlack 2018:13). Other scholars have argued that similar dynamics were reproduced

within Russia, wherein covering anti-LGBT purges and appealing to the West, Russian liberal oppositional media relied on the discourse of homotransnationalism where 'the figure of the Chechen gay refugee represents the violent excess of Chechnya as the racialized/ethnic Other' (Davydova 2019:174). For Davydova, this figure within the discourses of Russian liberal opposition justifies Russian intervention and control of Chechnya and creates an alternative image of progressive, more civilized, and freer Russia as an alternative to the 'heteropatriarchal nationalism' of Putin's regime (Davydova 2019:174). This scholarship illustrates that the rhetoric of sexual modernity is not contained within geographically bounded blocks but easily crosses borders, deployed as part of the Europeanization narratives by Russian liberal opposition opposing the government.

While these discussions have highlighted the instrumentalization of the discourses of backward Eastern/Muslim others to justify homophobic legislation or reproduce Eurocentric sexual modernity frames, I argue that careful examination of Timati's and Black Star's cultural productions between 2014-2016 allows intervening in such mappings. It enables tracing how within Russian popular culture, Russia's post-2013 rejection of Western sexual modernity and gender diversity builds not upon the racialization and exclusion of non-Russian Muslims and racialized others as backward and subsequent promotion of exclusively 'white' Russian ethno-nation but entirely on the contrary, on their strategic revalorization. This revalorization draws on and sustains all-Russian patriotic multi-ethnic (imperial) nationalism that emphasizes Russia's historical and 'organic' ethnoracial diversity and multi-nationality versus the 'unnatural,' artificial, violent multiculturalism of 'the West.' Russia's 'organic' diversity is construed as natural not only in terms of ethnoracial heterogeneity but also 'organic,' 'healthy' gender and sexuality, where heterosexuality is positioned as natural, and homosexuality and gender diversity as Western sexual perversion, false and fake. Therefore, within these mappings, the Eurocentric binary of tradition/modernity is turned upside down and resignified. At the same time, through discourses of US hip-hop modernity, racialized non-Russian men are not cast as backward and traditional but as cool, desirable, hyper-virile, and modern.

Both the 2014 Sochi Olympics and the Eurovision song contest found reflections in the musical productions of the Black Star label, demonstrating how Russian popular culture was caught up in sexual geopolitics. In 2014 a joint video of a rapper from Black Star label, MC Doni and Timati called, *Борода* (*Beard*) was released. Originally from Uzbekistan, MC Doni (Dostonbek Islamov), formerly Timati's back MC, was signed as an artist to the Black Star label in 2014. Introducing new artists like MC Doni through hit songs with established celebrities like Timati is one strategy the media-savvy label used to guarantee the immediate success of new artists. Another strategy is harnessing the viral social media issues of the time, such as the scandal around the 2014 Eurovision. The 2014 *Борода* video features a Conchita Wurst's inspired character and makes multiple textual references to her winning the 2014 Eurovision song contest. Later, in

2015 a video of MC Doni featuring pop singer Natali *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)*, filmed in post-Olympics Sochi, appeared online. Both videos participated in the discursive circuit of the 2014 Eurovision Olympics. Simultaneously, both reflected a recalibration of Timati's project of racial translation in the context of Russia's geopolitical reorientation away from 'the West.' I argue that the beard in both videos metonymically operates as an index for racialized non-Russian masculinities deployed for local and global authentication projects within and outside Russian hip-hop. The beard as a racial and sexual metonymy for hyper-virile non-Russian masculinity features on thematic, textual, and visual levels of these two videos. In the following analysis, I examine the beard's work in relation to the East-West geopolitics of homo and heterosexualism and sexual modernity paradigms.

The song and video *Борода (Beard)* were recorded in the aftermath of Conchita Wurst winning the 2014 Eurovision song contest. The victory provoked fierce reactions in Russia, including politicians' calls to stop Russia's participation in the Eurovision, a contest long emblemizing Europe's moral decay and sexual perversion, confirmed by Conchita Wurst's victory. A beard-shaving flash mob, *Prove you are not Conchita* drawing in celebrities from Russia, gained popularity immediately after Eurovision 2014 results were announced (Borenstein 2021; Labrot 2015). The motto for participants in the flash mob included the phrase *Побрейся, не будь как баба!* (Shave, don't be like a woman!) and a hashtag *#докажичтотынекончита* (Prove you are not Conchita).²⁰⁸ Conchita Wurst's triumphant victory radically troubled the readings of the beard as a conventional signifier of manliness. In protest, upset Russian social media users rushed to shave off their beards as a compromised symbol. In Eliot Borenstein's words, Conchita 'came to represent everything that men must *not* be,' her 'victory became a slap in the face not just of traditional masculinity, but of Russia' (Borenstein 2021:82). Russian social media users who took part in the shaving flash mob were rebelling against Conchita's appropriation of the beard, revealing the workings of the beard as a technology of gender. Upsetting the ties between essences and surfaces, Conchita Wurst's Eurovision performance was read not only as a manifestation of Western sexual perversity but also as having compromised the imagery of the lush beard as a traditional symbol of masculinity.

As Russian media covering the flash mob ironically remarked, this was the most extensive beard shaving the country has ever witnessed since Peter the Great times, referring to his 1722 decree when after his European voyage, a tax for beard-wearing gentry was introduced to modernize and Europeanize the country. Etkind highlights that the goal of the beard tax was not shaving everyone but rather to distinguish between the gentry (shaven) and clergy and peasantry (bearded) (Etkind 2013:102). As I will demonstrate below, 300 years later, beard-related body politics with recalibrated logics

²⁰⁸ newdaynews.ru/incidents/497590.html

of differentiation played an essential role in Russia's more recent articulations of (non)belonging to Europe.

Rappers ST and 5 Plukh, who starred in 2012 rap-*meykhana* together with Timati (Chapter 9), joined the shaving flashmob,²⁰⁹ while Timati reacted to this on his Instagram, responding to ST that: *по внутренним соображениям и национальным признакам, сбривать бороду не стану, слишком дох*я чести этим пидорам будет, тем более у меня своя, а не нарисованная, как у некоторых* (because of *natsional'nost'* and personal beliefs, I won't shave my beard, too much attention to these fags. Moreover, my beard is my own, not painted).²¹⁰ Claiming that Conchita Wurst won because of the shock value of her performance, in his Instagram post, Timati compared homosexuality to a disease that morally disintegrates society, does not contribute to reproduction, and may corrupt the kids. At the same time, he articulated a conspiratorial vision of the Russian gay lobby that operates extensive networks of propaganda from the West using democracy as a cover story:

An increasing number of these individuals are trying to fill their ranks as much as possible with "claymakers" (*пытающихся максимально пополнить свои ряды «глиномесов»*), are conducting extensive propaganda from America and Europe, hoping to spread and expand their circle of influence in our country. As long as most adequate people share my point of view, their attempts are in vain. Many thanks again to Vladimir Putin for banning gay pride parades in Moscow! Society needs to be sensibly developed, not decomposed from within, under the guise of "pseudo-democracy."²¹¹

Similarly to the aftermath of the Twitter scandal, leading to the #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ video, a more detailed response to Conchita Wurst's victory followed in the shape of the 2014 video *Борода*. Much of Timati's quote listed above was reworked into the narrative and visual structure of the video. The video builds upon the Eurovision controversy and harnesses the social media virality of the shaving flash mob. It articulates a refusal to shave, reinstating the beard as a sign of 'real' masculine virility. As the rapper from Black Star L'One, who was featured in the video, remarked on the backstage shoot: 'Because of the last events on Eurovision, many think they need to shave their beards off, but Doni and Timan don't think this way, so they decided to make a statement.'²¹² MC Doni explained the significance of the *Борода* song: 'This song is dedicated to all real men (*настоящим мужикам*) [...] Why with Tim? Because Tim is a real man (*настоящий мужик*) and wears a beard!'

Before I proceed with the visual analysis of the video, I turn to the brief overview of Russian masculinity research to discuss how it takes up the themes of ethnoracial difference. As Eliot Borenstein has recently argued, summarizing Russian masculinity research: 'There is no full-fledged theory of Russian masculinity' (Borenstein 2021:80).

²⁰⁹ rap.ru/shortly/98015

²¹⁰ The post was later deleted from Instagram but the text from the post is available on other websites for example mediananny.com/obzory/2304803/

²¹¹ Ibid. The term *glinomes* (literal translation 'clay maker') is part of slang/criminal jargon referring to a penetrative partner in homosexual anal sex.

²¹² youtube.com/watch?v=2QAf5TiLPxI

Gender scholars have theorized the crisis of late Soviet and post-Soviet masculinity (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2013). This crisis of post-Soviet masculinity, loss of virility, and super-power status by post-Soviet Russia has been discursively tied to the figure of the homosexual (Baer 2013) even before the notorious anti-LGBT ‘propaganda’ laws and broader ‘conservative turn’ towards ‘traditional values.’ As Francesca Stella has put it, ‘anxieties over the new visibility of homosexuality have become intertwined with the crisis and renegotiation of national identity in post-Soviet Russia’ while ‘in nationalist discourses queer visibility is explicitly linked to more permissive sexual mores, declining moral values, and western influence’ (Stella 2013:462). Russian men were imagined by journalists and experts as pushed to deviance, homosexuality, and impotence by the crisis (Baer 2013:40–41). Russian authorities have been addressing this loss of national pride by using gender discourse as a legitimation strategy, pursuing a remasculinization of Russia, and promoting an attractive image of Putin as a ‘real’ man as a personification of Russian national masculinity (Riabov and Riabova 2014; Sperling 2014). Putin’s iconography and masculinity performance has received much scholarly attention (Cassiday and Johnson 2010; Foxall 2013; Goscilo 2013; Novitskaya 2017). However, there is much less research on the masculinities of ethnically non-Russian men or the intersections between racialization and Russian masculinities. I connect this trend to imagining the field of Russian masculinity studies in the singular as a study of masculinity of ethnically Russian men, which betrays a Russo-centric bias of Russian masculinity research. This vision of studying Russian masculinity as masculinity of ethnically Russian men is predicated on imagining contemporary Russia as a classical nation-state. This, however, ignores Russia’s multi-ethnicity and embeddedness in the entangled legacies of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union or what Hutchings and Tolz eloquently call ‘imperial and colonial origins of Russia’s ethnic diversity’ (Hutchings and Tolz 2015).

In contrast, much more scarce research advancing relational perspectives on Russian masculinities suggests that masculinities of ethnically Russian men are produced in contrast with the masculinities of racialized and sexualized others (Sumina 2014). This distinction between masculinities has roots in the Russian Empire’s colonial expansion to the Caucasus and lengthy colonial wars due to the resistance of local populations. The Caucasus has been positioned as Russia’s own Orient, and that has been reflected in Russian classical literature and the specific ‘unstable sensibility of Russian intellectuals’ (Tlostanova 2010:64). In the romantic orientalist stage of the Russian Empire’s colonial expansion, Russian officers and Russian intellectuals were ‘partial to Circassian dress and armaments and imitated the Caucasus caracole’ (Tlostanova 2010:71). At the same time, Russian male anxiety was intimidated by violence and machismo of local men (Tlostanova 2010:78). The imaginary of the relative weakness of ethnic Russian/Slavic masculinity compared to racialized masculinities of men from the Caucasus has not received sufficient scholarly attention. One of the few relational analyses of gender performativity and multiple masculinities is Michelle Smirnova’s study of Soviet-era

anecdotes that contrasts representations of masculinities of ethnic Russian men against those of Jews, Georgians, and Chukchi. She shows that Soviet anecdotes 'construct Russian masculinity as tragic heroism' where Russian man 'seeks greatness through heroic feats, but inevitably falls victim to women, ethnic others and his own shortcomings' such as alcoholism (Smirnova 2017:7). At the same time, Russian men 'are often constructed as both heroes and victims in narratives whereas women and ethnic others play the role of villains' (Smirnova 2017:14–15). Smirnova argues that Jews were often represented as manipulative and cowardly but also as 'sexually inferior or inept,' while Georgians were portrayed as greedy and manipulative but also morally inferior, 'hypersexual and crude' (Smirnova 2017:16–17).

Contemporary Russo-centric bias in Russian masculinity research also ignores the structuring experience of two Chechen wars for modern Russia. Maya Eichler describes the instrumentalization of these wars 'to associate the state with a notion of militarized, patriotic and strong Russian masculinity embodied by Putin,' an image that was 'juxtaposed to Chechen masculinity represented by terrorists and Islamic fundamentalists' (Eichler 2006:498–99). She suggests that 'the threat of terrorism (exemplified by the apartment bombings) and the fact that, "Chechens" became synonymous with "terrorists," "bandits" and Islamic "fundamentalists," created support for Putin's anti-terrorist campaign, for him as a leader and for the state and military as protectors of the nation' (Eichler 2006:498–99). Furthermore, in the wake of the September 2001 attacks in the USA, the Chechen wars were legitimized as 'part of the global war on terror, which has lessened international criticism of Russian forces in Chechnya' and allowed to portray the country as an ally of the West and as civilized and modern (Eichler 2006:498–99). During the wars, the imagery of the wild Caucasus and the rebellious masculinity of Caucasian men inherited through classical Russian literature got reactivated; the 'Chechen wars were not explicitly legitimated by the state as 'ethnic wars,' but they were fought against Chechen 'separatists,' 'criminals,' 'bandits' and 'terrorists.' (Eichler 2006:501). Chechen men and men from the Caucasus started being associated with terrorism and ultraviolent, militarized masculinities (Scicchitano 2021). Russian media utilized gender tropes to justify military intervention, constructing Chechnya as 'anarchic' and Chechen masculinities as 'aggressive, criminal and corrupt' allowing to juxtapose 'militarized, ordered, patriotic Russian masculinity' to 'the racialized notion of aggressive, anarchical, criminal Chechen masculinity' (Eichler 2006:489–90). Erik Vlaeminck, analyzing pop-cultural film representations of the First and Second Chechen wars, highlights a shift in the politics of representation marked by the emergence of multiple Islamic masculinities:

Whereas monolithic depictions of barbaric Chechen masculinity, juxtaposed to suffering and victimised Russian masculinity, dominated in the course of the First War, multiple masculinities were staged during the Second Chechen War, including two Islamic masculinities: a Chechen Islamic masculinity linked to terrorism, violence and the Middle East, and another one linked to tradition, Sufism and the periphery. Relying on the fictional opposition between good and bad Islam, these masculinities symbolise a hegemonic struggle in the claim of an original Russian Islam. (Vlaeminck 2019:260).

These theoretical insights illustrate the importance of construing Russian masculinities as multiple and relational, with the central role of the understudied ethnoracial dimension. It is also necessary to account for the shifting nature of these relations in the broader geopolitical and domestic contexts. Russophone popular culture and entertainment industries in the 2010s provide a fertile ground for such explorations. The video *Борода* (2014), which I analyze in this chapter, weaves together several narratives about East-West sexual geopolitics, Eurovision, masculine realness, homo and transphobia, Russian and non-Russian masculinities and operates through the mechanism of racial and sexual metonymy, linking beard to non-Russian racialized masculinities. In my analysis of the operation of racial metonymy in the video, I build on Alaina Lemon’s theoretical insights on indexicality, racial metonymy, and ethnoracial discernment (see Chapter 2 and Chapter 7). I argue that the affordances of the music video as a multimodal text combining visual, textual, and sonic elements allow for a particularly fruitful use of racial metonymy. In my analysis of *Борода* (2014), I show how the beard plays a central role in the work of racial signification within the video. Examining the beard as racial and sexual metonymy allows grasping the 2014-2016 process of revalorizing non-Russian racialized masculinities in Timati’s and Black Star’s cultural productions. Through translation of Black hip-hop masculinity and with the help of US hip-hop modernity, racialized non-Russian other, the bearded man (*бородач*) is resignified as both modern and cool.

Heavily narrativized, the *Борода* video contains several interrelated plot lines; the first one is the dream of MC Doni. The corrupt and sexually perverted West is personified in the video by the deceptive body of Conchita Wurst, whose double appears in the dreamlike opening scene. Noticing an attractive woman with long hair and a miniskirt on the streets, MC Doni follows her. After reaching her, he taps her shoulder. As she slowly turns her head to the viewer, we see a Conchita-inspired figure, marked by the presence of the beard. As the camera zooms closer, it is clear that the beard is not ‘real’ but painted.



Figure 22. Homophobic and transphobic nightmare of MC Doni Screenshots from the *Борода (The beard)* video. Source: [youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM)

Screaming in fear, MC Doni wakes up from this nightmare, heavily panting. He is surrounded by two women who peacefully sleep on both sides of his bed. He turns around a couple of times to ensure the women next to him are not ‘Conchitas’; after all, they have the same hairstyle and wear pink tops. The introductory vignette blends into a song. This nightmarish vision of MC Doni merges transphobia with homophobia: desire awakened by the ambivalent figure of Conchita Wurst threatens the masculinity of MC Doni through the ever-present possibility of becoming gay.

The video presents the beard as a racial and sexual metonymy for masculine hyper virility mapped on the non-Russian body of Uzbek MC Doni. Tattoos mark the ultra-muscular, trained, and decidedly non-white body of MC Doni. The camera lingers on it, presenting his body as an object of sexual desire. He approaches the mirror, takes the trimmer in his hands, and starts grooming his beard while rapping about his sexual prowess: *Чтоб я покинул клуб один? Да никогда!* (It has never happened that I would leave the nightclub alone!). Hyper-virile masculinity embodied by MC Doni is paired with heterosexuality and sexual prowess. Such revalorizing sexualization of the body of Central Asian male migrants is unusual. More often Central Asian migrant body is portrayed within Russian hegemonic representations as a low-status racialized body performing menial labor such as low-income cleaning and construction jobs. This body may be subjected to racial profiling and abuse by the police. Multiple scholarly works have documented the everyday xenophobia, police abuse, and exploitations Central Asian migrants encounter in Russia (Agadjanian, Menjivar, and Zotova 2017; Malakhov 2019; Round and Kuznetsova 2016). Occupying a low place in the hierarchy of masculinities, it is a decidedly non-sexy, abject body.



Figure 23. Beardless man (Russian hipster) vs. bearded man. Screenshots from the *Борода (The beard)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM

The video features a figure I read as an ethnically ‘Russian’/Slavic man or a Russian hipster. He is a side character against whom the masculine realness of the bearded man is staged. His fully shaven beardless face signals weaker masculinity, corresponding to the scholarly readings of weak Slavic/ethnic Russian masculinity in crisis. Trying to attract the attention of a model-looking woman who reads on the bench in the park, he has no chance with her due to his facial hairlessness. In contrast, when a bearded man appears on the bench, she is immediately reinvigorated, showing interest. Her changed body language and smile indicate that the bearded man is more ‘real’ and desirable.



Figure 24. The street scene where the fake beardedness of the Russian man is revealed. Screenshots from the *Борода (The beard)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM

Later, the same unfortunate beardless character is seen on the streets of Moscow, hastily gluing a fake beard on his chin to score more female attention. Walking around the central streets of Moscow, he spots a group of attractive young women checking him out. One of them, looking interested, approaches and tries to feel his beard. However, she soon discovers that his beard is fake, glued on his chin, and peels off in an unsightly manner on her fingers. Enraged by his deceptive gestures, seeking out a ‘real’ bearded man, she refuses to say ‘yes’ to the Russian hipster without a beard and looks at him with disgust. In *Борода* full-grown and lush beard of racialized non-Russian men becomes linked to virility, sexual prowess, and heterosexuality. As the female voice in the hook of the song repeatedly reiterates: *У тебя есть борода? Я скажу тебе: Да / Я скажу тебе: да. / Если бороды нет, то и нет - мой ответ* (Do you have a beard? I will say ‘yes’ to you / I will say ‘yes’ to you / If there is no beard, my answer is no).



Figure 25. The beard as a sexual metonymy. Screenshots from the *Борода (The beard)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM

To say ‘yes’ in this line indexes sexual consent and implies the sexual desirability of the bearded men and, by extension, of racialized non-Russian men possessing such beards. The beard is explicitly compared to a penis in one visual insert, measured in length with a measuring tape. It represents a curious recalibration of the work of sexual and racial metonymy in, for example, Soviet joke lore, where the size of the nose of Georgian and Caucasian men was associated with the size of the penis (Draitser 1998:49). Textually,

shaving the beard off is also likened to emasculation/castration; this is how the beard-shaving flashmob in the wake of Eurovision 2014 is positioned in the Timati's verse:

Ассалам Алейкум. Алейкум Ассалам.
Шалом всем московским бородачам!
Ты читаешь Тору или чтешь Коран,
Или ты просто небритый русский пацан!
Береги свою породу и носи бороду;
И не брей её по тупому поводу.
Эстафета принята, борода побрита (Что?)
Отрежь себе и член, не будь как Кончита

Assalam aleikum, Aleikum assalam.
Shalom to all Moscow's beardies!
You read Torah or worship Qu'ran,
Or you are a simple ethnic Russian lad!
Protect your stock and wear a beard,
Don't shave it off for silly reasons
The game is on. The beard is shaven off (What?)
Cut your dick off, don't be like Conchita



Figure 26. Beardedness and religious inclusivity. Timati greets a rabbi and an imam entering his barbershop. Screenshots from the *Борода (The beard)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM

Timati's verse expresses respect for Islam and Judaism, transmitting a message of religious inclusivity (although Christianity is explicitly excluded). The link between beardedness and religiosity is strengthened visually when Timati greets both a bearded imam and a rabbi entering his Moscow barbershop ¹³ by *Timati*. Explicit play on Timati's double affiliation with Islam and Judaism that stems from his mixed Jewish/Tatar heritage fuses with business concerns to promote his chain of barbershops, catering to the bearded audiences hailed in the lyrics as Moscow's *бородачу* (beardies). This word is often used within the Russian language as a marker of ethnic and religious difference but also as a racialized denominator of Muslim men wearing lush beards and sometimes for militarized separatist masculinities from the Caucasus, especially in the context of two Chechen wars.²¹³ It is also notable that in the lyrical appeal to beardedness, Timati uses one of the Russian words for race, *порода*: *Береги свою породу и носи бороду* (Protect your stock/breed, wear a beard) to emphasize that protecting the beard may serve a deeper purpose.

That the *Борода* video performs a resignification of the beard as a racial and sexual metonymy, trying to move it away from the imaginary of militarized separatist Islamic masculinities threatening Russia is also evidenced in Timati's direct engagement with such a reading. After watching the video, one internet user left a public comment on Timati's Instagram where he habitually interpreted beardedness as a metonymy for separatist Islamic masculinities claiming that Timati is 'becoming a Wahhabi, who will blow himself up on his concert together with his fans.'²¹⁴ Timati felt compelled not only to challenge such an interpretation but also, in a pedagogical gesture, decided to

²¹³ Timati uses this word in other songs as well.

²¹⁴ instagram.com/p/pKEU3APIdF/

publicize it as a screenshot on his Instagram account. In this comment, Timati articulates a reading of the beard as a symbol of both Russia's religious pluralism, hinting at nebulous rhetoric of 'traditional values' and Russia's organic multiculturalism:

The beard means that I am half-Muslim (by my father) and half-Jewish (by my mother), having grown up in Orthodox Rus, where men have also walked unshaven for centuries. The beard is the manliest symbol of all faiths, religions, and denominations, and it is one of the main signs distinguishing our sex from the weaker sex. But even a beard does not adorn a man as much as his actions.

In this comment, Timati describes his upbringing by evoking the chronotopic construct of Orthodox Rus, inhabited by bearded men, collapsing the temporalities of then and now. The beard is read as having a syncretic potential to demarcate the 'real' man. Based on this masculine realness, the ethnoracial conflict in Russia is muted. The potential for universal masculine groupness is also articulated in the lyrics where *небритый русский пацан* (unshaven ethnically Russian guy) is invited to join the community of 'real' bearded men. Subsequent visuals highlight further that the beard can potentially embellish any man through the display of diverse bearded male faces in a visual reworking of a well-known Marxist trope that juxtaposes profiles of Lenin, Stalin, Marx, and Engels in one image:



Figure 27. Bearded masculine groupness. Screenshots from the *Борода (The beard)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM

This cross-religious pan-ethnic solidarity is based on heterosexual, cisgender masculinity signaling the masculine 'realness' of beardies. However, as I demonstrated earlier, ethnic Russian masculinity is positioned ambiguously in the video, both hailed and rejected, reflected in the figure of the 'Russian hipster' whose beard is fake. Therefore, the beard in the video should be read as primarily a racial and sexual metonymy for non-Russian racialized masculine realness.

Linking racialized non-Russian men and hyper virility performs a double action. Throughout the video, the 'real' beard connotes the 'real' cisgender masculinity and heterosexuality of MC Doni, juxtaposed to Conchita's 'fake' beard, connoting Western gender and sexual perversion. The fake beardedness of Conchita cannot compete with the masculine realness of 'authentic' beardedness embodied by MC Doni and Timati. Another contrasting body with a fake, glued beard is that of the Russian hipster, with weaker masculinity signaled by the absence of facial hair. The authentic beardedness of MC Doni makes women drawn to him 'naturally' unlike the artifice and deception the Russian man has to employ to get female attention:



Figure 28. Street scene, MC Doni's sexual desirability. Screenshots from the *Борода (The beard)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=7mvqAEe58oM

The wordplay in the lyrics reinforces the naturalness and ‘realness’ of heterosexuality and masculinity. In the Russian language, one informal way to refer to a straight person is through the use of the word *натурал* (natural). As MC Doni raps: *Всем реальным пацанам привет / Я уважаю строго натуральный цвет* (Hi to all real guys! / I respect only natural color). The line builds on the double meaning of the expression ‘natural color’ in Russian, referencing both natural hair color and heterosexuality (and, in this particular video, cisgenderism as well). Here ‘realness’ is used not only as a classical strategy of hip-hop authentication by establishing links to the urban street subcultures and racialized minorities (beardies) but also to heterosexuality posited as natural in confrontation with the perverse Western body of Conchita Wurst, whose beard and masculinity is fake and also through the internal juxtaposition to the weak masculinity of the Russian hipster, whose beard is glued, artificially colored and therefore also fake like his masculinity. Similar imagery of an artificially colored beard or fake beard drawn on the face (*нарисованная борода*) is compared to the presumed unnaturalness and deviance of homosexuality in Timati’s section:

Твой Брадобрей тебе красит бороду,
 Вы теперь близки, слух идет по городу.
 Хочешь, я тебе дам поносить тебе свою бороду?
 Стремно краску лить по любому поводу.
 Уважаем наш конгломерат,
 Здесь каждый бородатый - наш брат.
 И каждая малышка скажет: "Да",
 Если не нарисованная борода.

Your coiffeur dyes your beard,
 You are intimate with him now, the rumors say.
 Would you like to borrow my beard?
 Uncool to waste hair dye for no good reason,
 We respect our conglomerate,
 Here each beardie is our brother
 And every cutie will say "Yes,"
 If the beard is not painted.

Throughout the video, Timati’s and MC Doni’s hip-hop gets authenticated through the rejection of perverse Europe associated with the sexual and gender deviance embodied by Conchita. This rejection, however, deliberately deploys the strategy of viral homophobia used already in 2012 in *#ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ*, where sexual perversity was associated with Kirkorov and metonymically with the entire Russian *Estrada* in the closet. At the same time, the bearded racialized men get symbolically repositioned away from Russia’s security concern (bearded terrorists associated with separatist Islamic masculinities) to a cool, modern subject of desire (masculine hip-hop realness). Thus, the *Борода* video not only symbolizes the break with the West and explicit mocking of sexual and gender perversion embodied by the figure of Conchita, but it also marks the shift towards increased valorization of non-Russian masculinities, where hyper-virile bearded Other has a role to play in securing Russia’s future against Western sexual

perversion. The racialized bearded man is resignified through hip-hop modernity as sexy and cool. If, in the sexual modernity paradigm, LGBT tolerance is produced on the back of racialized men rendered as backward and homophobic; the *Борода* video revalorizes the bearded man as hyper-sexual, homophobic, and modern through hip-hop.

What is more intriguing is that the video closes with a third body with a fake beard: a teenager hanging around MC Doni's house. He is depicted as humming the altered line from the song while painting a beard on his face with the help of a small pocket mirror: *У меня есть борода и ты скажешь мне да!* (I have a beard, and you will say yes to me!). The boy inspired by MC Doni's example now wants to emulate him. MC Doni passes by the boy, smiles approvingly, and enters his house. The ending transports revalorized non-Russian bearded man from a security concern/post-Soviet abject via hip-hop modernity into the realm of cool. MC Doni is presented as an excellent example to be emulated by the Russian youth, unlike Conchita Wurst, whose emulation by Russian youth might lead to a perverse decay.

As my analysis of the video indicates, the nexus between the explicit anti-LGBT stance in Timati's songs and videos and the valorization of non-Russian racialized masculinity cannot be attributed to Russia's conservative turn away from the West alone. Homophobic scandals marked Timati's media persona pre-2014, as my analysis of 2012 hip-hop *meykhana* demonstrated. The study of this viral use of homophobia should be thus positioned at the intersection of post-Soviet discourses on homosexuality, Russia's increasing drift away from the West post-2013, Russia's project of homophobia and 'traditional values' rooted in Russia's 'organic' multiethnicity, and finally homophobia, and violent masculinity as part of hip hop culture and domestic struggles between musical scenes. In the next section dedicated to the video *Ты такой* (2015), I will trace how the revalorization of the bearded man intersects with the neoliberal phantasy of economic uplift for Central Asian migrants in Russia and the sexual phantasy of ethnoracial mixing.

Fantasies of migrant economic uplift and ethnoracial mixing: Central Asian realness of MC Doni in *Ты такой* (2015)

In theoretical Chapter 2, I have described the centrality of the issue of realness or authenticity for scholarly and subcultural hip-hop discourses. Marginalization is one of the central dimensions of hip-hop realness, including gender/sexual hardness and social and ethnoracial marginalization. As mentioned earlier, Timati has never experienced material hardship, growing up as a cosmopolitan Muscovite with a privileged economic background. However, in his interviews, he persistently highlights that he never

received financial support for his musical projects from his parents, bolstering a narrative of a self-made man who earned money honestly through his hard work and business acumen.²¹⁵ I also argued that Timati's ethnoracial ambiguity has helped him secure hip-hop realness in 'the West' but resisted translation into hip-hop authenticity within Russia, producing constant accusations of mimicking US rap. In contrast, other artists from the Black Star label could score much higher in hip-hop realness, for instance, Uzbekistani MC Doni, who joined the label in 2014, and who, as an ex-migrant worker in Russia, comes from the experience of economic hardship and racial marginalization. MC Doni's authenticating Central Asian migrant realness occupies the principal place in the 2017 Black Star label-produced documentary, initially called *Thanks to the Almighty for what I have become*.²¹⁶ The caption to the documentary emphasizes Doni's authenticity and proximity to 'the people':

Doni decided to tell first-hand about his complicated but very interesting fate. This is a true story of a guy from a simple family with a big dream who went through all the trials of harsh life in the capital. Doni started his way on a Moscow construction site, and in 7 years, he had already performed on the stage of Olimpiyskiy. Like no one else, Doni knows what a dream is and how difficult it is to fulfill!

The documentary repeatedly dramatizes the racialized migrant 'realness' of MC Doni, tracing his roots and origins in Fergana valley, Uzbekistan. We first follow the rapper's visit to the kindergarten and the school he attended as a child in Fergana. As MC Doni walks through the corridors, he recollects his childhood memories and passions, such as breakdance, practiced in the school's ballroom. He narrates how his family was too poor to buy him sneakers for dancing, resulting in him dancing in broken or torn shoes and dreaming about buying the best sneakers when he grows up. 'Dreams come true; I stand here in the new sneakers,' states MC Doni, narrating his journey of economic success. Muslim Uzbek realness of MC Doni is also emphasized through the video title. He praises God for his success, and a brief shot is shown where the rapper prays with former schoolteachers during his visit to his school in Fergana.



Figure 29. MC Doni's Central Asian migrant realness, MC Doni advises construction workers. Screenshot from the documentary *Doni*. Source youtube.com/watch?v=NBw5Yth_Wso

²¹⁵ Although in his interviews he repeatedly stresses that his financial success is due to his own making alone and that his parents were never spoiling him with money.

²¹⁶ youtube.com/watch?v=NBw5Yth_Wso

Later the rapper revisits a luxurious housing complex in Moscow, where he worked on a construction site upon his arrival in Russia. MC Doni narrates the hardships of the work life and the abuse he experienced as a racialized migrant laborer. He juxtaposes the harsh labor of the Central Asian migrants on the construction sites to the comfortable white-collar office jobs of Muscovites by calling the labor he performed ‘real job, real manly job!’ Revisiting other construction sites, where he worked for four years, MC Doni stresses that ‘Thanks to God’s will, now everything has changed.’ MC Doni changes his clothing into a workers’ outfit. Standing next to the workers, he ruminates over his past life as a migrant worker. He shares personal advice with others on getting rid of insects in the workers’ dormitory, as informed by his experience. ‘You do the job which for many would be impossible,’ MC Doni addresses a group of Central Asian workers gathered next to him. As the camera lingers on their faces, shown as listening attentively to the rapper’s advice, MC Doni continues: ‘What can I wish for you? Protect yourself! All the best to you! Take care of yourselves! You are needed at home. Money is important, but you need to take care of yourselves!’

The documentary is structured around a rags-to-riches narrative, casting the story of MC Doni as the successful transformation from a racialized migrant laborer in Moscow to a hip-hop celebrity through the stewardship of the Black Star label. In the documentary, the creative director of the Black Star label, Viktor Abramov, describes MC Doni as *музыкант из народа* (a musician coming from the people), whose music and words are said to be intuitively understood by simple people. MC Doni’s hip-hop realness is thus based on his authenticating experiences as a racialized Central Asian worker in Moscow; he speaks to those migrants who dream of making it in the postcolonial metropolis. This realness has commercial potential for the Black Star label; it translates into profits by appealing to Central Asian migrant workers in Russia. MC Doni’s celebrity status allows him to become a business owner: the documentary showcases a barbershop called *Tonop* (Axe) that he opened up together with his friends.²¹⁷ After having left the Black Star label in 2020, MC Doni has launched a fast-food chain called *Базара нет by Doni*, marketed as ‘the first Uzbek fast food in the world.’²¹⁸ The brand name builds both upon a double meaning: street credibility of the slang expression *Базара нет* (literally: no bazaar, meaning ‘no question about it,’) and the double meaning of *Базар* in Russian as both Oriental market and verbal argument or talking. MC Doni’s firm negation of *Базар* is both an expression of hip-hop realness and an attempt to overcome the imaginary which ties Central Asian migrants to the traditional market trade.

The model of US hip-hop moguldom that extends the music business into lifestyle consumption brought to Russia by Timati inspires both the business model of the Black Star label as a whole and individual artists from it, such as Timati and MC Doni. Although the documentary is sympathetic to both Uzbek people and Central Asian

²¹⁷ toporbarber.ru

²¹⁸ bazaranet.ru

migrant workers, stressing their exploitation as a racialized underclass within Russia, the aspirational dream and fantasy of upward mobility embodied by the celebrity success of MC Doni can hardly ever materialize for most such migrants. This rags-to-riches narrative of migrant uplift, together with a fantasy of racial mixing, also takes a central place in the 2015 music video *Ты такой* (*Oh! You are such*) to which I now turn my analytical attention.

I have shown in the previous sections how the #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ video released in 2012 as a variation on *meykhana* played with the indexicality of the Russian language adjective *такой* (such), used in the video as a coded pointer to homosexuality, without explicitly naming it. The video ultimately questioned the legitimacy of Kirkorov and the entire closeted Russian *Estrada* through homophobic hip-hop bashing. In the wake of the *Борода* video (2014), which metonymically tied the beard to the racialized masculinities of ethnically non-Russian men and revalorized them, the next 2015 video characteristically titled *Ты такой* (*Oh! You are such*) continued linguistic play with indexicality. Its catchy hook: *А ты такой, мужчина с бородой!* (*Oh! You are such a bearded man!*) transformed the pointer *такой* (such) into a celebration of masculine virility associated with the non-Russian bearded man, stressing his sexual desirability.

Scoring no less than 283 million views on YouTube by January 2021, the video continues the tradition of memetic song-making, relying on kitsch, parody, and hyperbole. Its extremely viral character can be perhaps explained by the fact that as a memetic song, it builds on two preexisting viral hits: Timati's and MC Doni's *Борода* (2014) and Natali's 2013 hit *О Боже, какой мужчина!* (*O God, what a man!*).²¹⁹ The latter song, describing the lyrical heroine's infatuation with a perfect man, culminates in the chorus declaring her desire to have children with him:

О, Боже, какой мужчина,
Я хочу от тебя сына.
И я хочу от тебя дочку,
И точка, и точка!

O God, what a man,
I want to have a son from you.
And also a daughter,
That's it, that's it!

Although it might be tempting to dismiss Natali's 2013 fascination with 'a man' as an empty heteronormative pro-natalism, the lyrics point that this man is other-worldly: he is intermittently described as either a Western celebrity: a 'mixture of Brad Pitt and Johnny Depp' or as a 'magical man, coming from another planet.' Natali's lyrical heroine has to travel far from Russia to find a man worthy of her love and good enough to have children with. Furthermore, if such a man is found, it might be wise to have them in bulk, as if subtly hinting at problematic qualities of ethnically Russian men, a phenomenon echoing gender studies scholars' portrayals of 'weak Russian masculinity' in crisis. *Ты такой*, shot in 2015, offers a home-grown response to Natali's search for the magic man. She no longer needs to travel to another planet or appeal to Western celebrities. Natali's discovery of this desirable masculinity in the figure of the bearded

²¹⁹ [youtube.com/watch?v=SYAf3JEB7Xc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SYAf3JEB7Xc)

non-Russian man continues the trend of the revalorization of racialized masculinities initiated in *Борода* (2014).

Ты такой operates via racial translation of US black hip-hop authenticity: locating domestic equivalents of racialized hip-hop masculinity in Central Asian migrant realness of MC Doni. The translation of the trope of ‘racial mixing’ involves a search for local racialized figures that would enact the positions of the ‘black man’ and ‘white woman’ in the fantasy. These figures are rendered into intelligible tropes characterizing the dynamics of post-Soviet racialization. The ‘white woman’ is translated into a blonde, blue-eyed Slavic female superstar (the singer Natali in *Ты такой*). The ‘black man’ is enacted by Timati or MC Doni, who inhabit non-Russian racialized masculinities and elastic, post-Soviet ‘blackness.’ Translated and adapted ‘black on white’ sexual fantasy of racial mixing defines the visual structure of the entire video. This ironic and deliberately kitsch video hyperbolizes and juxtaposes the sartorially amplified, translated ‘whiteness’ of Natali and the ‘blackness’ of MC Doni, echoing the parallel pairing employed in the 2014 *Понты* video (2014) of Timati (shot by Pavel Houdiakov) which I describe in the next chapter. My reading of *Ты такой* foregrounds the interlinked fantasies of migrant economic uplift and interracial mixing as two organizing tropes that structure this irony-laden, deliberately kitschy viral video.



Figure 30. Caucasian sublime meets urban (post-Olympic Sochi) and sartorial (MC Doni) transformation. Screenshots from the *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

As a director of *Ты такой*, Rustam Romanov pointed out: the choice of Sochi, which recently undergone an Olympic makeover, as the filming location for the video was ‘our response to sanctions,’ referencing the sanctions imposed on Russia by European governments for the annexation of Crimea, as well as Russian government’s responsive counter-sanctions.²²⁰ Impossibility or unwillingness to go abroad in search of an exotic filming location resulted in the video being shot in post-Olympic Sochi, echoing Baker’s ‘Eurovision-Olympics convergence’ set in motion already by *Борода* (2014). Showcasing both the post-Olympic architectural transformation of Sochi and the sublime mountainous landscapes of Caucasus, the video recycles the visual tropes from both *Что видишь ты* (2013) and *Борода* (2014), also shot by Romanov. The narrative structure of the video also plays with this double makeover, both Sochi’s and MC Doni’s, by packing his autobiographical story of migrant economic uplift in Russia into a ludic viral video format featuring unlikely romance and sartorial transformation.

²²⁰ youtube.com/watch?v=chvfoY9Ogk

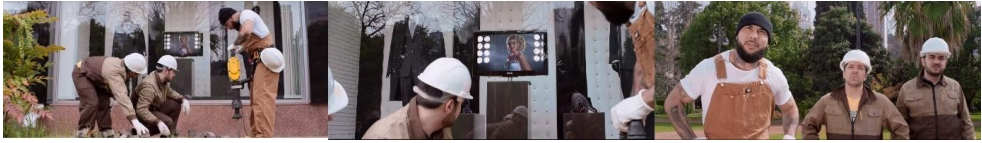


Figure 31. The scene of pavement drilling. Natali appears on the screen. Screenshots from the *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

The first sound entering the video is the mundane noise of pavement drilling. The shot centers on a group of migrant workers busy repairing the pavement in front of an expensive clothing store with a TV screen in the window. Natali appears on the screen, announced as ‘Super Star,’ a move that sharply emphasizes the class abyss separating the celebrity world of Natali and the racialized manual labor performed by MC Doni and his colleagues. This time it is Natali who is other-worldly and unreachable, deity-like. The song’s opening hook: *А ты такой, мужчина с бородой, в твою попала сету!* (You are such a man with a beard! I am caught up in your net!) together with Natali’s sudden, fairy-like mediated image appearing on the TV screen captivates the workers’ attention. They interrupt drilling and stare at the TV screen in awe while the close-up shot of MC Doni’s face emphasizes his intense attention. The sound is diegetic; we hear the song as these workers listen to it, transported, as they are, in the fantasy world of the video.



Figure 32. The ludic narration of the fantasy of migrant economic uplift. Screenshots from the *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

In the next shot, MC Doni walks by the seaside and tells his autobiographical story of migrant hardship and eventual success: being signed as an artist at the Black Star label. The video and lyrics construct a narrative emphasizing MC Doni’s migrant realness. MC Doni’s lyrical hero in the video stands for his former self, also portrayed in the 2017 documentary I analyzed above:

Я работал на стройке, ездил на метро.
 Без регистрации - просто повезло.
 Я мечтал подняться всем врагам назло,
 А что? Мужчина должен уметь всё!
 Собрать стол из Икеи, иметь крутые идеи.
 Зарабатывать кэш, а не сидеть на шее.
 Быть с любимой, а не собирать трофеи.
 Меньше тусоваться, больше посещать музеи.

Однажды я поменял маршрут.
 Прощай, Равшан, и прощай, Джемшут.
 Привет, Москва, Black Star, я тут!
 У меня есть борода и меня берут.
 Теперь любая хочет быть со мной,

I worked at a construction site, used the subway,
 Without registration, I just got lucky.
 I was dreaming of success despite all my enemies.
 So what? A man should be able to do it all!
 Assemble a table from Ikea and have great ideas.
 Earning cash, not sitting on her neck.
 Be with the one he loves, not collecting trophies.
 Party less and go to museums more.

Once I changed my route.
 Farewell, Ravshan, farewell, Djamshut.
 Hey Moscow, Black Star, I am here!
 I have a beard, and they take me in!
 Now every girl wants to be with me,

Как-будто я - супергерой!
Так неожиданно успех большой.
Продолжим, Натали, страна будет петь с тобой!

As if I am a superhero!
So unexpected, a huge success.
Continue, Natali, and the country will sing along!

The ludic fairy-tale-like story of success presented by MC Doni is tweaked to fit a shorter video format. If in real life MC Doni rose from a migrant worker to Timati's back MC, and later to Black Star label artist, in the video, he finds a credit card issued by the imaginary Black Star Bank, lost on the street by Timati making a cameo appearance. The deliberately ironic lyrical narrative of MC Doni's success suggests a radical break with iconic portrayals of Central Asian migrants on Russian TV. MC Doni references this break through the line *Прощай, Равшан, и прощай, Джамшут!* (Farewell Ravshan, farewell, Djamshut!), that includes the names of Tajik migrant workers from the famous comedy TV show *Nasha Russia*, becoming somewhat of a generic name for Central Asian migrant workers in Russian popular culture. To get rid of the sartorially coded migrant abjection, MC Doni enters a luxury clothing store, where he tries several garments, refashioning himself into a desirable, sexy man, exposing his tattooed muscled physique again. For a short time, he slips into his former migrant habitus, clinging habitually to a *barsetka* leather bag, an accessory performing the work of racial metonymy, indexing fashion choices of racialized migrants from the Caucasus and Central Asia. As he dances holding *barsetka*, he suddenly makes a disgusted face expressing a conflict between ossified habitus and the newer socio-economic reality he inhabits, thanks to his magical financial success.



Figure 33. Leaving the migrant abject behind. MC Doni's sartorial makeover. Screenshots from the *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* video. Source: [youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ)

This recognizable image of the abject Central Asian migrant worker who can hardly be seen as sexually desirable is something that the video plays upon yet also reworks by resignifying racialized Central Asian masculinity as hyper-virile and attractive. Mentioning familiar TV comedy characters (Ravshan and Djamshut) in the lyrics is instrumental: it helps elicit a ludic response from wider audiences who will recognize familiar images. Their jocular mention also helps dramatize MC Doni's makeover, where he is presented as leaving his past behind for the journey of economic empowerment and music success through Black Star. Hutchings and Tolz, who studied the popular comedy series *Nasha Russia* portraying Central Asian migrants, take issue with the perspectives that frame the series as 'serving merely a locus of vernacular racism,' suggesting instead that the genre of comedy should be read as a space 'for renegotiation of national and ethnic identities' (Hutchings and Tolz 2015:123). Relying on and

reworking the notion of modality as ‘the distinction between the “content” of language and the speaker’s attitude to that content to describe the sources of the humour the series generates’ (Hutchings and Tolz 2015:123), the authors frame *Nasha Russia* series as modalizing or de-literalizing the xenophobic prejudice against migrants depicted within the sketches (Hutchings and Tolz 2015:140). The 2015 *Ты такой* video, equally, while building on the post-Soviet comedy tropes of both Central Asian migrants and Caucasian masculinity, which guarantee their broad public intelligibility and video’s virality, uses them to resignify and revalorize racialized masculinities through sexual and racial metonymy of the beard, hip-hop modernity and the neoliberal fantasy of migrant economic uplift.



Figure 34. Natali's appearance from the white limousine to the red carpet. Screenshots from the *Ты такой* (*Oh! You are such*) video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

Natali’s appearance in the video is staged through her emergence out of a white limousine, with a personal chauffeur and paparazzi around, signaling her superstar status.²²¹ A silver, Cinderella-like shoe is shown stepping on a red carpet in a slow-motion shot. When Natali steps out of the limousine, she is presented surrounded by paparazzi, basking in their attention, dressed in a white fur coat and sparkling white crystal dress. The figure of Natali and her ‘whiteness’ is amplified sartorially through clothing choices and is juxtaposed to darker-skinned bared-chested MC Doni, with his body covered with tattoos, presented as selecting clothing in the expensive store afforded by his access to the Black Star Bank. He highlights the distance between himself and Natali in the line: *Я раньше тебя видел только в интернете* (I used to see you before only on the internet).

²²¹ Natali is a singer who is mostly remembered in Russia for her 1997 hit, *Ветер с моря дул* (The wind was blowing), but she has been releasing videos throughout 2000s and 2010s too. In 2015 Natali released a video *Volodya, Volodya* allegedly dedicated to and meant as a birthday present to the president of Russia. The video does not contain direct references or portrayals but continues a tradition of celebrity birthday songs composed for the president.



Figure 35. The translated fantasy of ethnoracial mixing. Screenshots from the *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

MC Doni leaves the shop dressed in a newly bought black suit and black shirt and approaches a sky-blue vintage cabriolet with a chauffeur waiting for him. Now that his sartorial makeover is complete, he can try his luck with Natali, meeting her next to the glitzy hotel where she lives. The video explicitly plays with the fantasy of racial mixing by rendering it hyperbolic. The video invites racial readings by deliberately staging the contrasting color scheme to create a sharper visual juxtaposition between Natali and MC Doni. Racial meanings are coded through clothing, cars, colors, and bodies, undergirding the interracial mixing trope informing the video: MC Doni's 'blackness' is juxtaposed to Natali's 'whiteness.' Natali is shown sitting in a sky-blue cabriolet in a white fur coat with an angelic smile, while MC Doni, all in black, describes her beauty by referencing her phenotypical features in a slightly old-fashioned poetic way: *Светлый волос твой, голубые очи* (Your fair hair, your blue eyes). Promising to steal her under cover of a dark night, MC Doni hints at his unbridled temper and die-hard 'wild' Caucasian proclivities to kidnap women he likes. MC Doni's sexual excess and intentions are signaled when he playfully warns Natali to be careful when going for a ride with him in the cabriolet: *Будь осторожна, от этого бывают дети* (Be careful, it may lead to babies) as if to reference Natali's 2013 search for a 'magic man' and her desire for children.

As has been theorized by researchers working with post-Soviet and specifically post-Soviet masculinity in Russia, the masculinity of ethnically Russian or Slavic men is often perceived as being in crisis. In sharp contrast, the men from the Caucasus are perceived as potent and virile; their masculinity is constructed as both excessive and, at the same time, stronger than Slavic/Russian masculinity, attractive, and hyper-sexual. As Tlostanova argues, commenting on the distinct Russian articulations of colonial racial-sexual tropes during the Imperial conquest of Caucasus:

The erotic element of Russian imperialism was expressed in the male form and extrapolated into the Russian male anxiety and fear of the Caucasus machismo in war and in sex [...] Feminization of aboriginal males was never widely used in the colonialist interpretation of Caucasus and hard to find in Central Asia either with an exception of transsexual cases. In Russian colonization only one side of the colonial gender paradox was at work—that of the association of the local men with violence [...] The post-Soviet society retains the stereotype of the Caucasus male which today is used as the basis of the standard racist

accusations of his desire to possess a Russian woman. But during the colonization this would be unthinkable because they never encountered each other in reality (Tlostanova 2010:78).

The currency of the trope of the hyper-sexual virility of Caucasian men and the allure of interethnic sex can be sampled by searching Russian social media platforms. Such a search would reveal the existence of multiple sex groups dedicated to the fetish of ethnoracial mixing. One can find groups with names like *Russian whores for Caucasian men*, *Caucasian men own Russian women*, etc. These mostly closed groups can be anything from porn groups dedicated exclusively to race/ethnicity fetish, groups for dating, and exposure groups with moralizing missions (exposing photos and nudes of Slavic/Russian women allegedly ‘tarnished’ by interracial sex with ‘foreign,’ non-Russian racialized men). This fetishization of Caucasian male sexuality crosses the hetero/homo divide, and multiple gay groups exploit the fetish of hyper-masculine Caucasian men. One group name, for example, characteristically references a homo-erotic reworking of Russian classical romantic tradition, called *Prisoner of Caucasus 18+*, but there are more generic titles, such as *Home photos of Southern guys*.

At the same time, hyper-sexualized Caucasian male sexuality is not only a fetish but also a source of anxiety over masculinity and financial domination. MC Doni’s character in the *Ты такой* video actively plays with the tropes of strong, virile masculinity and hypersexuality, whose excessiveness is not only sexual but also spills into the realm of financial generosity. Such tropes find reflections in late Soviet and contemporary Russian popular culture. For example, many Soviet jokes about Georgians (and metonymically Caucasians) connect imagery of material affluence and buying power with sexual overindulgence and prowess, revealing ‘Russian men’s irritation with the Georgians on sexual grounds; their money, cars, and fashionable flamboyant clothes made the Russians feel that the Georgians were not their Southern neighbors but living on another, futuristic planet. Thanks to their affluence, they were perceived as formidable competitors for the attention of Russian women’ (Draitser 1998:50). In the video MC Doni invites Natali to an expensive restaurant, and as they sit together, he raps: *Пускай весь мир нас подождет, / И все что хочешь ты за мой счет* (Let the entire world wait for us, / Everything you desire, I will pay for). When the waiter serves the couple a small elaborate meal, MC Doni gets visibly irritated. In a second, after whispering something to the waiter, the entire table is suddenly covered with multiple dishes. This scene evokes the meanings attached to racialized post-Soviet masculinities, linking the imaginary of Caucasian material success, hospitality, and generosity to the sexual and financial excess of Caucasian men in dating. Natali is showered with meals and presents. In another shot, MC Doni appears with a massive bunch of roses obstructing half of his face, which he presents to Natali as a sign of his admiration and unbridled passion for her.

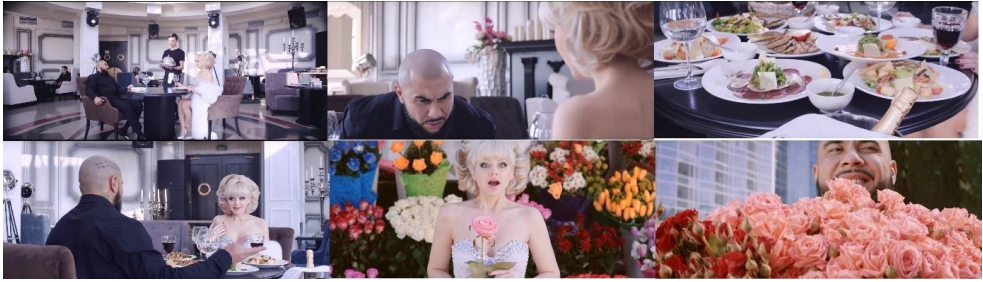


Figure 36. Financial/sexual generosity and excess. Screenshots from the *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

The image of virility and strength is emphasized in the ironic scene at the end of the video. During a romantic stroll around post-Olympic Sochi, which, like MC Doni’s character, has just undergone a dazzling makeover, Natali throws a small stone into a lake. MC Doni, following her, throws a huge rock that ends up landing on the other side of the lake because of his strong arms. The pinnacle of masculine realness is showcased in the closing scene when a car tire of the sky blue cabriolet with Abkhazian numbers suddenly bursts out. MC Doni decisively leaves the car, determined to fix the problem. Pushing the driver aside, he lifts the entire vehicle alone due to his superhuman strength. Natali, wrapped in white furs, is shocked and applauds him contently.



Figure 37. Virility and strength. Screenshots from the *Ты такой (Oh! You are such)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

The video explicitly foregrounds racial readings of MC Doni, where he embraces gestures and behaviors associated with different ethnic groups, thus presenting him as an undefined racialized Other. While he is first shown as a Central Asian migrant worker on Sochi’s streets, indexing his autobiographical experience, after a sartorial makeover, he is linked to the images of hyper-sexed Caucasian masculinity in his performances of financial generosity, sexual excess, and superhuman strength. Shown dancing when standing in a limousine, MC Doni performs lezginka, a dance associated with societies and cultures of the Caucasus. Thus, *Ты такой* deliberately blends and conflates ethnocultural signifiers, constructing a position of an overarching non-Russian

racialized masculinity yet elevating and revalorizing it as cool and modern through hip-hop.

The video's organizing trope of interracial romance and sex features routinely in the ways it is read in the comment thread on YouTube. Analysis of comments reveals anxiety accompanying the fantasy of ethnoracial mixing, which manifests through the usage of multiple racial slurs against MC Doni. The misogynistic slur *чернильница* (inkwell/mudshark), in turn, is used in the comments to disapprove of the sexual preferences of Natali's character. MC Doni, just like Timati himself, is routinely positioned as an undifferentiated ethnoracial other, labeled as either a monkey (*обезьяна, папуас*) or with local ethnoracial slurs pointing at his origins from the Caucasus or Central Asia such as *хач* or *чурка*, or a mixture of both, such as 'singing monkey with a beard.' I list some of the comments scraped from the comment thread under the video: *Фу, и эта кукушка с чуркой* (Eww, this chick is with *churka*); *Ну и обезьяна гавкающая. Наташка, ты нормального то не смогла найти?* (What a barking monkey! Natashka, could you not find a normal one?); *Ты сама себя опозорила с этим мудаком!* (You embarrassed yourself with this asshole!); *Чернильница!* (Inkwell!); *Она соска черномазая хачёвская!* (A mudshark!); *Московская баба и кавказский мачо с кучей роз, всё как в жизни* (A Moscow chick and a macho from the Caucasus, the way it is in real life); *Ага, русских мужиков не хватает. Гоу за папуасами. Фуууу... Гадость* (Not enough ethnic Russian men, grab the Papuans).²²²

The word *чернильница* used in the comments above is an offensive slur deployed in the Russian language to judge women who engage in romantic and sexual relationships with non-Slavic men. It is primarily used for ethnically Slavic or Russian women who date or have sexual relations with men from the Caucasus and other ethnically non-Russian and non-Slavic men. The word itself comes from the word *чёрный* (black). *Чернила* in Russian stands for 'ink,' metaphorically inviting a comparison of a woman involved in interethnic intimacy to an 'inkwell' According to the imagery provided by the word, such a woman is constructed as tainted, tarnished, and marked, having sex with ethnoracial others is presented as something impossible to wash off easily. The trope of being tarnished by mixing and explicit color imagery spills into colonial tropes of racial contagion. As Stoler argues: 'Racial contagion rested on two competing claims: on discrete categories of people and on the premise that those categories could be "sullied" through sexual contact, moral influence, and affective attachment—irrevocably tainted and transformed' (Stoler 2016:261). Some commenters, taking the ludic video quite seriously, chastise Natali's character for picking ethnically non-Slavic men over Russian or Slavic ones. Others go as far as to lament the degradation of the Russian ethno-nation through such 'promiscuous' conduct of women who behave like Natali.

²²² Comments scraped from the thread under the video: [youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ)

The discourse of *чернильница* points to the peculiar constellation of post-Soviet vernacular racisms, where Slaviness and ethnic Russianness are pitted against non-Slavic darkened others, loosely associated with the Caucasus and Central Asia, but occasionally with men from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. From the 1950s, according to scholarly accounts, African students coming to USSR to study were attracting the attention of Slavic women, provoking masculine anxieties over ‘our’ women, threatened by ethnoracially foreign men (Sahadeo 2007a:569; Shnirelman 2011:245). Such couples were often targets of sporadic violence perpetrated by young students and workers, forming voluntary vigilante groups (Mitrokhin 2003:53). The post-Soviet re-articulation of these anxieties about ethnoracial mixing crystallized in moral panics about Russian women dating and having sex with foreigners when Russia hosted the World Cup 2018. The anxieties resulted in slut-shaming ethnically Russian/Slavic women for immoral behavior and unpatriotic romantic interest and sexual desire for these foreign men, perceived as better looking compared to ethnic Russian men.

Ты такой video lifts racialized non-Russian masculinities from abjection and revalorizes them, exploiting the fears of weakening, declining masculinities of ethnic Russian men. It flaunts the sexual desirability of racialized and potent masculinities of Caucasian and non-Slavic men. One YouTube user praises the video as an educational example for ethnic Russian men to learn from virile Caucasians how to remasculinize themselves: ditching girly Western fashions and growing beards, like MC Doni: *Хоть русские начнут после этого мужиками становится, бороды отпускать начнут, а то ходят как девочки из западной моды. Пусть поднимают то качество, что Бог отдал мужичкам, дабы отличаться от девочек.* (I hope ethnic Russians will transform into *muzhiki* after that and start growing beards instead of looking like girls from Western catwalks. Let them nurture the God-given quality of the *muzhiks*, distinguishing them from girls).

The video closes where it starts, returning to the migrant workers and the expensive clothing store with the TV screen where MC Doni first saw Natali. However, MC Doni is now on the screen, dancing next to Natali in the music video; both are celebrities. His former colleagues stare at the screen, interrupted by their superior speaking in a characteristic accented Russian. Noticing MC Doni’s disappearance, he forces them to resume work. This ending troubles the ludic fantasy of Central Asian migrant economic uplift in Russia promoted in the video. The migrant workers are still in the same spot; no ‘magic’ happened to them compared to MC Doni. MC Doni’s journey to economic empowerment and country-wide fame hardly resonates with the experiences of less fortunate Central Asian migrant laborers in Russia much less likely to become celebrities.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that the beard operates in the *Борода* (2014) and *Ты макоў* (2015) videos as racial and sexual metonymy for racialized non-Russian men. The videos revalorize non-Russian masculinities as modern, desirable, and sexy in two crucial ways: firstly, by moving away from the imagery of the bearded terrorist from the Caucasus, as Russia's security concern, towards the vision of the bearded man as securing Russia's multi-national future against sexually perverse Europe; secondly, by moving away from the portrayal of Central Asian migrants as post-Soviet abject towards the promise of Central Asian migrant economic uplift in Russia via entrepreneurialism and hip-hop modernity. This peculiar fusion of tropes and fantasies must be seen in the context of US hip-hop moguldom and its Black Star translations into post-Soviet neoliberal Russia. At the same time, the ludic fantasy of ethnoracial mixing built through sartorially amplified racial translation exploits Russian ethnonationalist anxieties over virile masculinities of racialized men and plays a part in the promise of migrant economic uplift. The videos' memetic character and the Central Asian migrant 'realness' of MC Doni, described as a 'musician from the people,' responds to the Russian cultural trend of aesthetic populism, which gained force at the time and was reflected in Black Star cultural productions. The next chapter will analyze the translation strategy, around which all the trends described in the last two chapters have coalesced. This strategy involved the creation of the memetic impersonation of a racialized taxi driver from the Caucasus and Central Asia, Timati's alter-ego Teymuraz.

11. Memetic figure of Teymuraz: originality, aesthetic populism, and patriotic anti-racism

Introduction

This chapter analyses a racial translation strategy that involved creating a deliberately memetic figure of Teymuraz, a ludic stage and video persona of Timati that builds on the hyperbolized Russian stereotypes of a racialized taxi driver from the Caucasus or Central Asia in Moscow. The Teymuraz figure first appeared on Timati's Instagram in 2014. It later featured in three videos, released between 2014 and 2016: *Понты (Swag)* (2014) with 71 million views, *Баклажан (Eggplant)* (2015) with 220 million views, and *Маза (Maza)* (2016) with 53 million views on YouTube.²²³ I begin this chapter by tracking the first social media appearance of Teymuraz as part of Timati's shift toward memetics in the attempts to overcome chronic domestic inauthenticity. I will then place Teymuraz within broader global cultural trends of post-irony, valorization of imperfection, and Russian hybrid visuality of aesthetic populism characterizing the times of 'conservative turn.' This hybrid aesthetics fuses elements of New East style, Soviet and post-Soviet cultural recycling, social critique, and appropriation of the voices of the subaltern. Afterward, I spend time on each of the three videos to unpack their narrative structure and the work of racial signification that relies on multimodal racial metonymy. In the last section, I trace the broader implications of Teymuraz as a racial translation strategy. I explore how it relates to Timati's attempts to negotiate a stigma of imitation and his quest for originality in the context of Russian hip-hop authenticity discourses. Having been haunted by the accusations of 'copying' and mimicking US rappers throughout his career, Timati transgresses them in the figure of Teymuraz by deliberately exploiting his ethnoracial ambiguity and chronic hip-hop inauthenticity. At the same time, as a strategy of racial translation, the figure of Teymuraz is motivated by the pursuit of originality: hailed by Timati as a discovery of authentic Russian aesthetics not borrowed from the West, a 'cool original story with a Caucasian accent.' I explore the contradictions of the peculiar patriotic populist anti-racist project promoted by Timati through the figure of Teymuraz and in his interviews and performances of *lezginka*, where he frames both the dance and metonymically the Caucasus as part of the shared cultural legacy of the Russian Federation. On the one hand, these readings may challenge exclusionary mono-ethnic framings of the country and upset Russo-centric chauvinism; on the other, they may foster too familiar imperial frames.

Temporally and thematically, the early incarnations of the Teymuraz figure intersect with translation strategies deployed already in *Борода* (2014) and *Ты макоў* (2015). The

²²³ As of January 2022.

figure of Teymuraz harnesses memetic internet humor: creating songs with hooks or characters that instantly go viral, generate hashtags, and flood social networks. However, it is essential to separate this racial translation strategy from the previous ones because in the figure of Teymuraz, Timati’s art of racial translation reaches its apotheosis. As it develops the elements of previously deployed strategies such as vicarious realness, virality, homophobia, racial and sexual metonymy, and regional originals, Timati combines them into one excessively memetic figure. Via Teymuraz Timati translates US black hip-hop masculinity into a localized idiom of gendered ethnoracial difference that relies on late-Soviet and post-Soviet tropes of racialized non-Russian masculinities and popular humor traditions. At the same time, through the figure of Teymuraz, Timati enacts racial translation, performing kitschy impersonation infused with deliberate self-irony, virality, and grotesque, responding to the Russian popular culture trend of aesthetic populism and anti-elitism.

The emergence of the Teymuraz character first manifested in a series of Instagram posts in March 2014 when Timati published a ludic photo collage juxtaposing US hip-hop celebrities Pharrell Williams, Kanye West, and himself, sporting expensive oversized leather bags as the latest fashion trend.²²⁴ Although Timati wanted to appear funny, accompanying the collage with a phrase: *Настоящий джентльмен свеж!!! В сумке он домой несет кеш !!!* (Real gentleman is fresh, in his bag, he carries cash), it instead elicited responses that, far from acknowledging Timati’s cosmopolitan worldliness and style, concentrated on a range of reactions: from calling him a *гомосек* (faggot) who *с женской сумкой ходит* (wears a woman’s bag) to the more familiar accusations of mimicking US rappers too faithfully.



Figure 38. Teymuraz character daydreaming before falling asleep. Screenshot from Timati’s Instagram post. Photo credit: [instagram.com/p/mEEFUMPIVY](https://www.instagram.com/p/mEEFUMPIVY)

This failure to find a common language with domestic audiences must have prompted a response carved out by Black Star social media managers. On the same day, Timati released a ludic Instagram apology for his fashion mistakes, acknowledging the distance separating him from real rappers like Kanye and Pharell and declaring the need to be more modest: *Нормальный пацан не*

должен носить сумки Hermes (Normal guy should not wear Hermes bags), promising

²²⁴ [instagram.com/p/mCyMRDvISX/](https://www.instagram.com/p/mCyMRDvISX/)

his audience to exchange his Mercedes-Benz jeep to a native Lada Sedan.²²⁵ This jocular ‘apology’ was accompanied by several photos featuring a sartorial makeover in a drag of migrant masculinity: grey suit, knitted hat with the word Russia on it, leather *barsetka* bag, and white socks with black shoes.²²⁶ Other photos included Timati posing in the same attire while leaning on a silver Lada car,²²⁷ getting a meal at *Крошка-Картошка* fast food,²²⁸ and towards the end of the day sleeping in the migrant dormitory.²²⁹ This curious, carefully planned ludic social media campaign inaugurated the emergence of a new racial translation strategy. The story above also illustrates Timati’s chronic trouble with authenticity within Russian hip-hop scenes and among the broader Russian public. The foreignness he embodies for domestic audiences with his conspicuous consumption style, display of wealth, and attempts to approximate US black aesthetics often makes Timati utterly alien, if not a subject of outright ridicule in the eyes of the local public. Attempts to negotiate this stigma manifest in the ludic turn, where Timati learns not to take himself too seriously. This peculiar hybrid memetic character of non-Russian racialized *gopnik*, first emerging in March 2014, will linger on Timati’s social media throughout the entire summer, prepping the audiences with small bites for the big video reveal in September 2014.

At the end of July, a small video teaser with Teymuraz was released on Timati’s Instagram, staging a short conversation between a customer who hails a taxi with a distinctive non-Russian accent: *Эй, братишка, до вокзала сколько будет?* (Hey, brother, how much is it to get a ride to the station?). The taxi driver Teymuraz in a white Lada car reacts in indignation: *А каких братишка? Уэра Брежнева везу!* (What kind of brother? I am driving Vera Brezhneva!).²³⁰ In another jocular Instagram appearance, Timati advises his audience that the secret of winning women over is to smile more, only to transform in a second into a grinning Teymuraz, greeting the audience with a broad smile exposing his golden teeth and saying: *Прухэм!* (Hauhlow!).²³¹ In both these instances, Teymuraz speaks characteristic broken Russian with a mock ‘Caucasian’ accent, marked by replacing the sound *v* with the vowel combination ‘*vyah*.’ This sonic pointer is one of the ways Timati deploys multimodal racial metonymy to index racialized non-Russian masculinities not only through sartorial codes but also through accent, manners, sounds, gestures, and grimaces afforded by the genre of video. Before I analyze the videos, I situate the figure of Teymuraz within broader cultural trends in contemporary post-Soviet culture, such as aesthetic populism.

The shift from the 2000s Russian culture of glamour towards the so-called New East style of the 2010s, fetishizing ‘neglectedness and ruin’ was reflected in the ‘transnational

²²⁵ [instagram.com/p/mDkGZsvIQi](https://www.instagram.com/p/mDkGZsvIQi)

²²⁶ [instagram.com/p/mD9Y6-Pla7](https://www.instagram.com/p/mD9Y6-Pla7)

²²⁷ [instagram.com/p/mD8D1EPIYH](https://www.instagram.com/p/mD8D1EPIYH)

²²⁸ [instagram.com/p/mDtZadPIfD](https://www.instagram.com/p/mDtZadPIfD)

²²⁹ [instagram.com/p/mEEFUMPIVY](https://www.instagram.com/p/mEEFUMPIVY)

²³⁰ [instagram.com/p/rEohNRPIaD](https://www.instagram.com/p/rEohNRPIaD)

²³¹ [instagram.com/p/rCF8dVvIWd](https://www.instagram.com/p/rCF8dVvIWd)

success of the “gopnik style” marking ‘the end of the post-socialist imitation of the West’ and being ‘directly linked to the rise of identity politics in Eastern Europe and Russia’ (Engström 2021:98–99). Engström calls the style that exaggerates the features of the New East/gopnik style ‘Russian neo-camp’ and locates it both within wider global revalorization of the aesthetics of imperfection, post-irony, and metamodernism and within ‘subversive affirmation of Russia’s outlaw status after the annexation of the Crimea’ (Engström 2021:99). Aesthetic populism is an important artistic phenomenon in modern Russian culture coinciding with Putin’s third term that has seen the rise and perfection of this aesthetics. Aesthetic populism can be defined as a ‘strategy of appropriation of “the voice of the people,” the aesthetics of everyday, and the representation of life of the subaltern groups’ (Engström 2021:105–6). For Engström, Russia’s so-called ‘conservative turn’ is inherently postmodern and hybrid, combining normative elements such as patriotism and nation-building, local search for a non-Western identity, and global trends such as valorization of post-irony, voices of marginalized and cultural recycling. The figure of Teymuraz is part and parcel of this hybrid aesthetics.

Teymuraz as a memetic strategy of racial translation should be analyzed at the intersection of US and Russian discourses of hip-hop authenticity; global trends such as valorization of post-irony and imperfection; late Soviet and post-Soviet cultural recycling, and Russia’s hybrid cultural phenomenon of aesthetic populism. By enacting Teymuraz, Timati turns the stigma of imitating US rappers on its head: embracing the accusations of inauthenticity and channeling them into ludic self-critique. This self-critique mixes both elements of anti-elitism and populism with hip-hop modernity and capitalist fantasy of economic uplift for the non-Russian subalterns. Timati fuses the features from the New East aesthetics emblemized by social media virality of Adidas-tracksuit-wearing ‘squatting slavs’ and *gopnik* memes with cultural recycling of the artifacts of late Soviet and post-Soviet visual cultures representing non-Russian men, such as comedies *Nasha Rasha*, sketches *Gortsy ot uma*, and KVN to produce a highly memetic and viral figure of Teymuraz, a type of a non-Russian racialized *gopnik*.

In contrast to the dazzling memetic success of viral videos of Sergey Shnurov and the Leningrad band, which for Engström celebrates ‘the Russian abject,’ in the case of Teymuraz, the celebrated abject is decidedly non-Russian, metonymically tied to racialized men from the Caucasus and Central Asia. The subversive work that the figure of Teymuraz performs rests on its exploitation of Russian clichés about men from the Caucasus and Central Asia. It is deliberately imprecise who is ridiculed through this figure: Timati himself, racialized men from the Caucasus and Central Asia, or Russian ethnonational xenophobic prejudice that reduces them to grotesque caricatures. As my analysis of the videos will demonstrate, this body of work cannot be simply boiled down to the reproduction of xenophobic stereotypes, as some public commentary on the figure of Teymuraz maintained. Instead, the Teymuraz character mobilizes, exposes, appropriates, and reworks Russian xenophobic clichés about men from the Caucasus

and Central Asia, revalorizing them through hip-hop modernity and elevating them from post-Soviet abject through the promise of economic uplift. At the same time, similarly to Shnurov, through impersonations of Teymuraz, Timati deploys the strategy of aesthetic populism, which harnesses ‘the voices of the people’ and quotidian aesthetics. Timati expresses his proximity to ‘the people’ and the racialized men by embracing and instrumentalizing his ethnoracial ambiguity and non-Russianness, exploiting his chronic inauthenticity in local hip-hop scenes.

Понты (Swag)



Figure 39. Opening scenes of the video. Clothing and foods (samsa) as racial metonymies. Screenshots from the *Понты (Swag)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=MThhnNVncnY

The first video featuring Teymuraz, *Понты (Swag)*, appeared in September 2014.²³² It was shot by Pavel Houdiakov, the same director that filmed almost all of Timati’s videos with US hip-hop celebrities. By then, he had already released his first feature comedy with Snoop Dogg called *Odnoklassniki.ru*, and the video with Teymuraz also flirts with the comedy genre.²³³ The opening scenes are set in one of the central squares in Moscow, close to the main train stations, where taxi drivers hang around and wait for their clients. The figure of Teymuraz enacts hyperbolic racialized (migrant) masculinity rendered readable through the work of multimodal racial metonymy afforded by the music video genre. This racial metonymy includes sartorial codes: white socks worn with black sandals, fake Adidas tracksuit; appearance: golden teeth and beard; mannerisms: exaggerated gestures, ‘uncultured’ habits such as picking nose, grimacing, dancing lezginka; objects coded as ‘oriental’: samsa pastry and tuned white Lada car. These markers serve as deliberately inflated, kitschy pointers at Teymuraz’s non-Russianness

²³² youtube.com/watch?v=MThhnNVncnY

²³³ Comparative juxtaposition of lyrics and imagery in *Понты* as a song released already in 2013 on the album *13* and as a video released in 2014 allows hypothesizing that Teymuraz persona was invented post-hoc and was subsequently stitched to the song.

and loose provenance from either South, North Caucasus or Central Asian countries. His exact ‘origins’ are deliberately obscured.

The narrative in *Понты* relies on the ludic maiden-in-distress trope: the female protagonist, played by celebrity Vera Brezhneva, is robbed by a biker on the streets of Moscow. Well-known superstar and sex symbol in post-Soviet pop culture, Ukrainian Vera Brezhneva, made her career in a female pop trio with a telling name VIA gra.²³⁴ Teymuraz, who witnesses the robbery while eating samsa is furious; his male honor and hot temperament compel him to act. Attempting to stop the biker thief, he throws half-eaten samsa at him, miraculously reaching the biker, who falls off the motorcycle. Triumphant Teymuraz heroically returns the stolen bag to Vera: grinning and exposing his golden teeth. Unable to contain his emotions, he performs a lezginka dance in front of her and other taxi drivers, who applaud him. Teymuraz invites Vera for a ride in his white Lada car, and we see them roaming the streets of Moscow together.



Figure 40. Maiden-in-distress scenario. Saving Vera sets the unlikely ground for the two characters to meet. Screenshots from the *Понты (Swag)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=MThhnNVncnY

Teymuraz drives a white tuned Lada Priora car, manufactured by a Russian automaker AutoVAZ, modified to open its doors upwards. Popular across post-Soviet spaces subculture of DIY car modification or tuning (*тюнинг*) involves making more affordable Russia-produced cars look like fancy racer cars. A particular niche within such car-tuning practices is associated with changes deemed particularly grotesque, excessive, and bad taste. Such car tuning vernacularly indexes low-class, especially racialized (migrant) masculinities and features widely in Russian-language joke lore, internet memes, and popular culture. The encyclopedia of Russian internet folklore Lurkmore provides an especially revealing slur-ridden description of this type of tuning

²³⁴ A spin on Soviet music scene where VIA stood for Vocal Instrumental Ensemble envisioned as a Soviet answer to the growing popularity of Western bands.

as *Ара-тюнинг* (также армянский тюнинг, хач-тюнинг, хач-мобиль, быдло-тюнинг, агро-тюнинг, ара-моторс, колхоз-тюнинг, цыганский тюнинг) (*Ara-tuning*, also known as *Armenian tuning*, *huch-tuning*, *huch-Mobil*, *bydlo-tuning*, *agro-tuning*, *ara-motors*, *kolhoz-tuning*, *Gypsy-tuning*).²³⁵ Ethnoracial slurs blend in this description with low social class epithets such as *bydlo* and *kolhoz*, as the encyclopedia specifies the propensity to such tuning practices among national minorities and *gopniks* who do not have money to afford proper cars but still want to stand out. Iconic elements of such tuning are lowering the car and darkening the windows. Teymuraz also has a passion for tuning his Lada from the inside, reflected in its interior salon decorations – fluffy steering wheel cover, plush cubes, a dog with a shaking head, and Putin’s portrait, all emphasizing Teymuraz’s patriotism. Teymuraz’s patriotism also manifests in explicit lyrical homophobia where he references tropes familiar from #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ that Russian gays stick out way too much and are way too visible. He also thanks the president for banning pride parades:



Figure 41. Teymuraz invites Vera for a ride in his white Lada Sedan car. Screenshots from the *Понты* (*Swag*) video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=MThhNVncnY

Мне часто говорят, что надо быть поскромнее.
 В нашей стране поскромнее надо быть геям!
 И пусть осудят люди консервативный взгляд,
 Я рад, что Путин ввел запрет на гей-парад!

I am often told that I should be more modest.
 In our country, gays should be more modest!
 And let people condemn the conservative view,
 I'm glad that Putin banned gay pride parades!

In *Понты* and subsequent *Баклажан* videos, racial meanings are color-coded through cars and women, and it is relations between signs that matter.²³⁶ The car in the *Понты* video is a white Lada Priora, while Slavic Vera Brejneva’s character, with her light blond hair, blue eyes, and whitish dress, stands in sharp visual contrast to the figure of the racialized migrant taxi driver Teymuraz with his pitch-black beard and golden teeth. There is a vast class distance separating them. Dating a woman like this is an unattainable dream for Teymuraz, and only a miraculous happening – a ludic maiden-in-distress scenario, allows the two characters to meet. A similar fairy-tale-like scenario is used in 2015 *Ты такой*, built on the imagery of cross-racial romance through racial metonymy and sartorial color-coding, as I showed in the previous chapter.²³⁷

²³⁵ neolurk.org/wiki/Ара-тюнинг

²³⁶ youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

²³⁷ youtube.com/watch?v=5Fix7P6aGXQ

Driving a white-tuned Lada car together with Vera in a later scene, Teymuraz raps while grinning: *Я как в конце 90х, я новый русский от рэпа. Хотя я в общем нерусский, ладно, не будем об этом* (I am like at the end of the 90s, a new Russian from rap, But I am not really ethnically Russian; ok let's change the topic). Timati references the idiomatic expression *новый русский* (new Russian), used in the early post-Soviet contexts to refer to people who economically benefited from the transition to capitalism and represent economic but not cultural elites. Using the expression, Timati plays both on his financial success generated through the Black Star label and his firm reputation of chronic hip-hop inauthenticity and excessive commercialism within Russian hip-hop scenes. He jokingly dissects the pun by highlighting its oxymoronic nature, stressing his ethnic non-Russianness.



Figure 42. Eating *shashlik* and smoking *shisha* in front of Moskva-city. Screenshots from the *Понты (Swag)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=MThhnNVcnY

In a later scene, Teymuraz and Vera stop next to the Moscow City viewpoint. Teymuraz cooks another ethnically coded food for Vera – *shashlik* using his car's engine.²³⁸ The kitsch character of the scene is reinforced by the backdrop for this activity: the glitzy Moscow City business district, a place more likely to be inhabited by celebrities like Vera, which sharpens the visual mismatch between the protagonist and his surroundings. The couple enjoys smoking shisha and drinking tea together as the sun goes down. The work of racial metonymy is deliberately imprecise: Teymuraz can be read as embodying stereotypical characteristics of racialized (migrant) men from the North Caucasus of Russia and Central Asian countries. It is unclear where he is from, yet his racialized masculinity is immediately recognizable. The figure of Teymuraz does not aim to represent Russia's subalterns; it represents Russian xenophobic clichés about them.



Figure 43. 'Uncivilized' mannerisms of Teymuraz in an expensive clothing boutique. Screenshots from the *Понты (Swag)_video*. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=MThhnNVcnY

²³⁸ Skewered fried meat

Later, Teymuraz brings Vera on his Lada Priora to an expensive clothing boutique where his character appears even more at odds with luxurious interiors. While Vera picks the outfits, Teymuraz wanders around the store and displays his exaggerated ‘uncivilized’ mannerisms, using expensive perfume as a tooth aerosol or deodorant. The transition into the closing section of the video involves Teymuraz almost driving over ‘real’ Timati. The dark bluish colors of the scene set in the urban maze, the change in sonic ambiance, and the lyrics signal a shift in tone from jocular to serious. This song fragment is thematically focused on the dark side of Moscow’s rat race and financial success, stressing the transience of power and wealth. Some commentators have also identified a masked diss on Oxxxymiron in one of Timati’s lines mentioning *лондонский бездельник* (idler from London).²³⁹

As Timati himself stated when invited to a popular late-night comedy show, his Teymuraz character embodies *восточный собирательный образ пацана, который приехал в Москву подниматься* (a generic oriental/eastern imagery of a lad who came to Moscow for a better life). In this quote, the Teymuraz figure metonymically refers to a broader group of peoples, migrants, or people read as migrants (although they may be Russian citizens who are othered as migrants). Scholar of Russian xenophobia and racism, Malakhov, illustrates how in Russian colloquial vernacular terms like ‘Tajik’ can be used interchangeably to chauvinistically mark people of ‘oriental’ appearance performing low-skill labor in Moscow, regardless of people’s actual ethnic affiliation, also pointing toward the conflation and interchangeability of ethnically marked signifiers (Malakhov 2019:311). The exaggerated hyperbolic portrayal of racialized groups enacted in the figure of Teymuraz may lead to conclusions that the image is offensive. However, in the interviews tracking the emergence of the character, Timati signals his affection towards people like Teymuraz: ‘I respect the Caucasus and Caucasian men. They have their moments, which would not be understandable in Moscow. But there are also cool moments and phrases. I took them, and the Teymuraz character appeared.’²⁴⁰ On his Facebook page, Timati performs a double voice both as someone who represents the ‘native’ Muscovite population yet can relate to racialized newcomers because of his ethnoracial hybridity:²⁴¹

I am a muscovite in the fifth generation. For me, it is not bad that 50% of Moscow is composed of people like Teymuraz. They sell cigarettes and flowers, drive your taxis, and work at construction sites, which is normal. You have Algerians in Paris and Mexicans in America. Exactly such a mixed population inspired Teymuraz’s character. He is close to me – I am half Jewish, half Muslim. My oriental side finds all this appealing – carpets, hairy car seat covers, tuned cars, and shisha aesthetics.

Explicitly framing Russia as a post-colonial country, Timati compares it to the USA and France, where Teymuraz-like migrants come from former colonies to the metropole for the prospects of a better life. Within this quote, Timati compensates for his lack of street

²³⁹ This was argued on YouTube channel Russian battle rap [youtube.com/watch?v=PE5xd8xTKc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PE5xd8xTKc) and

²⁴⁰ lenta.ru/articles/2017/08/10/timaty/

²⁴¹ facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=224949161364298&id=208762962982918

credibility within Russian hip-hop due to the absence of economic marginalization by evoking his non-Russianness and, therefore, his proximity to racialized men. He deploys his mixedness to align with the multicultural, postcolonial character of Moscow, whose mixed population inspired the character of Teymuraz. At the same time, he stresses that the figure of Teymuraz is not intended to mock racialized migrants but should be read as a love letter of sorts, signaling his proximity to these migrants and showcasing his ‘Oriental side,’ drawn to carpets and shisha. However, much like the fantasy of Central Asian migrant economic uplift in Russia promoted by MC Doni, Timati’s proximity to Teymuraz has certain limits, for, in his daily life, Timati prefers Mercedes to Lada and Gucci to fake Adidas tracksuit. By introducing Teymuraz to domestic audiences, Timati heavily capitalized on the character’s social media virality and memetic potential, which converts well into advertising revenues. Upscale toothpaste brand ROCS made an ad featuring Teymuraz’s ludic transformation into Timati after brushing his teeth, helping him get the girl.²⁴² Later Timati appeared as Teymuraz at Ivan Urgant’s late-night show on the first channel; moreover, memes featuring Teymuraz have been posted on social media pages, inviting the audience to exploit the memetic virality of the character.²⁴³

Баклажан (Eggplant)



Figure 44. Screenshot from the video to the original version of the song by Record Orchestra *Lada Sedan* from July 2015. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=6lyc5nDzyJw

The second video featuring Teymuraz is *Баклажан (Лада Седан) (Eggplant, Lada Sedan)*, released in September 2015. It is also the second time when Timati builds upon a regional original of sorts, this time using the chorus from the *Lada Sedan*

song released by the band *Рекорд Оркестр (Record Orchestra)* in July 2015 on the album titled *#лезгинобалкано (lezginobalkano)*. Record Orchestra comes from the town of Vladimir in Central Russia. The band’s peculiar trajectory defies a coherent sense of origins: formerly known as *Blackmailers*, it positioned itself as a Russian blues band performing in English. At a certain point, musicians discovered Emir Kusturica’s music, incorporated elements of Balkan music in their sound, which the purists of the blues

²⁴² youtube.com/watch?v=5j3_s2XKjeE

²⁴³ instagram.com/p/gbcQpMPIWS

genre scorned. Later, musicians discovered an additional source of inspiration in the aesthetics and cultures of the peoples of Caucasus, reflected in the title of their album *#лезгинобалкано* (*#lezginobalkano*). This passion for the Caucasus reads in a redesigned logo of the band, two crossed sabers, and the embrace of the *papakha* hat by the frontman on stage during performances. Wearing *papakha* on stage links it metonymically to the imaginaries of Caucasian warrior masculinities and North Caucasian Dagestani MMA fighter Khabib Nurmagomedov who made *papakha* part of his signature style. Unfortunately, the band could never replicate the success of the *Lada Sedan* song, which scored above 11 million views on YouTube.²⁴⁴ Record Orchestra is often awkwardly described in promo materials through the clarifying title ‘the authors of *Lada Sedan* hit.’ Their song went viral online and was noticed by Timati, who infused it with the memetics of the Teymuraz character to stage the second episode of Teymuraz’s developing story of migrant economic uplift in Moscow.²⁴⁵



Figure 45. Opening scenes of the video. Gritty urban landscapes and Lada sedan car. Screenshots from the video *Баклажан (Лада Седан) - Eggplant (Lada Sedan)*. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

The original chorus of Record Orchestra’s ‘Lada Sedan! Ba-kla-zhan!’ screaming to announce the purple color of Lada Sedan features unaltered in Timati’s *Баклажан* version of the song. The color of the tuned Lada car celebrated in the song performs a metonymic work, referencing the aesthetic preferences of Teymuraz-like postcolonial racialized migrants and a subculture of car modifications. The color may hint toward colloquial meanings of the word *Баклажан* in Russian, which can refer to people with a darker complexion. *Баклажан* builds heavily on references utilized in *Понты*, continuing the narrative of Teymuraz’s upward social mobility in Moscow and forbidden love. In contrast to *Понты*, set in the center of Moscow, gloomy skyscraper buildings dominate the video set this time, pointing out that we are now somewhere on the outskirts of a big city. Driving a Lada Sedan car and bragging about his reckless car driving that attracts police attention, Teymuraz raps about the conditionality of his belonging in Moscow and the contrast between big city life and the mountainous landscapes he grew up in:

Лобовуха в хлам, таз сидит низко
 Корпус по асфальту высекает искры
 Копы на хвосте, мы в зоне риска
 Я вообще не местный, Да, и без прописки

Wrecked windshield, body sitting low
 Cutting sparks on the asphalt
 Followed by the cops, we are at risk
 I am not from here and don't have a registration

²⁴⁴ youtube.com/watch?v=6lyc5nDzyJw

²⁴⁵ youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

Городская жизнь - вокруг одни заборы,
 А я родился там, где одни просторы.
 Заведу мотор, опущу рессоры.
 Чем выше горы, тем ниже приоры

City life – only fences around,
 But I was born in the wilderness.
 I turn on the engine and lower the springs.
 The higher the mountains, the lower are *Priora* cars.

The textual imagery points to the Russian romanticist tradition of portraying the Caucasus by describing its nature and mountains as sublime and to the post-Soviet migrant life in big metropolises such as Moscow with the institution of *propiska* (registration), an absence of which represents a sign of migrant marginality. The ludic lyrics enact the image of proud and free Caucasian masculinity, a *dzhigit* locked into the urban cage of a big city and missing the greatness of Caucasian mountainous landscapes. In the urban setting, this masculinity finds an outlet in the reckless car driving, escaping the police, and catcalling women on the street featured in the video.



Figure 46. Vehicles, sartorial styles, and reckless car driving as racial metonymies. Screenshots from the video *Баклажан (Лада Седан) - Eggplant (Lada Sedan)*. Source: [youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs)

The sartorial codes of racialized migrant masculinity are apparent – this time, Timati is wearing a fake Armani hat, a purple color turtleneck, and sports golden teeth. The seats in the car have a leopard-print cover.

Чёрные туфли, белые носки
 Со мной только те, кто мне близки
 ДПС опять делает мозги
 Уходим по дворам, пульсируют виски
 И так каждый день, как тренировка
 Выбирай — права или тонировка
 Нормальный парень ест кебаб, а не суши
 От души братуха душевно в душу
 Нормальный парень ловит кайф, когда бьёт грушу
 От души братуха прилетает в душу
 Дела по телефону, я на волне
 На районе офис в Чайхане
 Ты один с деньгами, приезжай ко мне
 Тут нормально, кстати, ковры на стене
 Тут все свои, чтоб ты не стеснялся
 Теймураз и братья, все, кто поднялся
 Делаю красиво, чтобы бизнес отбивался
 Передаю привет всем, кто заебался!

Black shoes, white socks
 Only those who are close to me are near
 Police fucks my brain again
 Escaping through the backyards, throbbing temples
 And this is my every day, like a workout
 You choose – a driving license or tinted windows
 A normal guy eats kebab, not sushi
 From the heart, brother, heart to heart
 A normal guy enjoys hitting a punching bag
 From the heart, brother, punching in the heart
 Business on the phone, I am on it
 In the hood, office in the teahouse
 Come to me alone, with money
 It's dope here, carpets on the wall
 We are all the same here, don't be shy
 Teymuraz and brothers, those who made it
 I do it nicely so that the business grows
 Hi to all who are fucked up!

This ironic narrative of entrepreneurial masculinity embodied by Teymuraz stresses the importance of style and diasporic community. Racialized migrant attachments, behaviors, and aesthetic predispositions, coded by the majoritarian norms as low

culture, are elevated from the post-Soviet object into the realm of cool, reworked as a legitimate aspirational narrative through the hustle ethos of hip-hop entrepreneurship.



Figure 47. The scene in the teahouse. The comedians from the sketch comedy show *Горцы от ума* (Highlanders from Wit) play the roles of protective brothers of the female character. Screenshots from the video *Баклажан (Лада Седан) - Eggplant (Lada Sedan)*. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

Uzbek/Kazakh model Shaira Kulbajeva plays the female lead character in *Баклажан*. The romantic plot in the video is different from that of *Понты*. This time, the female protagonist is positioned as non-Russian/Slavic, following more traditional gender scripts. She embodies the ‘woman of the East,’ stressing the porousness of the borders of this imagined post-Soviet Orient, stretching from the Caucasus to Central Asia. We first encounter her in a teahouse surrounded by her brothers: space and drink operate here as racial metonyms. The tea-drinking brothers, excessively protective of their ‘sister,’ are celebrity comedians from the North Caucasian republic of Dagestan who became famous through the sketch comedy show *Горцы от ума* (*Highlanders from Wit*): Khalil Musaev, Yousoup Omarov, Eldar Iraziev, and Omar Alibutaev.²⁴⁶ Teahouse (*чайхана*) is the place where we meet Teymuraz, who uses it as his makeshift office. Through metonymic work, the video’s settings link racialized bodies to particular sites where these bodies enact ‘inherent’ behaviors. One such site is a teahouse, where Teymuraz operates his office, drinks tea, and smokes shisha, fiercely pushing out steam. As the melody takes on an explicit ‘oriental’ Lezgino-Balkan twist, Teymuraz sings:

Эти длинные ресницы, черные глаза
 Красотой своей сгубили пацана
 Сходим на свидание в лучший ресторан?
 Прокачу на Ладе Седан

These long eyelashes, dark black eyes
 They killed the guy with their beauty
 Let’s have a date in the best restaurant,
 I will give you a ride in my Lada Sedan.



Figure 48. Teymuraz enacts hot temper through embodiment. Screenshots from the video *Баклажан (Лада Седан) - Eggplant (Lada Sedan)*. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

²⁴⁶ youtube.com/channel/UCSfWw6TWhMJqE4pZPiJ41Ng. The name *Горцы от ума* (*Highlanders from Wit*) plays with canonical Russian literature comedy Griboedov’s *Горе от ума* (*Woe from Wit*).

Teymuraz's exaggerated mannerisms and kitschy fierceness play around with tropes of hot-tempered, excessive Caucasian masculinity. The imagery of dark, black, enchanting eyes is another trope familiar within Russian popular culture, referencing the classical Russian Gypsy romance song *Очи чёрные* (*Black eyes*) and evoking the image of a hot-tempered, sexually alluring woman with dark eyes which have hypnotic powers to lure (Lemon 2000:71–72). The lines also emphasize the excessive generosity of Caucasian men when Teymuraz invites his passion to the best restaurant in town. Flirtingly, the female protagonist replies:

Ты послушай меня, милый, придержи коня
И спроси у братьев отпустят ли меня?
И я тогда надену платье цвета баклажан,
Сяду к тебе в Ладу Седан

Listen to me, sweetheart, hold your horses,
Ask my brothers if they will let me.
Then I will put my eggplant color dress on
And will get into your Lada Sedan.

The chorus hints at different gender norms governing the behavior of the female protagonist, such as the expectation of female modesty. She asks Teymuraz to hold his horses, referring to his hot-blooded Caucasian masculine temper, and suggests he first asks for permission from her brothers. Teymuraz manages to steal her in secret (another hint to customs and traditions from North Caucasus, playing with imagery of forbidden love and bride kidnapping), and they end up riding together in his car and later stop next to the shabby migrant dormitory where Teymuraz lives.



Figure 49. Teymuraz completes the 'kidnapping' and triumphantly dances next to Lada Sedan and his 'brothers' in front of the migrant dormitory. Screenshots from the video *Баклажан (Лада Седан) - Eggplant (Lada Sedan)*. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

Celebrating his prowess, Teymuraz performs a lezginka dance on top of a police car, which followed him earlier for his reckless driving. As he dances, a man wearing the traditional Caucasian dress and *papakha* hat emerges from the fog, also dancing lezginka on top of a police car. Camera whirling movements and choppy editing indicate that this *dzhigit* is a contemporary incarnation of Teymuraz. Teymuraz's true nature is awakened: proud *dzhigit*, trapped in every male Caucasian migrant suppressed by the urban landscapes of Moscow, is powerful imagery to counter the abjection of everyday racialization. Lezginka on top of a police car symbolizes a ludic rebellion against the system: not only is it an act of symbolic revenge against the powers subjecting migrants to everyday profiling and abuse, but the fact that it is Dagestani comedians playing the police officers also exploits the Russian ethnonationalist anxiety of Caucasian criminality and ethnic 'mafia' infiltrating and controlling Russian police structures.



Figure 50. Teymuraz dances lezginka on the police car and transforms into a papakha-wearing dzhigit. Screenshots from the video *Баклажан (Лада Седан) - Eggplant (Lada Sedan)*. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

As Teymuraz lures his love interest into the shabby dormitory where he lives, their kiss is interrupted by the arrival of angry brothers trying to recuperate their ‘stolen’ sister from the protagonist. Their revenge is unrelenting: armed with baseball bats, they smash the windows of Lada Sedan. This move plays with racialized notions of excess, revenge, and temper associated with warrior-like Caucasian masculinity.



Figure 51. Infuriated brothers enact revenge. Behaviors and proclivities as racial metonymies. Screenshots from the video *Баклажан (Лада Седан) - Eggplant (Lada Sedan)*. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=TP5Br2WUBNs

Баклажан was a spectacular success, reaching almost 225 million views on YouTube by January 2022 and nearing one million likes; it is one of Timati’s most-watched videos throughout his entire career, standing in sharp contrast to the subsequent failure with 2019 *Moskva*, promptly deleted after beating the record in dislikes. In 2016 Timati won Muz-TV awards for *Баклажан* in the category Best Song and Best Video among male artists. Timati acknowledges how thanks to the memetic appeal of Teymuraz, the video became a truly *народная песня* (people’s song):

You can criticize as much as you want. I hear a ton of criticism about “Eggplant.” Try to write a song like that. You make a music video that gets 83 million hits. You make it so that your song is sung by five-year-olds and known by eighty-year-olds. Go try to make a product that makes the whole country swing. And you’ll find that it’s not easy. Only a few make songs that tear up the entire country. Honestly, at the Muz-TV Awards, I didn’t expect Eggplant to win. I was sure they would give it to the “Exhibit” by Leningrad.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ rhyme.ru/timati-osnovnaya-ideya-poluchit-albom-goda-2016

Мага (Maga)²⁴⁸



Figure 52. Screenshot to the *Мага (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

The last video, closing the Teymuraz trilogy, is an 8-minute-long comedy video *Мага*, described by the media as a ‘Caucasian wedding in Kusturica traditions.’²⁴⁹ Directed by Pavel Houdyakov and released in April 2016, the video’s organizing trope is the hyperbolic excess of a Caucasian-style wedding

organized for wealthy Russian clients from Moscow. *Мага* stages a confrontation of two worlds in multi-cultural postcolonial Moscow: the world of wealthy Muscovites represented by the pop star Igor Nikolaev and his wedding guests and the world of entrepreneurial and unruly, ‘wild’ ‘newcomers’ from the Caucasus. The video includes comedy sketches, celebrity appearances, and product placements. Dagestani comedians from *Highlanders from Wit* who already starred in *Баклажан* play prominent roles, while the central focus this time is on the character of Maga (short for Magomed), presented in a role of an entrepreneurial wedding planner, played by a comedian Yousoup Omarov. Other high-profile celebrities appear in the video, such as famous Ukrainian-Russian comedian Alexander Revva as the wedding ceremony master.

The opening scene, set in an expensive restaurant, portrays Maga’s negotiations with Nikolaev to organize his celebrity wedding.



Figure 53. Maga meets Igor Nikolaev. Screenshots from the *Мага (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

Maga’s character is a wannabe businessman from the Caucasus, a post-Soviet hustler. The video’s humor is built upon the contrast between the image of respectability that he tries to create and his failure to approximate it. Maga, wielding a golden Vertu phone, brags about having Beyonce and J.Lo performing at his weddings yet simultaneously

²⁴⁸ Short for for Magomed but may also translangually play on Trump’s Maga.

²⁴⁹ show-biz.by/timati/blog/2013/

struggles to escape his creditors. When securing a deal with Nikolaev, Maga boasts of his business success with wealthy clients while hungrily devouring snack peanuts. Maga's character exploits the post-Soviet gendered tropes of Caucasian criminality and excess, predisposition to trade and deception, being part of the ethnic mafia, and having connections in the corrupt Russian police. The tropes are deliberately overdone and rendered grotesque and comical. Maga's website features a manipulated photo of giving a handshake to no other than the Russian president, stressing his aspirational proximity to power, which nevertheless suffices for the naive Russian celebrity groom to hire him. *Быстро, четко, дорого* (Fast, sharp, expensive) motto featured on the black-colored business card handed by Maga to Nikolaev anticipates the upcoming grotesque spectacle of the wedding gone wrong, around which the video narrative is staged.

Denisova and Herasimenka, in their article, that deals with the ethnoracial and gender imagery in Russian hip-hop videos, describe the video as follows:

Timati's video shows the entrepreneurial Mid-Eastern looking protagonist who fools a rich White man into spending a lot of money on a poorly organized wedding. On one hand, this character fits in what Hall (1995, cited in Helbig, 2014) called the inferential racism when a Black character is depicted either as an uncivilized savage, a clown, or a canny individual. On the other hand, the video praises the character who gets away with money and success. This double-edged interpretation of the racial stereotype mirrors the Russian complex racial issues and ultimately confirms the White hegemony (Denisova and Herasimenka 2019:6-7).

The genre of the video and the presence of Dagestani comedians who perform central roles in both *Мага* and *Баклажан* complicates the abovementioned reading of *Мага*. Even though both comedy sketches in *Highlanders from Wit* and *Баклажан* and *Мага* videos recycle Soviet and post-Soviet cultural tropes of Caucasian men, the fact that it is men from the Caucasus who produce humor about men from the Caucasus cannot be dismissed as insignificant. As many times before in Timati's cultural productions, the authenticating function of vicarious masculine realness secured through proximity to others helps Timati navigate the complex terrain of post-Soviet cultural politics. As a local gendered idiom of ethnoracial difference, this authenticating Caucasian realness occupies a central role in Timati's project of racial translation. Moreover, *Мага* is not simply concerned with 'white' and 'black' characters per se but works through the operation of racial translation and racial metonymy. As Lemon reminds us:

This is why race is "not essentially about skin color," though it often is: most of my consultants in 1990s central Russia spoke a great deal about how skin color and facial features mark difference. This was so even though many people from the Caucasus or parts of Central Asia are not physically distinct from some people who identify themselves as Russian. But skin color was never the sum of race—most linked "black" complexions to naturalized proclivities: cleverness in the market, a lusty nature, quick to fight ("hot blood"), a nature inseparable from "traditional" practices ("patriarchy"), and networks of family ("clans") (Lemon 2002:58).



Figure 54. Racial metonymies: dances, behaviors, embodiment, clothes, and bodily adornments. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

In that light, *Maza* presents an almost text-book case for students of post-Soviet racialization dynamics, providing unique insights into articulations of vernacular racial imageries that build on indexicality and link the external signs to naturalized proclivities. In *Maza*, the sartorially amplified ‘whiteness’ of the bride, groom, and their middle-class guests translates into ethnic Russianness. Post-Soviet elastic ‘blackness’ encompassing both the imaginaries of racialized Caucasianness and Gypsiness is inflected through the stretchy meanings it bears within post-Soviet Russia via multimodal racial metonymy: clothing and jewelry (black leather jackets, golden watches, patriotic tracksuits; white socks/black shoes or sandals; fur hat, *papakha* hat); appearance (golden teeth; beards); bodily styles (‘uncultured’ gestures and mannerisms), behaviors, and predispositions (cheating and scheming; reckless car driving; stealing jewelry; fighting; shooting at the wedding), dances (lezginka), foods (pilaf, shashlik), animals (sheep, horses), games (backgammon), objects (Vertu phone); vehicles, accents (speaking Russian with an accent); musical tunes and various textual realia.



Figure 55. Guests are disembarking from the Derbent-Moskva bus. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

The video merges in-film and music soundscapes throughout the clip. Music in the video is diegetic, starting with an intro piece sung in a female voice in the style of Russian Gypsy romance. The musical intro juxtaposed with the visual scene presents the arrival to the wedding of Caucasian guests, played by the Dagestani comics descending one by one from the shabby bus serving the Derbent-Moscow route. Romani folk band in brightly colored garments also disembarks from the bus.

С рождения путь джигита он был определен.
 Неистовую силой он с детства наделен.
 Его ты не удержишь, как свободного орла.
 Зачем я Мага, встретила тебя?

From birth, the path of dzhigit has been set.
 From childhood, he was gifted with unbridled strength.
 You cannot hold him captive; he is like a free eagle
 Why, Maga, have I met you?

The ironic juxtaposition of Russian Gypsy romance lyrics with the onscreen emergence of actors ties together the imagery of proud, brave, warrior-like Caucasian masculinity

endowed with uncontained strength and noble spirit, echoing Russian literature’s romantic portrayals of Caucasus and linking it to contemporary Caucasian men.



Figure 56. Staging Muscovite xenophobia against newcomers from Dagestan. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

This romanticized portrayal shatters to pieces when the camera traces the reaction of the pristine upper-class Muscovites to the arrival of the newcomers from Derbent. The wedding guests appear shocked, clearly unwelcoming the Dagestani newcomers and looking at them with thinly veiled condescension. This move, therefore, can be seen as making a critical commentary on Russian xenophobia towards peoples from the Caucasus, seen as ‘invading’ Moscow with ‘uncivilized’ habits and criminal behaviors. Music transitions into a choppy chorus merging rap with rock with a female voice having a dialogue with Timati:

<p>А ты такой дерзкий, как пуля резкий. Да, это аргумент веский. А ты такой дерзкий, как пуля резкий. Ты готова, будет разговор не детский. А ты такой дерзкий, как пуля резкий. Да, это статус королевский. А ты такой дерзкий, как пуля резкий. Мага жесткий, мощный, аппетит зверский.</p>	<p>You are so tough, sharp as a bullet. Yes, this is a solid argument. You are so tough, sharp as a bullet. Are you ready? We will have an adult conversation. You are so tough, sharp as a bullet Yes, it is a royal status You are so tough, sharp as a bullet Maga is tough, mighty, and has an animal appetite.</p>
--	--



Figure 57. Foods and games as racial metonymies. Teymuraz plays backgammon with the character of Khalil Musaev. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

The character of Teymuraz, who is this time invited to perform at the wedding organized by Maga, is dressed in all-black attire, sporting golden teeth, and presented as playing a backgammon board game together with Dagestani comedian Khalil Musaev. The game is especially popular in North and South Caucasus and Central Asia, played by men in public spaces. In the background, the viewers are presented with food preparation for the wedding: *shashlik* meat and *pilaf*, foods playing the role of racial metonyms associated with Caucasian and Central Asian cuisines.



Figure 58. Foods as racial metonymies. *Shashlik* and *pilaf* stand for Caucasian/Central Asian feasts and generosity. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

When Teymuraz is invited on stage to sing, his exaggerated mannerisms and facial grimaces enact hyperbolized Russian clichés of Caucasian masculinity as uncivilized and uncultured. To prepare for the stage, Teymuraz grooms himself by spitting on his hand to style his hair. When he meets Maga, he can hardly hide his emotions by performing expressive welcoming. As he raps, wedding guests are entertained with solo and group *lezginka* performances. Visuals gradually slide into a frenzy of vignettes: horses and sheep mix with product endorsements, *papakha* wearing bride dances with Maga. The feast slides into the embodiment of excess, showcasing kitschy yet inebriated conviviality that erases the boundaries between racialized newcomers from Dagestan and upper-class Muscovite guests who end up devouring *kolbasa* and dancing *lezginka* together.



Figure 59. The wedding-gone-wrong trope. Horses, sheep, and *lezginka* dancing fuse in a frenzy of the wedding celebrations. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

Говорят я дерзкий, как пуля резкий,
 Номер на авто, регион зверский.
 Слышишь мой акцент, он почти московский,
 Но не как не скрыть, темперамент горский.
 Девочки меня называют Тигр,
 Мага - чисто жесткий, Мага - не как Игорь.
 Игорь ей кладет лавешечку на карту.
 Мага исчезай с картой 8-го марта.
 Мага был борцухой, был чемпионом.
 Теперь с золотым ходит телефоном.
 На крутом авто гоняет по районам.
 Бриони и Zilly скупает по сезонам.
 Поднимаю тост, чтоб мечты сбывались.

People say I am bold, sharp as a bullet,
 My car numbers, wild region.
 Do you hear my accent? It is almost Muscovite,
 But I cannot hide my mountainous temper.
 Girls call me Tiger,
 Maga is tough; Maga is not like Igor.
 Igor transfers cash on her card.
 Maga disappears with the card on the 8th of March.
 Maga was a fighter, was a champion.
 Now he walks around with a golden phone.
 He rides a cool car in the hoods.
 He buys the latest Brioni and Zilly.
 I raise my glass for dreams to come true.

Чтоб бродяги в люди тоже пробивались.
 Чтобы от души мы жизнью наслаждались.
 Эй подруга ты куда, нормально же общались?

Все по красоте, борода, фигура.
 Под рубашкой жесткая мускулатура.
 Я вообще цивилизный, чисто прет культура.
 Жду тебя с деньгами в кафе "У Артура".
 Широко известен в узких кругах.
 Мага бизнесмен на золотых зубах.
 Сказал, как отрезал, спорить никто не будет.
 Ты нормально делай и нормально будет.
 Один на один, против любых верзил.
 Мага любит стечки, батики крокодил.
 Много ситуаций сложных он решил.
 Даже в Белый Дом однажды заходил.
 Поднимаю тост, чисто за братуху.
 Ты вообще красавчик, за твою движуху!
 Теймураз любого за тебя порвет.
 Кто не понял - тот поймет!

So that the tramps could make their way into the world
 So that we could enjoy life in full.
 Where are you going, girl? Were we doing fine?

Everything is beautiful, the beard, the figure.
 Stiff muscles under the shirt.
 I am civilized; the culture is gushing out of me.
 I will wait for you with the money in Artur's café
 Widely known in narrow circles.
 Maga is a golden-teeth businessman.
 If I say it is set, no one will argue.
 Do it well, and everything will be well.
 One-on-one, against any brutes.
 Maga likes stechki and crocodile fabrics.
 He solved many difficult situations.
 Once, he even entered the White House.
 I raise my glass for my brother.
 You are a handsome one, drinking for you!
 Teymuraz will tear anyone for you.
 The ones who don't understand will understand!

The lyrics above revolve around articulations of Caucasian masculine realness. While they recycle the pre-existing Russian Imperial, late Soviet, and post-Soviet tropes and humor, they also perform a revalorization of Caucasian masculinity as cool and hard. The image of Caucasian hot-bloodedness is indexed in the song's verses through references to the 'temperament of the mountaineer' and comparison to exotic animals, such as Tiger as Maga's nickname. Sexual prowess is indexed by mentioning his popularity among women and attractive muscular physique hidden under the shirt. Caucasian masculine hardness is also juxtaposed to the weaker ethnic Russian masculinity of the celebrity groom Igor Nikolaev, indexed by his docility towards women, allowing him to be exploited financially. Late-Soviet associations of Caucasian men with money and markets are translated into post-Soviet symbols of financial success, such as the golden Vertu phone, consumption of expensive Italian luxury garments, and having a cool car to flaunt in the post-Soviet 'hoods.' If Teymuraz drives a Lada sedan, Maga, who climbed higher, prefers a black Mercedes jeep. Although the lyrics play on the late-Soviet ethnic humor imagining Caucasian men as speaking Russian with a bad accent and being uncultured, the deliberate mixing of tropes, their explicit hyperbolization, translation into post-Soviet symbols of material success and the overall genre of comedy together with hip-hop modernity allow conceptualizing the video as a reworking and reshaping of stereotypes rather than a xenophobic reproduction.



Figure 60. Caucasian warrior realness and hot temper. Two Dagestani guests transform into MMA fighters. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: [youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw)

Maga's masculinity is described as tough and wild, animalistic, fighting, and menacing to the enemies, indexing familiar Imperial Caucasian warrior tropes. This fighter trope finds a more contemporary translation in the popularity of mixed martial arts in the North Caucasus and the world success of the mixed martial arts fighter from the North Caucasian Dagestan Republic, Khabib Nurmagomedov. Indeed, later in the video, we see a direct reference to this propensity towards mixed martial arts staged around controversy between two male wedding guests from Dagestan, which transforms into a professional fight, as they cast away their suits and emerge in MMA fighter uniforms with Russia written on their backs. The Caucasian warrior trope gets harnessed in the video away from representing anti-colonial resistance to the Russian Empire or post-Soviet separatist sentiment into the representation of the manageable hot-bloodedness that buttresses the patriotic contribution of the region to Russia's global success in sports.



Figure 61. Roma guests represented as playing with the trope of stealing. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

Maza includes representations that both play on and subvert stereotypes of Roma, who are presented at the wedding as entertainers wearing colorful clothing associated with Roma ensembles in Russia. The stereotype of national proclivities: Roma's alleged attraction to stealing is integrated into the video as product placement for a jewelry brand, Sunlight (we see Roma kids playing with the wedding gifts), but also subverted. Roma performers jokingly 'steal' jewelry from the guests but afterward laughingly return them, exploiting the overused trope and racialized anxieties animating well-off Muscovite wedding guests worried about their expensive possessions. While I could not find any explanations for the appearance of this ensemble in the video except for commercial integration, it is essential to highlight that due to his ethnoracial malleability, Timati is often read as Roma and interpellated as Gypsy. The tragic car crash death of his close friend and colleague Ratmir Shishkov – who came from from the famous dynasty of Roma performers – deeply affected the rapper. Timati released several videos in his memory and named his son Ratmir.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ youtube.com/watch?v=QEUxRrdBeh8&t=72s



Figure 62. The ludic encounter of Russian policeman Beryozkin with Maga. The trope of Caucasian criminality with ties to the corrupt Russian police. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

With nightfall, the party gets wilder. The unexpected arrival of the police car creates a sense of suspense in the crowd. The music stops, and two policemen approach the wedding venue. In his swaggering manner, Maga announces that he will fix the situation and talk to the police. The trouble settles itself when Maga recognizes one of the police officers, with a characteristic surname Beryozkin and hugs him as an old friend.²⁵¹ The recognition is mutual: both start screaming and dancing lezginka together, while the second police officer Kolya, played by one of the Dagestani comedians, acknowledges how proud he is to finally meet Magomed. The video, therefore, plays with the widespread trope of Caucasian criminality with ties to the corrupt Russian police.



Figure 63. The frenzy of a Caucasian-style wedding. Shooting in the air. Teymuraz, with a white rose in his golden teeth, dances lezginka, applauded by Maga. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

With the police joining the festivities, the wedding transforms into a wild mess: fireworks, dances, bonding of police officers with guests, and drunken Beryozkin jumping into the empty pool. Lezginka-dancing Teymuraz reaches an almost ecstatic state amidst this frenzy. He is shown dancing with a white rose gripped between his golden teeth, surrounded by an applauding crowd. Teymuraz shoots in the air, behavior that evokes the tropes of a wild Caucasian wedding. This moment constitutes a climax of his art of racial translation: Timati as Teymuraz transcends the accusations of hip-hop mimicry and inauthenticity which have haunted him his entire career by taking yet another shape. In the video frenzy, celebrating hybridity and deferring any semblance of pure forms, Timati becomes everything he has ever embodied in the xenophobic

²⁵¹ Formed from the Russian word *beryoza*, a birch tree, often figuring as a typical signifier of Russian nature. The name Beryozkin in the video stresses his stereotypical ethnic Russianness.

online commentary: *lezginka* dancing Gypsy, Jewish Tatar, proud *dzhigit* from the Caucasus, personifying various incarnations of elastic post-Soviet blackness.



Figure 64. Transhistorical continuity and Caucasian proclivities. Dzhigit in Maga awakens. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

In the song’s closure, Russian Gypsy romance repeats as an outro, reiterating a tragic story of falling in love with Maga-dzhigit, endowed with the unbridled strength and energy of a free eagle yet destined for a peculiar fate. The outro is interspersed with visuals where Maga does driving tricks while riding his jeep on the empty night streets of Moscow. These shots are cut together and intermixed with shots of the dreamlike appearance of dzhigit dressed in a Caucasian warrior costume on a horse, also doing equestrian acrobatics. Choppy editing, like the one used in *Баклажан* when Teymuraz danced *lezginka* on top of the police car, invites identifying the mysterious horse-riding dzhigit as a contemporary incarnation of Maga. Reckless car driving of Maga is like the reckless, deliberately dangerous horse-riding of noble dzhigit. This reckless driving is in ‘their nature,’ enacting the link between naturalized proclivities and ethnic collectivities, inviting the ironic readings of transhistorical continuity: every Caucasian man is deep inside a noble warrior on a horse. Proud warrior Caucasian past is alive on the night streets of multicultural postcolonial Moscow. Ludic deployment of the Imperial noble horse-riding dzhigit trope both in *Баклажан* and *Maga* lifts Caucasian masculinities through hip-hop modernity and the spirit of post-Soviet capitalist realism from the abject of post-Soviet racialization.



Figure 65. The Caucasian hustle and invigorated Muscovite Russianness. Screenshots from the *Maza (Maga)* video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=bfcQg-befiw

As the fire spreads to the wedding decorations, scared guests run away. In the final scenes without music, Maga leans on the police car, counting hard-earned cash, enacting the image of corrupt Caucasian criminality linked to the police. Suddenly, he receives a call from the president’s administration (the word president is not used, but it is hinted

at in the video through a changed expression on Maga's face), inquiring about the use of his wedding planner services and making an offer to hire him which Maga happily accepts. Maga has fulfilled the dream of migrant economic uplift in Moscow, marking the journeys of Teymuraz and MC Doni: climbing the ladder of success, making his way upwards through ingenuity and skill. The video closes with the happy groom Nikolaev and his bride, dressed in white, standing in front of the burning wedding decoration. Nikolaev's 90s tune *Выьем за любовь* (*Let's drink to love*) is playing silently in the background while an abandoned sheep, the only remaining wedding guest, wanders awkwardly nearby.

Maza video stages a spectacle of multi-cultural conviviality by carefully threading a deliberately grotesque and ludic story of Muscovites going 'native' through the wedding-gone-wrong trope. By packaging the story in easily intelligible exaggerated tropes of Caucasian masculinity that build on post-Soviet representational conventions from comedies, *Maza* continues the work of revalorization of non-Russian racialized masculinities that I traced through Timati's cultural productions. Although the wedding ends with the scared crowd of guests running away in fear and the potential death of Beryozkin, it is a happy ending: Maga made it even higher in his journey of economic uplift and pursuit of financial success in Moscow while the Russian celebrity groom and bride are happy: their boring and leisurely Muscovite life got reinvigorated through unbridled and passionate energy brought by Dagestani guests. This time, the entire Muscovite society is presented as benefiting from multi-cultural coexistence. If in the beginning, Russian wedding guests frowned at the 'uncivilized' newcomers from the Caucasus, barely concealing their xenophobic prejudice, in the end, the inebriated crowd dances lezginka together, and everyone mixes in convivial 'unity in diversity' interspersed with integrated product placements of *kvass*, *kolbasa*, and jewelry. In the next section, I will discuss the broader implications of the Teymuraz figure as a strategy of racial translation by placing it in the context of Timati's quest for hip-hop authenticity and Russia's ethnic diversity.

'We have our own "blacks," and it is the Caucasus'

Having explored the operation of racial signification in three videos featuring Teymuraz, I have argued that this memetic figure represented the pinnacle of Timati's project of racial translation, enacting a localized idiom of ethnoracial difference that translates US black hip-hop masculine realness. In this section, I explore how the memetic figure of Teymuraz is implicated in Timati's chronic troubles with authenticity within Russian hip-hop scenes, manifested in the accusations of copying and mimicking US hip-hop. Although the figure of Teymuraz has subversively exploited both Timati's ethnoracial ambiguity and chronic hip-hop inauthenticity, Timati's embrace of Teymuraz was also motivated by the pursuit of originality and the attempt to reduce his

mimetic practice. I focus on several interview snippets which help illuminate these dynamics. Overcoming the stigma of imitating US hip-hop involved the search for originality, where no one could accuse the rapper of imitation. I trace the contradictory implications of Timati's pursuit of originality in his discovery of *lezginka* and Caucasus, claimed as 'our ethnic elements' by positioning it against Russia's multi-ethnic legacy and imperial identity.

In one interview that helps understand the emergence of the Teymuraz figure, Timati demonstrates an acute awareness of his chronic hip-hop inauthenticity within Russia. Timati's authenticity is typically criticized in such discourses through accusations of imitating US hip-hop too closely. That, in turn, entails a concern with repairing the stigma of imitation:

People say: first, Timati was a *negr*, afterward became a Caucasian (*сначала был негром, потом стал кавказцем*). But everything is very simple. Before, I was orienting myself to African American subculture from the USA. It ended up becoming mainstream. I go forward: take classical canons of Caucasian music and integrate them into rap. Here no one can confront me by saying I stole something. The Caucasus, this is ours. It is a very cool, original story. Russia's story but with a Caucasian accent. (*Кавказ — это наше. Очень крутая самобытная история. Российская, но с кавказским акцентом*). Plus, I can tell that the Islamic group is the fastest-growing group now. New members of this current emerge with such speed that others cannot keep up with it. There are more and more people who can associate themselves with this story.²⁵²

In the quote, Timati presents the invention of Teymuraz as part of his artistic evolution: overcoming the dependency and orientation on US hip-hop, going forward in his creative search by integrating sonic metonymies of the Caucasus into his music. Importantly the discovery of the Caucasus, framed as a 'very cool and original story' and 'Russia's story with a Caucasian accent,' is positioned as a remedy against the accusations of stealing from US rappers to which his oeuvre is routinely subject. Since the Caucasus figures as 'ours,' rendered authentically Russia's, it fulfills both the pursuit of originality and helps overcome the stigma of imitation. Because 'Caucasus' is designated as 'ours,' no one can longer accuse Timati of 'stealing' something which is not 'our own.' The last part of the quote also indicates some of the more pragmatic business motives which could have underpinned Timati's project of racial translation. A fast-growing 'Islamic group,' mentioned in the quote, indicates the potential ambition to harness new audiences and markets. If that is the case, then the revalorization of non-Russian racialized men and the theme of migrant economic uplift in Moscow, which, as I have shown, undergirds Timati's videos, caters to these new groups as potential consumers in Black Star-related businesses such as barbershops, burger chains, and clothing stores.

In another interview, commenting on *Баклажан* and the figure of Teymuraz, Timati similarly weaves together his attempt to overcome the stigma of imitation through racial translation and his pursuit of originality:

²⁵² lenta.ru/articles/2017/08/10/timaty/

The song “Eggplant” is an absolute “entertainment,” a slap in the face to everyone who said I was trying to bite from *негры* (*пощечина всем, кто говорил, что я пытаюсь что-то байтить у негров*). We have our own aesthetic. As I said when I won the Muz-TV award for best song, people used to say, “Timati is the Tatar who wants to be a *negr*, and now it’s the Jew who wants to be a Caucasian.” We used to orient ourselves to the West and try to be like the blacks there. And there was a lot of criticism for that. And after I found my aesthetic: we have figuratively our own “blacks,” and it’s the Caucasus (*А после того, как я нашел свою эстетику, у нас есть образно свои “черные”, и это Кавказ*), and when I took that aesthetic, there was still a huge amount of criticism. You can’t please everyone, but this story is absolutely original. Teymuraz is a distinctive character. It is not a bite, it’s just an original theme (*Теймураз – это самобытный персонаж, который не сбайчен, это просто самобытная тема*). It’s not even the pure Caucasus. It’s a collective image - both Central Asia and the Caucasus. It is a super successful alter ego.²⁵³

Timati presents *Баклажан* and the figure of Teymuraz as a response to the constant criticism of inauthentic mimicking and stealing from US rappers. Attempts to reduce mimetic practice relied on the turn to memetics, inaugurating the emergence of Teymuraz, which is described as inherently original, something that is not borrowed from the US, not ‘stolen’ from the US rappers. In the quote, Timati performs a racial translation by finding in racialized men from the Caucasus and Central Asia an equivalent to US black masculinities: *у нас есть образно свои “черные”, и это Кавказ* (we, figuratively speaking have our own ‘blacks’ and it is the Caucasus). He also highlights this figure’s deliberate ambiguity and strategic imprecision, merging the imaginaries of Caucasian and Central Asian masculinities.

In a 2016 interview with GQ Magazine, Timati proudly calls his discovery of *lezginka* ‘the beginning of his artistic rebirth’ and explains how it helped him overcome the accusations of unoriginality and imitation of US hip-hop:

Lezginka – is etnika. This is how my rebirth started... I was often accused that I steal a lot from Americans and that I have nothing of my own (*что нет ничего своего*). I responded to this with *lezginka*: I took hip-hop beats and added *our ethnic elements* to them (*добавил к ним наши этнические элементы*). This is how, for example, the track “Eggplant” appeared, which is now known by the whole country.²⁵⁴

Lezginka, described by Timati above as ‘our ethnic elements,’ is a dance tied initially to the ethnonym of the Lezgin people of Dagestan and Azerbaijan. The dance is spread around the entire Caucasus region as a traditional folk dance of diverse peoples of Caucasus, having different names in local languages. It can be performed as a solo male dance or in pairs. What is curious in Timati’s 2016 interview with GQ is that *lezginka* figures as ‘ours,’ a shared legacy of the Russian Federation. That makes the statement inherently ambiguous and open to multiple readings, some of which can upset existing ethnoracial hierarchies within the country. Depending on how this ‘ours’ is defined, the statement can prompt inclusive readings stressing Russia’s multinational, multi-confessional character and ethnic diversity, posing a challenge to the exclusionary Russo-centric visions of the country and upsetting Russian ethnonationalism and practices of the xenophobic othering of peoples from the Caucasus. At the same time,

²⁵³ rhyme.ru/timati-osnovnaya-ideya-poluchit-albom-goda-2016

²⁵⁴ “Тимати о Кадырове, гомофобии и рэп-баттлах.” GQ Россия. Accessed September 22, 2020. gq.ru/heroes/timati-o-kadyrove-gomofobii-i-rap-battlah.

claiming the Caucasus and its cultural artifacts as ‘ours’ can foster all too familiar imperialist readings, incorporating something that might not strive to be included into a part of a bigger whole and precluding the conversation about imperial and colonial origins of Russia’s ethnic diversity. When Timati claims *lezginka* as ‘ours,’ the GQ journalist immediately objects, not finding *lezginka* dancing appealing, unlike Timati, who made such dancing a staple in his video and stage performances.

If ‘going native’ for Russian imperial officers in the 19th century included adopting the Circassian dress, in mid-2010s Russia, for Timati and Black Star label artists such as MC Doni, it is *lezginka* dancing. Videos of Timati dancing *lezginka* during his performances are abundant. MC Doni actively dances *lezginka*, too: standing in a sky-blue cabriolet in the *Ты такой* video and during his stage performances in Chechnya. Teymuraz dances *lezginka*, both in *Понты* and *Баклажан*, on top of a police car. In *Мага*, the kitschy spectacle of communal *lezginka*-dancing and *papakha* wearing of wealthy Muscovites and Dagestani guests symbolizes inebriated multi-ethnic conviviality. Media circulate Timati’s *lezginka* dancing during his regular performances in Grozny, the capital of the Chechnya Republic. That includes his energetic *lezginka* dancing with other celebrity guests, such as Nikolay Baskov, in Kadyrov’s residence. In 2017, for example, Timati danced *lezginka* as a sign of coming to peace with Yana Rudkovskaya, producer of pop singer Dima Bilan. A mutual visit to Kadyrov’s residence dedicated to Kadyrov’s daughter’s modest fashion show ended with Kadyrov acting as a peacemaker for Rudkovskaya and Timati. In the video recording of the dance, circulated on Instagram, Timati, clad in a long hoodie, makes energetic movements next to Rudkovskaya in a long dress to the applause of the audience gathered in residence.²⁵⁵

This enthusiastic embrace of *lezginka* by Black Star label artists embodying post-Soviet elastic ‘blackness’ such as Timati and MC Doni is hardly shared by wider layers of the Russian population. Sumina’s work on public *lezginka* dancing performed on the streets and squares of Moscow highlights how these dances by groups of men from the Caucasus evoke ‘the fear of domination of Caucasianness over Russianness’ or emphasize ‘the fear of alien masculine penetration of the space of pure Russianness, of the very center of the metropole’ (Sumina 2014:24). *Lezginka* is therefore marked as a racialized dance, tied both to the Caucasus and the bodies of masculine performers (Sumina 2014:25). That makes *lezginka* an implausible candidate to be included in ‘our’ shared legacy, ‘our’ culture and heritage, which Timati assigns it to in the interview with GQ. Here, such inclusion’s potentially counter-hegemonic yet inherently contradictory potential may lie. As multiple polls monitoring xenophobia among the Russian population have shown, for many ethnic Russians, the Caucasus and its inhabitants are still hardly considered as desired potential neighbors, being perceived as too different, revealing unmasked prejudice of the majority population (Bessudnov 2016). People from Northern Caucasus republics are often perceived as culturally foreign outsiders,

²⁵⁵ [instagram.com/p/BRG4KSYAakC/?taken-by=rudkovskayaofficial](https://www.instagram.com/p/BRG4KSYAakC/?taken-by=rudkovskayaofficial)

invading newcomers or migrants in cities like Moscow. Russian mainstream media and politicians deliberately nourished this rhetoric during and after the Chechen wars (Shnirelman 2011). The region is also never entirely Russian because all stability in the North Caucasus seems impermanent, haunted by the specters of resistance and rebellion.

In analyzing the videos featuring Teymuraz, I have argued that *lezginka* dancing, sartorial items, and other objects, such as the Lada sedan car in eggplant color, function in Timati's videos as racial metonymies. Lada sedan car and *lezginka* dance as racial metonymies link embodied proclivities, bodily movements, and vehicles to the Caucasus and Caucasian masculinities. Just one month after the premiere of *Баклажан* (2015), Timati, together with the rapper Sasha Chest, released the infamous video *My best friend* (2015) meant as a birthday present to the Russian president, marking Timati's 2015 patriotic turn. The metonymical work the video performs helps unpack broader implications of Timati's project of racial translation and ties it to the peculiar patriotic anti-racist project it espouses. If the Red Square in Moscow is the heart of Russianness, the locus of state power and control, or the center of the Russian metropole, the iconic scene in the video where Timati sits on top of an eggplant color Lada sedan car driven by a man wearing a mask of Putin's face acquires a potentially different reading to the ones that had dominated both scholarly analyses and broader public perceptions of the video (see the description of such analyses in the next chapter). If Lada Sedan stands metonymically for Caucasus and Caucasian masculinities, having it driving through the heart of state power, the Red Square implies the region's paramount centrality and unique importance. The driver of the car is the one who 'rules' it: *руль* in Russian stands for the car's steering wheel, while in English, the word 'rule' means exerting control over the region, people, or territory. In that regard, the mask on the driver's face and Timati's, who sits on top of the car, *pointing* at the driver, can have very provocative connotations hinting at who actually 'rules' or drives the Lada Sedan (the Caucasus) and who only appears to 'rule' it.



Figure 66. Indexicality and racial metonymy. Lada Sedan Baklazhan on the Red Square, the man with a mask of Putin's face driving the car and Timati sitting on top, pointing. Screenshot from the *Лучший друг* (*Best friend*) video. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=jp9pfvneKf4

In 2018 Timati released a song - under the nickname Timur Benoyevsky on his Instagram account, dedicated to the 200th anniversary of Chechnya's capital, Grozny. In his Instagram post, Timati explicitly credits Kadyrov for inventing a new alter-ego. Baysangur of Benoa (Benoyevskiy) was a naib of Imam Shamil, who led the resistance war against Russian colonization of the Caucasus in the 19th century. Benoy is also a teip²⁵⁶ name of Kadyrov, and the name Timur Benoyevsky may have signaled Timati's inclusion in it (Laznovsky 2021:89). Timati visited the capital to present the song and performed on stage with his headscarf-clad ex-wife, model, and vice miss of Russia 2014 Anastasiya Reshetova.²⁵⁷ Bringing a rap song about Grozny as a gift, the celebration featured a feast in Kadyrov's residence with *lezginka* dancing. Some subscribers on Instagram criticized Timati's song for touching the sacred figures of Chechens, such as Baysangur of Benoa, others for using Adyghe melody to rap about Chechnya, and others for yet another shapeshifting as part of Timati's career.

Most importantly, the song's lyrics contain significant cues helping to grasp the implications of Timati's project of racial translation (for an overview, see Laznovsky 2021:87-91). The lines *От Урус Мартан Аргун Ведучи/Знают эти тексты, все бородачу* (From Urus Martan, Argun, Veduchi/ All beardies know these lyrics) link the symbolic geography of Timati's oeuvre from *Что видишь ты* (2013) filmed in Argun Gorge to the revalorization of the bearded man (*бородач*) away from Russia's security concern to desirable, cool and modern in *Борода* (2014) and *Ты такой* (2015). Another crucial line in the lyrics is *Да это Россия, это город Грозный* (Yes, this is Russia, this is the city Grozny). Thus, Timati's reclaiming *lezginka* and Caucasus 'ours,' fusing his hop-hop with sonic and visual metonymies of Caucasian masculinities, can be read as performing a patriotic multinational/imperial Russian Federation nationalism. Although the origins of Russia's ethnic diversity are constituted through colonial violence, wars, and forceful incorporation, casting *lezginka* as part of the cultural legacy of the entirety of the population of Russia challenges the practices of ethnonationalist xenophobic exclusion of the peoples of the Caucasus in the Russian Federation. These considerations allow for the re-reading of Timati's cultural productions as a peculiar conservative/patriotic anti-racist project potentially implicated in state-sponsored initiatives. Although highly contradictory and non-innocent, it contrasts with xenophobia among the Russian population, exclusionary Russian ethnonationalism, and the Islamophobic sentiments of Russian liberal opposition.

It is important to note that Timati's reclaiming of *lezginka* is also performed as an ethn racially ambiguous subject who has personally experienced neo-Nazi skinhead violence in Moscow as a teenager (see Chapter 8). In his interviews, Timati acknowledges his gratefulness to Russia's leadership for stifling down and suppressing

²⁵⁶ Teip is a form of tribal organization in Chechnya and Ingushetiya based on descent from a shared ancestor or a place.

²⁵⁷ [youtube.com/watch?v=s3V4itU_fwk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s3V4itU_fwk)

racist violence of the 2000s.²⁵⁸ By discovering his own ‘oriental side,’ Timati establishes ties of affinity with the Caucasus and Caucasian masculine realness. Timati’s ludic impersonation of Teymuraz is far from being a story about innocence, purity, and authenticity. Rather, it is a story that is ambivalently implicated in the experiences of ethnoracial marginalization, neoliberal globalization, and appropriations of the voices of the subaltern. This entanglement partly explains why there are almost no serious scholarly analyses of the Teymuraz figure and ethnoracial politics of Timati’s hip-hop compared to the performers who preoccupied the public imagination later. For example, Tajikistan-born singer Manizha who represented Russia in Eurovision in 2020, figured in academic and public analyses as a harbinger of Russia’s progressive, feminist, and anti-racist future.

One of the few places that featured the commentary on Teymuraz was in a dialogue between Mark Simon and Kirill Kobrin.²⁵⁹ This discussion, however, displays the familiar tropes of Timati presented as imitating and stealing from US hip-hop artists. In Simon’s words, Timati is described as part of the mainstream in Russia who challenges the Western mainstream:

But the only difference is that the British and American subcultures referred to the humiliated and insulted. At the same time, our Russian heroes are associated with those with power and authority. Their whole message, as well as the whole message of Putin’s post-Crimean situation, is that he who has power is right and can afford something. Of course, this is the exact opposite of punk’s intention because punk, for all its negativism, did try to give socially stigmatized groups a language to express themselves. On the other hand, Timati has clips where he alludes to the British singer M.I.A., a Sri Lankan refugee. She makes videos where she puts Arabs and other people marginalized in the Western world into a glamorous setting. And she does it very ironically, showing how pop culture excludes those people. With us, it’s just the opposite: by making references to this technique, Timati puts people dancing lezginka in the spotlight, a kind of Russian “negritude.” But it turns out that this is not a “negritude” that is oppressed, but one that oppresses, that is ready to abandon all normativity, not to emancipate its bearer, but to subjugate others.

In this analysis, which reproduces the conventional narratives of Timati’s chronic inauthenticity, any alternative readings of the Teymuraz figure are muted. The commentary overlooks how the emergence of Teymuraz was enmeshed in the attempts to manage the stigma of copying US artists, implicated in Timati’s contradictory pursuit of originality and Russian hip-hop authenticity. Timati is understandably not read as the voice of the subaltern because of his proximity to power and authority. The figure of Teymuraz is therefore dismissed as distorting discourses of authenticity and resistance accompanying figures representing Western post-coloniality such as M.I.A. However, the framing of Teymuraz as twisted Russian ‘negritude’ that perversely usurps the discourse of hip-hop as music of resistance is itself invested in politics of cultural purity and authenticity. Instead of looking at Teymuraz as a distorting aberration, it is more fruitful to read the figure as a part of the larger Russian hybrid cultural trend of aesthetic populism. As part of this trend, Teymuraz is contradictorily positioned vis-à-vis the

²⁵⁸ daily.afisha.ru/archive/volna/archive/rus_rap_timati/

²⁵⁹ gefter.ru/archive/21661

subaltern, both appropriating their voices yet containing elements of social critique, recirculating xenophobic clichés, and undermining them. Sustained by memetics, Teymuraz exploits and transgresses Timati’s chronic hip-hop inauthenticity, shamelessly promotes products, mobilizes and challenges xenophobic prejudice, and revalorizes the subaltern through hip-hop modernity, the fantasy of economic uplift, entrepreneurialism, and consumption. Timati neither claims to be oppressed nor attaches himself in any straightforward way to the discourses of resistance. He repeatedly maintains that the idea behind Teymuraz is to appeal to as broad an audience as possible. He is not bothered if his rap turns into pop and openly brings market interests into the mix, arguing that music is business. Impersonating Teymuraz is based on proximity, populism, post-irony, and appropriation of the voices of the subaltern, not on the representation of their voices through politics of purity, resistance, and authenticity. This role is better performed by other Black Star artists, such as MC Doni, who builds on Central Asian migrant realness.

Perhaps, the most significant illustration of what is at stake in the project of racial translation of Timati’s hip-hop was the stage performance of *Баклажан* in November 2017 during Timati’s fully booked 28,000 spectators concert show in Moscow in the *Olympiysky* concert hall.²⁶⁰ The stage, lit with bluish lights projecting rocking Lada Sedan cars, was suddenly peppered with *lezginka* dancing youth dressed in sleek black traditional Caucasian costumes. Sharp, energetic, and choreographed movements, performed by teenage dancers from Moscow-based *Lezginka* Dance collective Ansar, infused with acrobatic elements and synchronized with the song’s beat and melody, merge with Timati’s ecstatic *lezginka*-dancing in a red Adidas T-shirt (2018 FIFA Worldcup uniform) with the word Russia written on the back.



Figure 67. The stage performance of *Баклажан* (*Eggplant*) during Timati’s 2017 *Поколение* (*Generation*) show in *Olympiysky* with *lezginka* dancing Caucasian youth. Screenshots of the video recording. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=9MiaEq4p3zY

²⁶⁰ youtube.com/watch?v=9MiaEq4p3zY

A prominent Russian music journalist, Alexander Gorbachev, frames this performance of *Баклажан* through the wording ‘patriotism meets cosmopolitanism,’ an odd cultural fusion of Timati’s ‘estradny rap’²⁶¹ (*Estrada* rap) and ‘traditions of peoples of Caucasus.’ Although rightly identifying this moment as a leading political element of the show, such reading downplays its broader political implications by constructing this element as an oddity and strange eclecticism rather than as a climax of Timati’s long-term project of racial translation, as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis. Throughout Gorbachev’s review, rappers Oxxxymiron and Timati, both able to gather *Olympiysky* audiences, are pitted against each other as two antipodes of Russian hip-hop: representing two essentially different articulations of rap: ‘good’ complex poet rap of the former and ‘bad’ impure, *Estrada* rap of the latter, reproducing the narrative of Timati’s perennial hip-hop inauthenticity. However, all semiotic elements should be considered to grasp the affective force and message that the performance generates. Notably, this performance includes kids from the Ansar collective dancing *lezginka* on stage. The figure of a child is often associated in queer scholarship with the idea of futurity and sexual reproduction. Domestic specialists theorize Russian ethnofutures as bleak: experts lament the falling birth rates in European parts of the country, shortening life expectancies, and general depopulation resulting in highly politicized discourses of Russia as a ‘dying nation’ (Rivkin-Fish 2003). At the same time, imaginaries of Russian ethnonationalists are obsessed with the Russian Muslim regions’ fecundity, especially in the North Caucasus, imagined as swarming Slavic populations with excessive birth rates, remaking the ethnic composition of Russia. With this in mind, this energetic *lezginka*-dancing on stage hints that for Timati, the Russian future will have a Caucasian accent, further corroborating my thesis that Timati’s 2012-2018 project of racial translation can be read as a patriotic anti-racist project with contradictory implications.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have analyzed a memetic figure of Teymuraz as a culmination of Timati’s project of racial translation that found a localized equivalent to US black hip-hop authenticity in the ludic impersonation of a racialized taxi driver from either the Caucasus or Central Asia. Built on the mechanism of multimodal racial metonymy, the figure of Teymuraz reflects the broader trends within Russian culture during the ‘conservative turn,’ such as aesthetic populism. Combining elements of New East aesthetics of *gopnik* with late-Soviet and post-Soviet comedy tropes and Russian clichés about men from the Caucasus and Central Asia, the figure of Teymuraz enacts both social critique and Timati’s anti-elitist ludic turn through the embrace of post-irony and

²⁶¹meduza.io/feature/2017/11/07/timati-i-oksiron-drug-za-drugom-vystupili-v-olimpiyskom-kto-by-luchshe

memetics. At the same time, Teymuraz responds to Russia's search for civilizational originality and non-Western identity and Timati's attempts to manage the stigma of imitation of US hip-hop within discourses of Russian hip-hop authenticity. The figure of Teymuraz operates both through the appropriation of the voices of the subaltern and their revalorization through the promise of migrant economic uplift via hip-hop modernity. Teymuraz and Timati's lezginka dancing also enact a peculiar Russian multinational patriotic anti-racist project with contradictory implications. It subverts exclusionary Russian ethnonationalism yet may reinforce imperialist readings by claiming the Caucasus as Russia's 'cool and original story' or 'Russian story with a Caucasian accent.'

12. Resistance, foreignness, and race: contesting hip-hop authenticities

Introduction

This chapter traces how in the wake of Russian rap rising to mainstream countrywide popularity between 2015-2017, Cold War interpretative legacies have shaped some Western readings of this vibrant, heterogenous, and fractured music scene. Timati's patriotic turn, emblemized by several videos released in 2015, led many scholars and critics to interpret his hip-hop as a perverse emblem of everything wrong with Russia, as an aberration that distorts the inherently rebellious ethos of hip-hop as music of resistance. In the first section, I introduce examples of such framings in the literature and explore the assumptions underpinning such analyses. Because dominant hip-hop authenticity discourses imagine the ethnoracial dimension as irrelevant to Russian hip-hop, Russian hip-hop is fetishized as music of resistance able to democratize the authoritarian East. Instead, I propose to read Timati's 2015 patriotic turn as a strategy of hip-hop localization that involves both ludic and serious performative disidentification with the US. Timati's previous over-identification with the USA as a source of hip-hop and provider of models to be emulated has required active dis-identificatory work in the context of Russia's geopolitical turn away from the West. When earlier, in pursuing more solid hip-hop authenticity domestically, Timati needed to actively distance himself from associations with glamour and Russian pop music; since 2015, he has disidentified with the USA by performing ludic anti-Americanism and releasing a cycle of patriotic songs. However, the figure of Teymuraz that won him the highest Russian pop music awards solidified his image of chronic inauthenticity in the Russian hip-hop community. Teymuraz was read as another incarnation of Timati's inherent inauthenticity seen as sliding into vulgar '*Estrada-rap*' or '*KVN-rap*.' In the second and third sections, I turn to the Russian hip-hop scene preoccupied with detecting plagiarism in Timati's hip-hop. I track how discourses of Russian hip-hop authenticity involve the labor of discernment of 'real' hip-hop vis-à-vis 'fake' hip-hop by exposing Timati's plagiarism, imitation, and biting US rappers. By building on the anthropology of fakes and literature that links post-Soviet imaginaries of race, market, and immorality, I argue that Russian hip-hop commentary on Timati performs a peculiar work that ends up placing him both outside the borders of the genre and the Russian nation which reveals a Russian ethnonational bias informing the discourses of Russian hip-hop authenticity. In the place of a conclusion, I end the chapter and the empirical part on Timati's hip-hop with a peculiar 2018 case of moral panics about rap and 'LGBT propaganda' that involved former Black Star label artist Egor Kreed. I use this case of viral homophobic rhetoric that boomeranged back to Black Star label artists to ruminate on the shifting hierarchies of

masculine realness and on the need to center both gender and sexuality and race/ethnicity in the analysis of post-Soviet celebrity and hip-hop masculinities.

Russian hip-hop as music of resistance? From Cold War visions to patriotism as a strategy of hip-hop's localization

In the section on the issue of hip-hop racial authenticity, I have traced how the paradigm of hip-hop as music of resistance, connected to racial marginalization, informs the dominant readings of the genre. In tracking the emergence of Russian hip-hop, I have shown how Russian hip-hop is imagined as failing to translate the US hip-hop ethnoracial dimension, which leads to construing Russian hip-hop authenticity in terms of economic marginalization or peripheral location alone. As the genre grew in popularity domestically around 2015-2017, with the increasing visibility of rap battles as well as the government's increasing attempts to control the genre, the discourse of Russian rap as music of resistance took on a distinctly Cold War flavor, imagined by Western scholars and commentators through the frames of dualistic pairing: loyalty or opposition to the current political regime.

A scholar of Moroccan hip-hop, Moreno Almeida, has traced how the trope of resistance is particularly often applied to non-Western music, forming an expectation of sorts projected onto non-Western music scenes. She uses the notion 'straight jacket of resistance' to refer to the binary of framing hip-hop through the lens of either resistance or cooptation. Morena Almeida points out a need to 'move away from stagnant 'resistance versus co-option' narratives by shedding light on the many ways in which music can also be political, but also to reveal the limits and limitations of 'essentializing rap as a music of resistance' (Moreno Almeida 2017:4). Nooshin makes a similar argument on how popular music in Iran is framed in Western journalistic, scholarly, and Iranian diasporic accounts through an Orientalizing lens and tropes such as freedom, empowerment, emancipation: uncritically reproducing fetishization of resistance (Nooshin 2017). Scholarship on Soviet rock is an instructive case. As Polly McMichael argues, it has been often tinted by the interpretational schemas of the Cold War, positing rock and roll 'as global countercultural force, smuggling alternative ideas and beliefs into the Soviet world,' associating the genre with 'youth, energy, and noise – and the world of late Socialism, with its succession of failing elderly leaders and its economic and cultural morbidity' (McMichael 2008:204-5). In my recent work, I have traced how both the US moral panics about Russiagate and Russian subcultures of trolling have overdetermined the (mis)readings of Russian hip-hop as far-right and racist music for Nazis in the 2020 Twitter controversy between Talib Kweli and Russian rappers where transnational diversity of racialization got 'lost in translation,' and various sides mobilized the Cold War interpretative lens within the conflict (Yangeldina 2020).

This straightjacket of resistance relying on frames tinted by Cold War dualisms informs some recent Western scholarly works on Russian hip-hop. Such analyses (Liebig 2020:6; Selman 2017:124–43) tend to pit Russian rappers against each other by framing them through the limiting lens of oppositional vs. pro-government hip-hop (the terminology used for the last group by Selman is telling ‘hip-hop propagandists’). Timati typically represents pro-government and, therefore, ‘fake’ hip-hop, a caricature of the genre’s supposed rebelliousness and counter-hegemonic ethos. At the same time, other rappers such as Noize MC and Vasya Oblomov (or selectively Oxxxymiron) are constructed as representatives of hip-hop’s oppositional, political ethos, which would lead to a ‘singing revolution’ of sorts. Indeed, taking into consideration Timati’s explicit support for Russian president Putin in his 2011 presidential campaign, the infamous 2015 birthday video with Sasha Chest *Мой Лучший Друг (My best friend)*, social media declarations of patriotism, and a cycle of patriotic songs and videos recorded with L’One throughout 2015, it is hard to resist such interpretations.

For example, the article by Denisova and Herasimenka is dedicated to Russian hip-hop’s potential to foster democracy and its implications for counter-hegemonic political deliberation (Denisova and Herasimenka 2019). Their goal of reproducing the vision of hip-hop as music of resistance leads them towards constructing a taxonomy of three political discourses advanced by Russian rappers: pro-government rap embodied by Timati, oppositional one represented by Noize MC, and Oxxxymiron, characterized as both ‘in-between’ and ‘independent.’ In their analysis, Denisova and Herasimenka argue that Timati’s cultural productions reproduce an ‘ideological message familiar from the Soviet times’ with the main rule for a successful career being ‘enthusiastic loyalty’ to ‘powerful friends’ (Denisova and Herasimenka 2019:6). In turn, Noize MC and Oxxxymiron are praised for reflexively placing the individual in the center, prioritizing ‘personal growth and personal responsibility—something that the group-bound mentality of the pro-government rapper Timati does not reflect’ (Denisova and Herasimenka 2019:6). This narrative, however, does a disservice to the much broader portfolio of the themes within Timati’s hip-hop and videos, some of which include the narratives of personal growth and individual responsibility valorized by the authors. It also stages an unhelpful juxtaposition of individualism vs. collectivism, exposing underlying liberal assumptions structuring scholarly arguments. However, the most problematic element within the article is the reproduction of the Cold War interpretative schemas used as a lens for analyzing Timati’s cultural productions:

The pro-Kremlin and independent rappers take two different directions when it takes to swearing allegiance to the collective, the “state machine,” and “the cult of the leader.” The critically minded artists appeal to the values of an individual, strong personality and responsibility, hard work to achieve goals and build following, and often find themselves in more philosophical discourse on life, loneliness, and longing for peace in the times of wars [...] Endorsing the power of groups against the power of an individual is an ongoing watershed between the conformist and critical rappers. The rhetoric of pro-Kremlin rap thrives on the Soviet-style cult of the leader’s personality and full loyalty to the ruler. Close-knit conformism to the state and power structures dominates as the only steady condition for success in contemporary Russia. This mirrors the lack of established opposition in Russia, where the ideology of the critics of Kremlin is so

vague that resistant citizens prefer not to associate themselves with any political party (Denisova and Herasimenka 2019:7-9).

Notably, although the article analyzes gender and sexuality politics and finds all varieties of Russian rap perpetuating misogyny and homophobia, this conclusion does not disrupt the constructed taxonomy I have criticized above. Phillip Ewell suggests a more insightful typology in the article with a telling name, 'Russian Rap in the Era of Vladimir Putin.' The typology constructed to map the heterogeneous and fractured field of Russian rap is described through several varieties: among them, party rap, which is characterized as apolitical but opportunistic (using Timati's support for Putin during the 2012 campaign as an example), and dissenting rap of Noize-MC, compared to the legacy of Soviet dissidents, bards, and poets pitched against repressive Soviet state now incarnated in Putin's Russia (Ewell 2017:45). In another article, Liebig similarly makes connections between Russian rappers such as Vasya Oblomov and Oxxxymiron and somewhat idealized Russian intelligentsia: 'Russian hip-hop's political self-positioning to a stance of outspoken intellectualism also adds another layer to rap's function as a form of artistic resistance in Russia' arguing for the potential of Russian hip-hop for the 'rejuvenation of intelligentsia heritage' (Liebig 2020:7-13). The vast landscape of Russian hip-hop within such narratives is interpreted exclusively through the limiting pairing of resistance vs. cooptation by evil forces of the regime, precluding the theorizations of the genre as a site of cultural industries or entangled arena of conflicts around hip-hop authenticity. These framings impose a Cold War-tinted interpretative lens on a more complex cultural field. They bear traces of Western Sovietology frames, pitting ideological (bad, totalitarian) rap against enlightened (oppositional, anti-government, dissident rap). It also problematically to borrow Evren Savcı's expression, which she uses to critique Western queer scholarship's gaze on the Global South, overburdens Russian rap with revolutionary expectations (Savcı 2021). The politics of Russian popular music seems flattened by being interpreted through the exclusive frame of resistance. The narrative of Russian rap as music of resistance also acquires explicit Cold War framing, implicitly reinstating the USA as a beacon of cultural freedom, symbolized by allegedly counter-hegemonic cultural industries and inherently political music genres whose export abroad may be able to democratize the authoritarian East. This narrative obscures US rap's imbrications in the spirit of neoliberalism, as is exemplified by the phenomenon of hip-hop moguldom. It also decontextualizes Timati's hip-hop by ignoring its profound investment in post-Soviet capitalist realism. As a result, the much messier trajectory of Timati's hip-hop, marked by affectionate attachment to the USA and chronic domestic inauthenticity which I have traced in this thesis is reduced to the string of patriotic videos, or one 2015 video *Мой Лучший Друг*.

In an article on the role of the political in Russian rap written at the peak of the genre's success in 2016, music critic Gorbachev argues that the majority of Russian rap is apolitical, deliberately distancing itself from most current agendas (Gorbachev 2016:6). Moreover, explicitly politicized rap, be it oppositional or pro-government in its

messages, is often perceived by audiences as ‘opportunism, vulgarity, something outside of aesthetical’ and the ratio of protest rap vis-à-vis other varieties is relatively meager (Gorbachev 2016:10). Gorbachev also remarks on the liminal status of the artists such as Vasya Oblomov, or Noize MC, who are explicitly oppositional and critical of the government in their lyrics. Although praised in the literature I traced above as agents of democratic change, they are not necessarily considered part of Russian hip-hop by the fans of the genre due to the peculiarity of their music styles. I would add that the same liminal status applies to Timati, often excluded from the genre by the Russian hip-hop community, while his 2015 performances of patriotism reinforced but did not radically alter his image of chronic hip-hop inauthenticity in Russia.

While *Мой Лучший Друг* video is utilized as proof of Timati’s ultimate co-optation by the Russian government, its authorship provides a more complicated picture. The song was authored by the rapper Sasha Chest who defended a dissertation on the media image of politicians, using the case of Putin as an example. The beats were written by the popular beatmaker Capella, who also made Timati’s 2012 #ДАВАЙДОСВИДАНИЯ and *Баклажан*. In his interviews, Capella indicates his understanding of what it takes to make a song that would go viral.²⁶² Capella invited Timati to join the song by adding a verse of his own. The word *владыка* in the lyrics appeared as a replacement for ‘my nigga’ featured in the text of the original video still available on YouTube.²⁶³ In one interview, Sasha Chest explains the replacement for the sake of broader intelligibility: *когда дело идет на широкую аудиторию, то многие бы просто этого не поняли, всех этих “май нигга” и “шампейн пирамида”* (when it comes to wider audiences, many would not have understood all these ‘my niggas’ and ‘champagne pyramids’).²⁶⁴ Timati’s celebrity presence and social media capital helped the song generate instant hype, yet the video remains relatively unpopular on YouTube compared to his other works, which supports Gorbachev’s point on the audience’s aversion to explicitly politicized content. As Chest claims in the interview, he was overwhelmed with the overly politicized readings of the song.²⁶⁵ When asked whether Timati, who jumped on the track extremely quickly, could have extracted any benefits from this patriotic video, Chest remains hesitant, not excluding this possibility yet acknowledging Timati’s capacity to generate instant social media virality through his celebrity presence.²⁶⁶

Whether Timati’s 2015 patriotic turn represents a case of co-optation of youth culture is another question posed by Gorbachev in the same article, who aptly notes Vladislav Surkov’s affection for US rap and Tupac Shakur. Gorbachev hesitates to answer in the affirmative, pointing out that Timati’s role models are American rappers, but if, for them, it is ‘drugs and money’ that mark the right pathway, for Timati, after his

²⁶² [youtube.com/watch?v=f15kK-Xq9c4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f15kK-Xq9c4)

²⁶³ [youtube.com/watch?v=7VJHoxKCneY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VJHoxKCneY)

²⁶⁴ the-flow.ru/features/moi-luchshiy-drug-sasha-chest-interview

²⁶⁵ the-flow.ru/features/moi-luchshiy-drug-sasha-chest-interview

²⁶⁶ the-flow.ru/news/chest-na-black-star After the video Chest was invited to join Black Star but did not stay on the label for too long and later moved to Gazgolder

transition away from glamour rap of the 2000s, it is ‘connections with powerful individuals’ that constitute ‘reputational currency.’ Herein, it is argued, lies the most significant difference between Russian and American models of capitalism (Gorbachev 2016:8). In the same vein, in his insightful analysis of Timati’s cultural productions, which avoids Cold War inflected frameworks, Mills carefully weaves Timati’s entrepreneurialism with performances of patriotism and pursuit of ‘Russian cultural relevance’:

For Westerners, the idea that the Kremlin carefully curates all mass culture may be comforting. Not only does it reinforce familiar Cold-War stereotypes about “Russian propaganda,” it also allows Putin’s critics to believe that any support for his regime is coerced or staged. But regarding figures like Timati merely as tools of a centralized propaganda machine blinds us to the messaging of his strategic business plan and lyrical content. While his professed love of Putin may unsettle some observers, Timati’s pursuit of Russian cultural relevance can only outrage those who have never noticed the dollar bills and American flags adorning T-shirts the world over. (Mills 2018)

Building on this commentary, I suggest approaching the 2015 patriotic vector in Timati’s cultural productions as a strategy of hip-hop localization. This strategy intersects with the Russian cultural trend of aesthetic populism and pursuit of non-Western civilizational identity in the post-2014 geopolitical context of the increasing confrontation between Russia and the USA. Patriotism as a strategy of hip-hop localization is motivated primarily by the pragmatic spirit of capitalist realism, marked by the structural dependency on US hip-hop as a model. Timati’s hip-hop and Black Star label’s cultural productions were deeply embedded in popular geopolitics between 2013 and 2015 after Russia’s geopolitical shift away from the West in the wake of the war with Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. From approximately 2014, intrinsic connections linking Timati’s hip-hop to the USA as a place of origin and orientation eventually became a problem inaugurating a patriotic turn. For Timati, it necessitated the struggle to disidentify with the genre as heavily rooted in US politics as hip-hop. Attempts to actively distance himself from the affectionate attachment to the USA and reinvent both the Black Star label and his cultural productions resulted in social media performances and videos thematizing the rhetoric of patriotism.

That patriotism may figure as a strategy of hip-hop localization is supported by the research on non-Western hip-hop scenes. Moreno Almeida discusses the role of patriotism within the Moroccan rap scene: ‘at a time when rappers in Morocco were looked at with mistrust and considered symbols of Western imperialism, patriotic rap allowed this music genre and culture a smoother entrance to the Moroccan cultural field by speaking a language familiar to many’ and ‘with time some rappers have capitalized on patriotic music which grants them symbolic and economic recognition without any significant attempt to creatively contribute to the development of the Moroccan rap scene’ (Moreno Almeida 2017:4). The embrace of the patriotic rhetoric can therefore be seen as aiding localization of hip-hop in the contexts where it may be perceived as a foreign, US-American and unpatriotic genre.

Cold War-inflected readings of Timati's patriotic turn ignore the post-2014 geopolitical context and its effects on Russian cultural politics and occlude the longer messy trajectory of Timati's hip-hop and Black Star label I trace in this thesis. When these are seen as sites of Russian cultural industries that follow the US models, we must look at the relations of dependency between the model and its implementers. In multiple interviews, Timati reiterates the status of US hip-hop artists as pioneering and US cultural industries as trendsetting and most advanced in the world. His big dream, as narrated in his interviews, was to create a modern, commercially viable hip-hop label modeled on the urban labels of US hip-hop moguls, which would generate cultural products of comparable quality in Russia. US mainstream hip-hop in this framework always stays in the center of the picture. This reflection also allows to reconsider Timati's performances of patriotism as also dependent on US examples. In a 2016 interview, a GQ journalist presents Timati's patriotism as a hip-hop oxymoron, a parody of the protest spirit of the genre, suggesting as a mental exercise to imagine Tupac Shakur dancing in a mask of Bill Clinton and calling the latter a 'best friend' like Timati does in his 2015 video. Timati responds by tracking US hip-hop's rise to the mainstream: commercialization of rap as an industry and its transformation into a commodity, as well as the support of the US hip-hop establishment for Obama.²⁶⁷

Indeed, the vocal support of US hip-hop celebrities such as Jay-Z, Young Jeezy, Nas, and others for US president Barack Obama has been a process wrought with contradictions, or as scholars Gosa and Nielson have aptly called it, 'the Obamafication of rap' (Gosa and Nielson 2015:5). Research has tracked how Obama engaged with a politics of proximity to hip-hop, performing both 'realness' and respectability, instrumentalizing it for his presidential campaigning (Gorzelay-Mostak 2016), playing the 'role of hip-hop president' (Gosa and Nielson 2015:10). Jay-Z's regular support for the Obama's campaign 'suggested that electoral politics and mainstream hip-hop authenticity could actually coexist'; the rapper promoted the 'rhetoric of neoliberalism, repeatedly endorsing a free-market, pro-business economy,' becoming 'Obama's symbol of bootstrapping, de-racialized self-sufficiency' (Gosa and Nielson 2015:9-11). This comparative contextualization of convergence between mainstream US hip-hop moguls, neoliberalism, and the US political establishment helps problematize Cold War-inflected mappings of Timati's performances of patriotism as peculiar aberrations and perverse uniquely Russian distortions of hip-hop as music of resistance.

In one telling 2015 video interview that allows insights into Timati's performances of patriotism as a strategy of hip-hop localization, Kseniya Sobchak pokes the hip-hop artist with rather uncomfortable questions. Sobchak stages her interview around several contradictions: firstly, between Timati's recent embrace of Russian patriotism and his former image associated with material values such as the pursuit of glamour, conspicuous consumption, and luxury; secondly, between his explicit orientation

²⁶⁷ gq.ru/heroes/timati-o-kadyrove-gomofobii-i-rep-battlah

towards US hip-hop and Russia's geopolitical turn away from the West, including domestic Russian state discourses of 'spiritual bonds' and explicit anti-Americanism in official rhetoric and media:²⁶⁸

Sobchak: In our country, you are associated with specific values, including material values. Timati with bodyguards, with luxury cars, with beautiful girls [...] expensive watches, girls, cars [...] I will explain why I am asking you this. The spiritual bonds of Russia (*духовные скрепы России*), agree with me; they are about something else. They are entirely different spiritual values. And if you speak about what makes us different from Western society, from America, it is precisely less emphasis on material values [...] (slightly ironic) And this Russian spirituality (*русская духовность*) about which so many people, including on the governmental level, love to talk about, it is always roughly speaking is juxtaposed to the material West, consumption society, etc. So I always wondered about you; you are the perfect embodiment of the consumption society, you are a rapper with a luxurious life, and there is always the American dream, not the Russian (*русская*) dream. Taking all of this into account, you support our government and the politics of our government, and the people in power love you. I see a contradiction in that. It is one story when it is Kadysheva with Russian folk songs (*русские песни*), there it is clear: the spiritual bonds and Kadysheva go hand in hand. But you are another story. I am not saying it is good or bad, I hope it is clear, but you are about something else altogether (*Ты вообще про другое*).

Timati: I will explain. I spent my childhood in America, USA [...] But at a certain moment, I realized I missed the place where I was born, the people, and the friends. The mentality of an American person is quite different from a Russian one (*русская*). I was born and bred in Russia and became a conscious human being here. I did not stay in America for these reasons. Because the mentality of people there is not as close to mine as that of people in Russia. So I returned to Russia to do it here. Even though hip-hop and the urban genres were invented in America, each country, such as France, Italy, or Germany, adapted it in their manner [...] I came back here to do it here. Even though all trendsetters and big celebrities are in America, I am in close contact with them; since they are trend-setters of the tradition, I want to develop and grow it here. But I also have a Western career, which also develops nicely [...] So, there is a Western direction and a direction targeted at Russia. My musical label is here, and my base is here. I love my country; I love being here. It is hard to do business here, but it can be done.

Sobchak: I have no doubts that you love Russia. I don't have a single doubt. But don't you think that the things you are doing now are slightly off here in Russia? I will explain myself. The relations between Russia and USA are the most strained that we have ever seen throughout our lives. Turn on any TV channel, and you can see that the main enemy is America. So, you are a person who does not sing Russian romances. You are a rapper. You dress in American clothes. You promote the American way of life [...] But you sing songs in the enemy language and record with enemy artists you just spoke about. Don't you think that things you are doing now in the international situation we currently find ourselves in are slightly off for our government, politics, and people....

T: I don't want to go deep into politics; this is not my sphere of action. I always claimed openly that I support the current government and am on friendly terms with it. But I don't want to discuss or comment on it now. Regarding the materials, my audience, my main fan base, and my mission for the country are here. People say: you cannot only take; you also need to share. So, I want to work fully here. I want to build a structure here [...] I took the model of building a label there, in America, a model of music (they are trendsetters of this story), but I adapted it and did it here, in the Russian language, for Russia.

S: So then you promote American culture here.

²⁶⁸tvrain.ru/teleshov/sobchak_zhivem/timati_ksenii_sobchak_o_druzhbe_s_kadyrovym_ramzan_ahmatovich_vsegda_rjadam_ chtoby_dat_mne_sovet_v_kakoj_to_slozhnoj_situatsii-380319/

T: Why? I do hip-hop in Russian. That's it. It turns out to be Russian (*он получается русским*). It is Russian hip-hop.

S: But it is a traditionally American genre.

T: Ok, basketball is made in America, but we have a TSKA team, which plays beautifully on the European level, chess was made in India, but we have Gari Kasparov [...] Music is, in principle, international. Another issue is what are you promoting with this music? What do you write about? Listening to my last works is enough to understand that a lot has changed.

In the interview, Timati performs a double disidentification, both with his previous image associated with Russian glamour and hip-hop bling aesthetics and with the USA. The former is characterized as a banal preoccupation of youth with conspicuous consumption and pursuing external status symbols such as cars, nightclubs, women, and swag. Timati even characterizes the party lifestyle of his youth, which catered to the wealthy kids of the elites, as parasitic. The reorientation to the domestic hip-hop scenes I traced in previous chapters is described as a passage into maturity that involves reevaluating ideals and principles. Timati stresses his desire to serve the Russian society by becoming a worthy example for the youth. When it comes to his adolescence in the USA, Timati reconstructs his past as soul-searching, evoking an unbridgeable gap in Russian and American 'mentalities' which forced the rapper to return to his roots. His past connection with the USA is framed as a modernizing force: the aspiration to bring the best practices from the USA for the betterment of Russia by constructing the best possible label modeled after the most advanced US examples. USA's hip-hop past is Russia's hip-hop future. Through this move, Black Star label and Timati's hip-hop transform into a mission that serves the entire country.

Throughout the interview, Sobchak provocatively attempts to expose the contradictions in this narrative, claiming that rap is an inherently US-American genre. If one is to follow the official Russian state rhetoric of 2014-2015, Sobchak maintains, Timati can be seen as performing the 'enemy's music,' which is very far from Russia's rhetoric of 'traditional values' and 'spiritual bonds.' Timati deflects the accusations that Russian hip-hop as a genre is inherently unpatriotic by being US-American. He insists on the possibility of localizing hip-hop, pointing to vivid national hip-hop scenes in Europe that adapt the genre to local contexts. Similarly, although Sobchak portrays his visits to the USA and friendship with US hip-hop celebrities as hypocritical and unpatriotic, Timati describes these contacts as motivated by the pragmatic need to keep an eye on the latest hip-hop trends. Alluding to the trend-setting status of US hip-hop for the entire world, the visits are framed as a commitment to quality and professionalism.

Timati used similar rhetoric in the 2016 interview with GQ magazine, where he explained his post-2013 hip-hop turn away from the West as an existential search, dividing his life into before and after:²⁶⁹

²⁶⁹ gq.ru/heroes/timati-o-kadyrove-gomofobii-i-rep-battlah.

What was Timati doing before? I looked at the American rappers and thought about how great their life is. Golden chains, money. I wanted the same things, worked hard, and managed to make tracks with Snoop Dogg. I toured the whole of Europe and gained hundreds of millions of views. But afterward, I noticed that the audience in Russia stopped speaking one language with me. And then I started thinking deeply: if I yearn for the West, I need to leave. But then I decided that I wanted to live in Russia and work for my country.

In the quote, Timati constructs his past as an infatuation with the life and success of US rappers and his desire to emulate them. After achieving much-desired success measured in dazzling collaborations with US hip-hop stars, Timati reveals that he stopped ‘speaking the same language’ with his domestic, Russophone audiences. Now he wants to work for the future of Russia and stay in the country instead of moving to pursue a career in ‘the West.’ Timati reimagines himself as a true patriot of Russia, working for the country’s well-being. As I demonstrated earlier, this shift also involved a masculine refashioning of himself – building body mass and muscles, changing his hairstyle for a lush beard. Embracing Russia’s geopolitical turn away from the West, Timati began his search for hip-hop localization, negotiating the accusations of copying US hip-hop and his stigma of chronic inauthenticity.

Timati’s 2014-2015 patriotic turn as a strategy of hip-hop localization intersects with the Russian cultural trend of aesthetic populism. This involved serious and ludic performances of patriotism, anti-elitism, and anti-Americanism, both as Timati and sometimes as Teymuraz. In what follows, I outline several such performances on Timati’s social media and briefly review and explore intersections of these performances with the broader cultural trend of aesthetic populism on L’One’s and Timati’s 2015 patriotic mini-album *GTO*.

After 2014 Timati’s memetic rebellions against the US peppered his Instagram. In January 2015, Timati staged several performances of ludic insubordination against the US-American hegemon on his social media accounts, using locations, US celebrities, or politicians as metonymies for the USA. For instance, one short video clip from a drone shows Timati holding the Russian flag next to Hollywood letters in the Los Angeles hills.²⁷⁰ Accompanied by an audio snippet from *Kalinka-Malinka*, a sonic metonymy of Russianness, and claimed to be filmed 20 minutes before the arrest by the US police, the clip quickly went viral. It was spread in Russian media with the allegations that Timati was arrested for installing a Russian flag in Hollywood. Another ludic performance of patriotism involved a short video of Timati as Teymuraz shot in Florida, Miami Beach.

²⁷⁰ [instagram.com/p/yMDO6ZPIId5](https://www.instagram.com/p/yMDO6ZPIId5)



Figure 68. Teymuraz in red *zhiguli* car wearing *papakha* hat stages a rebellion against the US hegemony in Miami by waving a Russian flag, February 2016. Screenshot from Instagram. Source: [instagram.com/p/x4skMfvldp](https://www.instagram.com/p/x4skMfvldp)

Teymuraz wears an iconic Caucasian *papakha* hat while sitting in a moving red Soviet-era *zhiguli* car, waving a Russian flag from the window with a grimace.²⁷¹ In February 2016, Timati posted a short deep-fake video clip on his Instagram with the face of the US President Barack Obama lip-synching the hook from Timati's song *Мой Лучший Друг* 'My best friend is a President Putin' followed by a video-snippet with giggling Russian

president.²⁷²

Some of Timati's ludic performances of patriotism-cum-anti-Americanism included staging memetic spectacles of insubordination against US hip-hop celebrities. In November 2015, Timati shared a street photo of Kanye West with Kim Kardashian with a legend: *Канье в @blackstarwear #УСПЕХ не иначе* (Kanye in BlackStarWear. It is a success).²⁷³ The doctored photo had a logo of Timati's clothing line, BlackStarWear, digitally superimposed on Kanye West's bomber jacket.²⁷⁴ In another instance, Timati published on his social media a manipulated picture of Jay-Z and Beyonce with a carpet on the wall in the background, shifting the couple's location to an entourage of a typically Russian apartment. This staging of memetic ludic rebellions against the USA and US hip-hop exploits Russian popular internet culture of meme-making.

Timati's and L'One's patriotic mini album *GTO*, described through the post-Crimean rhetoric of *импортозамещение* (domestic replacements of Western imports), appeared as a response to the introduction of Western sanctions against Russia. The name *GTO* itself recycles the Soviet physical and patriotic education slogan *Готов к труду и обороне* (Ready for labor and defense). In his interview about the album, Timati insists that the idea behind it was to let people know that *нам не нужно заимствовать и ориентироваться на то, что делают на западе* (we do not need to borrow and orient ourselves towards what is done in the West).²⁷⁵ Musically, the songs from *GTO* combine the pursuit of originality with Soviet cultural recycling: building on samples extracted from Soviet *Estrada*, the 1980s Olympic games anthem, and Soviet films such as 1985 hit

²⁷¹ [instagram.com/p/x4skMfvldp](https://www.instagram.com/p/x4skMfvldp)

²⁷² [instagram.com/p/BB8jREvPIX8](https://www.instagram.com/p/BB8jREvPIX8)

²⁷³ [instagram.com/p/-lnouePIZw/](https://www.instagram.com/p/-lnouePIZw/)

²⁷⁴ rap.ru/news/6858

²⁷⁵ rhyme.ru/timati-osnovnaya-ideya-poluchit-albom-goda-2016

А напоследок я скажу (*In the end I want to say*) known as a soundtrack to the iconic late Soviet movie *Жестокий романс* (*Cruel Romance*).²⁷⁶

In the eponymous 2015 video *GTO*, Soviet patriotic slogans coexist with hip-hop modernity and visuality that fuses contemporary Russian multi-national patriotism with the imperial sublime.²⁷⁷ Several lines in the lyrics intersect with the peculiar patriotic anti-racist project promoted by Timati that I described in the previous chapter. In the lyrics, Timati stresses L'One's non-Russianness, playing with the imagery of Georgian men's sexual appetites: *Передай всем подругам, пощадь не будет, я приду не один! Ты узнаешь меня по походке, со мной будет грузин* (Pass it on to your girlfriends, there will be no mercy! You will recognize me by the way I walk, a Georgian will be with me). L'One introduces himself as a big-nosed 'Russian Georgian,' evoking the associations between *natsional'nost'* and phenotype: *Русский грузин, большой нос, большой профиль*.²⁷⁸ Elastic post-Soviet 'blackness' of both rappers merges with Oriental imagery of Georgian feasts in Timati's verse: *Мы на танцполе устроим хамам, ты потеряешь литры воды / До темноты, два тамады - за тостом тост, будут хиты!* (We will turn the dancefloor into a hammam, and you will lose liters of water / Till the night, two tamadas, toast after toast, there will be hits!). The trend toward anti-elitism and aesthetic populism is best reflected in L'One's verses. Flaunting his hip-hop reputation of street credibility, L'One emphasizes his coming from the regions: 'simple lad from Yakutsk' (*простой пацан из Якутска*) and simple people: *Я для народа, ведь я из народа!* (I am for the people because I am from the people). Vicarious realness achieved through Timati's proximity to L'One with his street credibility and humble origins intersects with aesthetic populism, helping to authenticate Timati's performances of Russian multi-national patriotism as 'the voice of the people.'

The video *А напоследок я скажу* (*In the end, I want to say*) is perhaps the least successful of all three, representing a performance of post-Crimean patriotism that meets a Soviet bard song, but without a ludic element.²⁷⁹ Shot in minimalistic black-and-white aesthetics mirroring its lyrical contents, it centers on a politicized monologue that stigmatizes political protests and blames Obama for the Euro-maidan uprisings and ruining relations with Ukraine. The verses ruminate around the contents of Russian national idea, vaguely condensed around anti-drug rhetoric, terms like 'healthy people' and 'sharp goal,' and more explicitly in the support for the project of 'gathering the shards of Russian Empire' (*А русский мужик встал и сказал - Хватит!!! И страна*

²⁷⁶ youtube.com/watch?v=G84bDxoEk6w

²⁷⁷ youtube.com/watch?v=rDoy4l3-9rc

²⁷⁸ It is important to note that this expression is polysemous. In web sources L'One is described as coming from a family of an ethnic Georgian father and an ethnic Russian mother. The expression can therefore be read as emphasizing L'One's 'halfness', a widespread way to describe oneself in Russia. But *Русский грузин* may also be understood in broader, imperial/cultural vein rather than narrower ethnic sense. Taken into consideration the overall analysis of the video I have laid out; the second interpretation seems more plausible.

²⁷⁹ youtube.com/watch?v=G84bDxoEk6w

ему верит/ Будет не просто, Но мы соберем осколки Русской Империи – Russian *tuzhik* stood up and said: Enough!!! And the country believes in him/ It’s not going to be easy, but we will reassemble the shards of the Russian Empire). In this line, perhaps the most curious aspect of the lyrics is the indexicality of the expression *русский мужик*, resonating with theorizations of Putin’s imagery as that of a ‘real’ man among gender and sexuality scholars (Riabov and Riabova 2014; Sperling 2014).

The last video from the *GTO* mini-album is *Utyosov*, sampling from Soviet *Estrada* classic Leonid Utyosov. The song provides a delayed response to Kanye West and Jay-Z’s *Otis* utilizing the sample from Otis Redding (2010).²⁸⁰ *Utyosov* was described by critics as another instance of Timati shamelessly stealing from US hip-hop celebrities. Mark Simon depicts *Utyosov* through tropes of theft and translation as secondary, uncreative imitation:

In the States, there is a song by Jay-Z and Kanye West called “Otis” because it is built on samples from Otis Redding. Timati took a sample from the song “Baron von der Pschick” and, in his music video with his partner, drives a tank, says that he wishes to stay in Grozny instead of going to the West and drinks kvas for the health of Russia. At the same time, the clip is an absolute calque from the original, but with the fact that we, they say, are not ashamed that we stole everything from you (*клип представляет собой абсолютную кальку с оригинала, но с тем, что нам, мол, не стыдно, что мы у вас все украли*).²⁸¹

Such a reading seems to overlook the video’s intentional design as a viral ludic performance of anti-Americanism, a patriotic hip-hop parody of the original video, Kanye West’s and Jay-Z’s *Otis*. This hip-hop parody stages a deliberately grotesque performance of Russian multinational patriotism by two ethnically non-Russian subjects, Timati and L’One. As a competitive response to the performances of US patriotism by Kanye West and Jay-Z, who in their video pose against the US flag,

Utyosov’s performance of Anti-Americanism and Russian patriotism is also a performance of racial translation of *Otis* across two imperial formations that reads well with Mogilner’s take on race as language and Empire as a context (Mogilner 2021). In its visual aesthetics, *Utyosov* is also the most apparent manifestation of aesthetic populism, built on recycling of the Soviet visual cliches such as military



Figure 69. Timati in red shirt walks together with a bear. Appropriating meme-aesthetics Meanwhile in Russia. Photo from shooting *Utyosov* from Timati’s Instagram. Source: [instagram.com/p/BQoethij8Sg/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BQoethij8Sg/)

²⁸⁰ [youtube.com/watch?v=DP6lcaNVP7U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DP6lcaNVP7U)
²⁸¹ gefter.ru/archive/21661

uniforms, tanks, and generalized Western stereotypes about Russia, such as walking bears. Timati introduced *Utyosov* by posting a still on his Instagram with the caption ‘Typical day in Russia’ using the aesthetics of social media memes and Western clichés about Russia.²⁸² The aesthetics of memes and memetic videos such as ‘Meanwhile in Russia’ genre represent Russia as an affect, a ‘hilarious amusement park full of shameful entertainments - a free zone of demodernization, absurdity, trash and kitsch, scandal and antisocial behavior that violate all norms of the “civilized world”’ yet also revalorize it ‘as the land of unexpected and bold decisions, sincerity, vitality and freedom from repressive regimes of “good taste” and “moral panic”’ (Engström 2021:101). As some scholars have argued, Russian memes can be considered the country’s most crucial cultural export, feeding on the ‘images and videos about perceived Russian excess [...] drunken fights, squatting Slavs and road rage’ (Borenstein 2022:6). This memetic culture achieves ‘the subversion of Western gaze’ ‘via aestheticization of Russia as a subaltern political subject, as the abject of the West’ (Engström 2021:101). Harnessing the trend of aesthetic populism through his various performances of Russian multinational/imperial patriotism and ludic anti-Americanism in 2015, Timati found a common memetic language with his domestic Russian audiences. Already in 2016, this symbolic capital

afforded by the social media virality of Timati was successfully converted into the business success of the BlackStarBurger chain, where such quintessentially American food as burgers was successfully localized and not perceived as unpatriotic.



Figure 70. Timati as a main thief of Russian hip-hop. Compilation of YouTube video screenshots exposing Timati’s and Black Star’s plagiarism.

Discerning fakes, exposing plagiarism: the search for authenticity in Russian hip-hop

As Russian hip-hop became the main musical genre of the country, YouTube, figuring as an alternative media sphere competing with Russian TV channels (Litvinenko 2021), mushroomed with specialized outlets dedicated to discussions of Russian hip-hop. On some of these channels, a particular genre of video emerged dedicated to exposing plagiarism within Russian hip-hop. Timati and artists from the Black Star label were often at the center of such videos. Revelatory investigations exposing suspicious proximities between Timati’s beats, visuals, and melodies and videos of

²⁸² [instagram.com/p/BQoethij8Sg/](https://www.instagram.com/p/BQoethij8Sg/)

foreign, mainly US hip-hop artists gained traction through the sensationalized appeal of exposé. Such video previews are built on the clickbait-style visual juxtaposition of the Western rappers with the word ‘original’ projected on their pictures to *плагиат* (plagiarism) placed next to the faces of the artists from the Black Star label and particularly often of Timati. For example, the YouTube channel Tyler, one of the most vigorous revelators of Timati’s and Black Star’s unoriginality, has dedicated five videos to the topic tellingly titled ‘Plagiarism you did not know about,’ ‘Again plagiarism,’ ‘Plagiarism even here,’ ‘Stupid plagiarism.’²⁸³ ‘Timati again stole everything,’²⁸⁴ argues the rap channel Punchline, calling Timati ‘the main thief of Russian pop music.’²⁸⁵

While in Western scholarly work on Russian hip-hop, it is the discourse of hip-hop as music of resistance, inflected by Cold War interpretative lens, that overdetermines the readings of Timati, in Russian hip-hop authenticity rhetoric, his performances of patriotism are read as adding one more aspect to his image of chronic inauthenticity. Accusations of imitation, plagiarism, copying, and even theft from US hip-hop are essential in delegitimizing Timati as a ‘real’ rapper within these domestic discourses.²⁸⁶ In this section, building on the anthropology of fakes, I examine the constructions of Timati’s inauthenticity in Russian hip-hop video commentary and music criticism, delegitimizing his hip-hop through practices of exposure and discourses of theft, mimicking, and plagiarism. I locate these processes in the larger context of the search for authenticity within Russian hip-hop. My central question is, what exactly is performed by exposing the alleged plagiarism of Timati? What is the relationship between the rhetoric of Timati’s copying, mimicking, and stealing from US hip-hop and Russian discourses of hip-hop authenticity?

Debates about hip-hop authenticity are, in fact, global, haunting regional articulations of the genre vis-à-vis the US-American norm, which is itself invested in an attachment to authenticity and originalism, casting non-US hip-hop varieties as ‘fakes’ through the language of imitation and cultural appropriation. Anthropology of fakes (Copeman 2019; Lempert 2014; Pang 2008; Reyes 2017) provides a helpful resource to examine discourses of authenticity, copying, and imitation, animating the discussions on plagiarism within Russian hip-hop commentary:

It is perhaps commonplace to view “fake” as the opposite of “real,” and “real” as a matter of “authenticity.” A productive line of scholarship centers not on authenticity as an inherent quality but on “authentication” as the outcome of social processes through which something gets read as genuine or real [...] These studies challenge simple assumptions that “fake” is the inverse of “real” or the absence of value. For even if “fake” is equated with “inauthentic,” such inauthenticity must also be authenticated (e.g., as a “real fake”) for it to be regarded and valued as such. The authentication and valuation of the real relies on the authentication and valuation of the fake. (Reyes 2017:5103)

²⁸³ [youtube.com/channel/UCatB5EOW3GZBjiGnbz-TgQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCatB5EOW3GZBjiGnbz-TgQ)

²⁸⁴ [youtube.com/watch?v=_ahz4_eaJNo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ahz4_eaJNo)

²⁸⁵ [youtube.com/watch?v=p_e2P9WPqFM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_e2P9WPqFM)

²⁸⁶ See for example exposure articles listing cases of Timati’s ‘stealing’ on specialized resources about rap vsrap.ru/vse-sluchai-plagiata-ot-timati/ and the-flow.ru/features/timati-i-plagiat

The quote positions authenticity not as a quality of objects but as an outcome of the social practice of authentication. The very practice of framing something as authentic establishes authenticity, and ‘things only become fake when they are metapragmatically formulated as such and when those formulations are taken up and circulate across events and social domains’ (Reyes 2017:5102). These insights help me shift the analysis away from conceiving authenticity as an ontological property of objects or cultural forms, such as hip-hop, to the practices of authentication and labor of discernment of the alleged ‘fakes.’

Imitation seems to involve the comparison of two or more object signs (e.g., “original” and “copy”) between which some “differential” is felt to exist (e.g., the incongruity), perhaps because the thing imitated seems poorly executed or awfully good or because there is something dissonant or uncanny about the scene [...] To be sure, the most immediate evidence of imitation’s significance comes from what people say about it, such as moralizing discourses on copies, copying, and copiers, and on the many cultural “sincerities” and “authenticities” and “realisms” that inform mimetic practice. This metalanguage of mimesis is but a congeries of conventionalized, publicly available resources for reflexivity; these bits of language can cast behavior as mimetic and give it value. (Lempert 2014:381–90)

The language of imitation performs a valuation of behavior or object, and it is a morally loaded discourse. As Lempert argues above, calling something a ‘copy’ is a moralizing act that seeks to delegitimize the imitator. The authenticating labor performed by Russian hip-hop fans and music critics who evaluate and stigmatize Timati’s hip-hop as ‘fake hip-hop’ via accusations of theft involves a compelling and binary visual grammar: a side-by-side juxtaposition of videos, demonstrating visual imitation, stolen melodies, or beats. The rhetoric of Timati’s plagiarism and Timati as a chronic plagiarist, a main thief of Russian hip-hop, circulates across domains, entering subcultural commentary, expert discourse, and oppositional Russian media. Through compelling audio-visual comparisons to the ‘real thing,’ exemplified by the tracks and videos of US hip-hop artists that have been ‘stolen,’ Timati’s ‘fake hip-hop’ is exposed as an inauthentic, unoriginal, and immoral imitation. The labor of discerning and exposing fakes reinstates the primacy of the original: excavating the possibilities of imitation within US hip-hop is rarely a matter of concern for Russian hip-hop commentary. Reyes suggests: ‘whereas the real is often seen as being itself, the fake is often seen as failing to resemble (i.e., stand in iconic relation to) what it aspires to be’ (Reyes 2017:5103). Within the metalanguages of hip-hop imitation circulating on Russian hip-hop media and beyond, Timati’s hip-hop tries too hard to resemble the original. In contrast, US hip-hop does not require authentication, as it is merely being itself.

Exposing fakes can build on interlinked logics of connoisseurship, entertainment, and nationalism (Copeman 2019:10). Those who expose the fakery participate in the acts of discernment facilitated by the techniques of vision (Copeman 2019:11). Discernment of Timati’s hip-hop plagiarism relies both on techniques of sight and hearing: for not only visual aesthetics of videos but melodies and beats can be ‘stolen.’ To expose someone’s hip-hop as imitation requires double expertise: knowledge of both US hip-hop trends and Russian ones, including the labor of spotting and comparing the imitated

original to the imitating fake. Such a deep understanding of the genre serves as a mark of distinction and connoisseurship, a sign of cultural capital, charged with a moral mission to do good to the genre by detecting the hip-hop that is read as counterfeit. At the same time, spotting 'fake' hip-hop can be easier when the one spotted already has a career of imitation, a reputation of peculiar propensity towards mimicry, and stealing.

Although Russian hip-hop fans frame Timati's hip-hop as an inauthentic and easy-to-spot imitation of US rappers, he enjoys tremendous mainstream popularity among broader audiences. Distinguishing 'real' hip-hop from 'fake' hip-hop metonymically renders Timati's audiences gullible: they are seen as consuming 'fake' hip-hop with regurgitated beats and melodies without being aware that the cultural goods they enjoy may be counterfeits. These audiences, therefore, remain dupes, allowing Russian hip-hop commentary to do the boundary work between separating the genre from the mainstream to which Timati's music is assigned.

Having examined the discourses of theft and plagiarism in the Russian hip-hop video commentary, I now turn to the framings of Timati's inauthenticity in Russian musical journalism and cultural criticism. A comparison of pre-2015 and post-2015 commentary supports my contention that within domestic criticism, the discourse of Timati's chronic hip-hop inauthenticity remained a constant, where Timati's patriotic turn added only one additional facet to this inauthenticity. For example, in a 2013 article, music critic Denis Boyarinov describes Timati as 'one of the most hated characters in Russian hip-hop,' an artist who sincerely thinks of himself as 'Russian Kanye West and Jay-Z together' (*русским Канье Уэстом и Джей-Зи в одном лице*).²⁸⁷ Boyarinov explains the reasons for this hostility in terms of Timati's overzealous mimicry of US hip-hop, characterized by excess:

Timati's main problem is that he has no taste and no sense of proportion, so his strenuous imitation (*устовое подражание*) of American success stories, his automatic copying of American clothing and music styles very often transforms "Russian Jay-Z" into a grotesque parody. During his long time in Russian rap, ZOZH²⁸⁸ adept Timati transformed himself from a skinny music fan into a clone of a Latin American convict (*клон латиноамериканского ээка*). Still, he never learned how to write lyrics.

In Boyarinov's quote, Timati's alleged lack of taste and measure results in excessive mimicry. Too much mimicry, imitating US hip-hop too zealously, renders some Russian hip-hop artists like Timati 'fake.' His unskillful mimicry is scorned as automatic, mechanical copying of American models, a bad parody of American rap, resonating with criticisms of literalism in translation as uncreative, mechanic transposition. Cloning is another mechanistic metaphor for unoriginal copying, easy to spot and expose as a fake. Boyarinov mocks Timati for his attempts to pose as a role model for Russian youth and

²⁸⁷ colta.ru/articles/music_modern/1203-uchitel-truda

²⁸⁸ ZOZH is a transliteration from Russian ЗОЖ standing for 'healthy lifestyle'. Here used derogatorily to interpret Timati's refusal of smoking, drugs and alcohol as an opportunistic patriotic move to please the authorities. However, in his interviews Timati claims that he stopped drinking much earlier for personal reasons.

calls his 2013 album *13* an example of ‘pedagogical rap’ rendering Timati ‘local Karnegi’ who speaks like a ‘Soviet school teacher’ (*в манере учителя труда из советской школы*). The work that tropes like ‘local Karnegi’ and ‘Russian Jay-Z’ perform indicates that Timati’s attempts to borrow the convincing tone of US pioneers of persuasion (hip-hop or otherwise) fail to resemble and stay on the level of a ‘Soviet school teacher.’ The post-Soviet liberal chronotopes of Soviet backwardness make Timati’s pedagogical rap project an unlikely model to be emulated by Russian youth.

The 2017 article by music critic Alexander Velikanov, symptomatically titled *Plagiarism or importozameshenie? Why does Timati copy American ideas?* tracks the instances of plagiarism in Timati’s cultural productions with a particular focus on *Utyosov*. This article illustrates that widely shared sentiments about Timati’s chronic hip-hop inauthenticity have not changed after the emergence of the Teymuraz figure and the 2015 patriotic turn.²⁸⁹ The article operates through the logic of moralizing exposure, referring to Timati as *октябренок русского рэпа* (Little Octobrist of Russian rap), a person who made a *воспроизводство популярных образчиков американского рэпа своей творческой стратегией* (reproduction of popular examples of American rap one’s artistic strategy) and backing this up through consecutive pairing of Timati’s videos with plagiarized ‘originals’:

One could say that by shamelessly translating hits into Russian, Timati is acting in line with a long domestic tradition. The Soviet VIA bands, in good faith, Russified The Beatles’ songs to bring genuinely beloved music to all the corners of the country. Russian rock began with diligent copying of English and American bands. Boris Grebenshchikov and Mike Naumenko translated songs by Bob Dylan and Marc Bolan and sang them as their own (*исполняли их как свои*). And the song “Baron von der Pschick” was written on the melody of the Yiddish hit song “Bay Mir Bistu Shein.” Except it was during the Iron Curtain and before the USSR joined the World Copyright Convention. The strangest thing is that Timati, acting as if from behind the Iron Curtain, doesn’t want to live in isolation - he goes to New York and takes selfies with American rappers. He clearly wouldn’t mind having equal interactions with Jay Z, Kanye West, and Nine Inch Nails leader Trent Reznor. Does it not occur to him that in the age of global transparency, it is impossible to conceal how he and his Black Star label do business out of reproducing other people’s ideas (*делают бизнес на репродуцировании чужих идей*)? Or does he expect to buy his international reputation with the proceeds from the sale of goods whose logo has been borrowed (*у которых позаимствован даже логотип*)?

The author positions Timati as a ‘shameless translator’ who follows the established ‘domestic tradition’ of Russifying and adapting foreign cultural forms, just like Soviet rock musicians translating the Beatles’ songs. Velikanov frames this propensity towards imitation as a quasi-national trait, reluctantly justifying it by the isolation of the USSR from the Western world manifested in its late signing of the international copyright convention only in 1973. Copyright convention figures here as a sign of belonging to civilized humanity. Timati is chronotopically positioned in line with liberal imaginaries of *homo soveticus* (Sharafutdinova 2019), an anachronism, a person still stuck in the past, struggling to accomplish a Sztompkian civilizational transition (Buchowski 2006). Timati’s figure is presented as lacking civilized competence by disrespecting the

²⁸⁹ colta.ru/articles/music_modern/13667-baron-fon-der-pshik

copyright regime and sanctity of individual authorship through his overzealous adaptations of US hip-hop bordering theft.

The article reproduces the primacy of US hip-hop and US cultural industries by explaining Timati's failure to be original through chronotopes of Soviet backwardness. This framing is intriguing and counterintuitive: as I argued earlier, Timati, like no other artist, embodies the logic of post-Soviet capitalism inspired by US models conceived as both modern and foreign. Velikanov's article links commerce, (in)authenticity, and (im)morality. Timati's business model is immoral because it is not original, as it is built on the appropriation of the ideas of others. Even his reputation is claimed to be bought with the revenues received from such immoral commercialism. Velikanov concludes that because of this plagiarism, people who are 'really involved in hip-hop' don't consider Timati a rapper despite his 'futile attempts to appear as Russian Kanye West.' Timati's hip-hop inauthenticity seems firmly tethered to the imaginaries of market and commerce and the pursuit of originality.

Famous on YouTube, music channel Skillz attempts to offer a more nuanced interpretative scheme to detect hip-hop plagiarism and plagiarists: making distinctions between sampling, citation, and biting within hip-hop and urging viewers to separate the first two from the latter.²⁹⁰ The main difference is that in sampling and citation, something new is created, while biting takes away something from others. Skillz intends to destabilize the negative framing of sampling by acknowledging it as a foundational hip-hop technology and introducing 'influence' as a fourth category, further blurring the borders between biting, citation, and sampling. Despite this intention, Skillz nevertheless reproduces modernist fascination with newness and originality, mapped on contemporary cultural and geopolitical hierarchies of value: US rappers are praised for their uniqueness in skillfully transforming samples and quotes into something new and original, while Timati (and Russian hip-hop taken more broadly) uncreatively reproduces and bites US hip-hop, locked into the identity of an inferior imitator. That, however, is at the heart of the contradictions of hip-hop as a genre both inherently post-modern in its techniques of sampling and citation, its valorization of the locality and blurring of the boundaries between art and everyday life, and yet committed to modernist narratives of racial and national identity and the cult of originality, authenticity, and authorship (Kiselyov and Hanova 2020:238).

Tellingly, another imitation featured in Skillz's video as an illustrative example of inferior copying is the Chinese company Xiaomi which 'steals not the design from Apple, but a feeling of having an iPhone.' This implicit mapping in the video tethers geography to essential practices and traits. Much like in Larry Wolff's famous book *Inventing Eastern Europe* (Wolff 1994), the propensity to imitation read as an essentialized trait increases the further East one travels and attaches only to the bodies of some Russian rappers, not others. In a rich 2008 study, Pang highlights how China is perceived as a

²⁹⁰ [youtube.com/watch?v=17Kl_OaKXeo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17Kl_OaKXeo)

'pirate nation,' 'chief threat to the knowledge economy; and China is backwards because China makes copies,' backed by the assumption that 'copying is culturally inferior' (Pang 2008:120). Likewise, the presumption of copying as culturally backward is involved in tropes of 'cheap copies' through which Timati's and Black Star's cultural productions are often narrated. In the post tellingly titled 'What is bad music and where does it come from?', Telegram channel PRNRP describes the mechanism undergirding the work of Black Star label as 'selling cheap copies of Western pop music to people who have not heard the original.'²⁹¹ In Skillz's video, the tethering of Timati's hip-hop to the imaginaries of Asian imitation performs important delegitimizing work. The work of spotting 'fake' hip-hop also identifies some rappers as more prone to imitation than others, reproducing hierarchies of authenticity between US hip-hop and Russian hip-hop, but also *within* the latter. For Skillz, Timati is an ultimate biter who steals sound bites from Kanye West and beardedness from Drake, while *назвать Канье плагиатором язык не повернется* (You can't call Kanye West a plagiarist).

Similarly, in a round table gathering experts to discuss the creative genius of Kanye West and his marketing instinct, music critic Gorbachev makes an explicit comparison between the US rapper and Timati as his Russian incarnation:

Timati stole seven tracks from Kanye. The man simply steals music. It would be interesting to think of Timati as a Russian Kanye West (*Человек просто крадет музыку. Было бы любопытно подумать о Тимати как о русском Канье Уэсте*). One is for Trump; this one is for Putin. One has sneakers; the other has burgers and Tatum Verde. If he was a genius, that would be great! Unfortunately, Timati isn't a genius. Let's imagine that Timati was a musician on Kanye's level and was friends with Ramzan Kadyrov. That would be an extremely interesting cultural situation. Unfortunately, we have a simpler situation.²⁹²

Although both rappers engage in hip-hop entrepreneurialism, actively market products, collaborate with brands, and deploy patriotic rhetoric, Kanye West's collaborations with Adidas are positioned as a representation of artistic genius, while Timati is described within Russian hip-hop criticism as an embodiment of vulgar commercialism. Timati's level is defined as inherently lower, and the Russian cultural scene is much simpler: Timati fails to resemble Kanye, no matter how hard he tries to imitate him.

However, unlike many other critics, Rondaryov has provocatively argued that the trouble with authenticity haunts the entire genre of Russian hip-hop from the moment of its emergence. It leads to the endless search for or, if needed, the invention of the 'Russian ghetto,' emerging in the post-Soviet sublime of panel bloc houses and songs of dirty *подъезды*. Rondaryov reads this as leading to paradoxical hip-hop posturing where privileged kids invent martyrdom for themselves.²⁹³ In this regard, Timati's early interviews provide an unorthodox commentary on Russian hip-hop authenticities. For instance, in an interview from 2006, Timati discusses the image of the rap band Kasta,

²⁹¹ t.me/trap_critics/429

²⁹² teletype.in/@psychodaily/SiNtEZw4N

²⁹³ youtube.com/watch?v=FWVDDxKTRKE

which has a firm reputation for hip-hop authenticity and street credibility in Russian rap circles:

As for “Kasta” – well, no one really knows who the parents of these guys in Rostov are. No one knows, but I do. The most important one, Vladi, has a father who is a psychologist and runs a huge psychological center. And Vladi always had a lot of money. The legend about it being some kids from the neighborhood is just a legend. Sheen was also the child of wealthy parents. The only guy from the real world is Hamil.²⁹⁴

Elsewhere Timati constructs his peculiar ethos of hip-hop authenticity by emphasizing that his music has more truth than most Russian hip-hop because he does not curate an image of subcultural authenticity, instead being explicitly commercial and openly mainstream, appealing to broad audiences (*В моих альбомах правды гораздо больше, чем в 80 процентах всего русского хип-хопа. Наши рэперы читают о том, чего не знают: про какие-то разборки, пистолеты, наркотики*).²⁹⁵ In this interview, Timati interprets the discourse of Russian hip-hop authenticity as a constraining and limiting device. Rondaryov also aptly highlights how the elevation of Oxford-educated trilingual Oxxxymiron to the status of a suffering poet builds on the cultural imaginary of a poet as a privileged figure who articulates dissent in the liberal imagination of post-Soviet intelligentsia. For Rondaryov, Oxxxymiron’s rap moves away from the importance of locality and collectivity for the genre.²⁹⁶ Rondaryov’s position is somewhat atypical compared to other scholars, music critics, and cultural commentators prone to constructing authenticity hierarchies within Russian hip-hop. Film critic Maria Kuvshinova exposes the dependency on ‘the original’ on both sides of seemingly opposing spectrums of Russian hip-hop, pitched against each other within cultural criticism. She is just as unapologetic when evaluating more venerated ‘oppositional’ forms of Russian hip-hop, such as battle rap or figures like Oxxxymiron. As she suggests:

Just as 150 years ago, in the Russian language, but through an imported form, the Slavophiles conduct their endless battle with the Westernizers [...] Just as in history, the Slavophile looks doomed in advance: in a couple of years, Oxxxymiron will turn into the new Mandelstam, and Dunya will remain the eternal loser from the show *Let’s Get Married* [...] Young Russian citizen lives on the outskirts of the global village and shows ‘fuck you’ from the window of his panel blockhouse to the only tower he sees; this tower today is located on the other side of the ocean.²⁹⁷

Thus, the US cultural industries are still at the center, whose performative rejection only reproduces its dominance. In his 2010 interview, Timati articulated this problem of the dependency of Russian rap on the US-American original.²⁹⁸ Timati reinstates the primacy of US rap as a ‘source of hip-hop’ but also tries to challenge the pejorative

²⁹⁴ newsmuz.com/news_3_2338.htm

²⁹⁵ gq.ru/heroes/timati-o-kadyrove-gomofobii-i-rep-battlah

²⁹⁶ the-village.ru/city/2017/296122-oxybog

²⁹⁷ colta.ru/articles/society/10144-pesni-protesta

²⁹⁸ rus.postimees.ee/349932/timati-amerika-stala-dlya-menya-shkoloy-zhizni

discourse of imitation, which blames Russian rap for copying US forms (*слизан*). This is performed by evoking the notion of cultural adaptation:

Interviewer: How do you relate to public accusations of the Russian rap industry copying the rap industry in the USA?

Timati: You have to understand one thing: hip-hop was born in America; therefore, all foreigners making this music will, by default, resemble the trendsetters. Not so much to resemble but will be associated with them. Secondly, I strongly disagree with the term copying (*не согласен с термином «слизан»*). Have you heard German, Chinese, or French rap? This is an entirely different music segment adapted to hip-hop-making countries' cultures and traditions today. Hip-hop in Russia has also produced somewhat of a revolution. Slowly but steadily, we gain our foothold on the world market. Conscious Russian hip-hop gained a massive audience in the country and abroad in just a few years. Mainstream hip-hop, the kind of music I make, has made it even in the international arena and competes soundly with trendsetters. We brought our own flavor to this music, which greatly contributes to hip-hop.

I have previously shown that Timati was acutely aware of his hip-hop inauthenticity, and the attempts to manage this stigma marked his entire career. In trying to reduce the mimetic practice, Timati pursued the search for regional originals through racial translation. Timati's paradoxical liminality is also reflected in the fact that despite firmly disassociating himself from Russian pop music and *Estrada* in 2012, by 2017, his oeuvre ended up being framed by many commentators as 'Estrada rap' or pop-rap,' titles that have even less symbolic prestige than commercial 'party rap.' Winning Muz TV's 2016 award as an artist of the year solidified Timati's accomplished entry into the mainstream. Why do other Russian rappers who earn millions, such as Busta, and collaborate with brands such as Oxxxymiron, rarely attract similar to Timati's negative attention within hip-hop circles and in broader cultural criticism and are not read as sold-outs even if they also earn fortunes in the business of hip-hop? Why do some figures in Russian hip-hop get elevated as more authentic while others, like Timati, straddle with inauthenticity throughout their careers?

Immoral commerce: race, markets, and authenticity in Russian hip-hop

In this section, I explore how Russian hip-hop discourses of Timati's chronic inauthenticity are connected to the Soviet and post-Soviet imaginaries of markets and race. I first trace the historical links between commerce and non-Russian minorities, explaining how race has been tethered to trade, markets, and immorality. As I will show below, this theme has found multiple resonances in the history of the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Russia. After having traced the connection between race and tropes of illegitimate commercialism such as theft, mafia, corruption, and criminality, I examine how these discourses are woven into ludic and critical commentary on Timati's cultural productions, which impact the readings of his hip-hop

as overly commercial, inauthentic and corrupt. I argue that the genre of Russian hip-hop commentary and music criticism on Timati performs a peculiar work that places him both outside the genre and outside the Russian nation, revealing an ethnonational bias that underpins the discourses of Russian hip-hop authenticity.

As Lemon has put it, 'commerce long had been pictured as the province of non-Russians, Gypsies, and Jews especially' (Lemon 2000:65). In his pioneering study of the Russian empire as a multi-ethnic polity, Andreas Kappeler has stressed the active participation of non-Russian ethnic groups in regional domestic and foreign trade networks in the 18th-19th century: Jewish merchants were active in Western borderlands while Armenians, Tatars, and Greeks in the southern and eastern territories (Kappeler 2014:128). Jewish traders in Russian folklore 'served as the antithesis of Russian spirituality and communality' (Goluboff 2012:129). Sahadeo, in his study on the 19th and early 20th-century Russian colonial society in Tashkent, traces how after the 1905 revolution, local Russian anxieties over modernity, empire, industrialization, and capitalist expansion manifested in the representations of Central Asians as dominating local economies. Sahadeo illustrates how 'representations of business as controlled by non-Russians were ubiquitous in the post-1905 local press', often portraying 'capitalists as Central Asians, or, perhaps, as Jewish' (Sahadeo 2007b:155). Discourses of Russians' 'economic enslavements' by 'Sarts, Bukharan Jews and Tatars', circulating in the local press, linked 'pursuit of profit to immorality' where 'Central Asian elites' hunger for money led them to promote "depravity"' (Sahadeo 2007b:154-55).

The forging of the connection between commerce and non-Russians has also been reinvigorated in Soviet times. Semi-legal and small-scale trade was one of the central late Soviet institutions where imaginaries of race and markets converged. As Lemon suggests, 'it had been commonplace to describe Soviet underground trade networks as "run by" Jews, Armenians, or other non-Russians' (Lemon 2000:68). According to Goluboff, 'although the selling of products outside the state's redistributive economy was outlawed, Soviet citizens got the goods they needed from the black market where Caucasian traders played a fundamental role.' (Goluboff 2012:123). Draitser locates the emergence of the Soviet imagery of criminal Caucasian affluence to the relaxation of taboos on small-scale individual fruit and flower trade after Joseph Stalin's death, leading to 'streets and markets of Russian towns [...] to be filled with oranges, flowers, and other southern produce, sold by a rather distinctive-looking Transcaucasians, usually dark-haired men with mustaches [...] highly visible and easily identified' (Draitser 1998:37). Similarly, sociologist Vladimir Il'in distinguishes both *kolkhoz* markets and the Soviet army as two main sites where Soviet and post-Soviet socio-racial stratification was shaped. The mild climate of the republics of the Soviet East was conducive to the growth of fruits and vegetables. Southern traders became easily recognizable 'outsiders' in big cities, on whom resentment against higher prices and hostility towards commerce was projected (Il'in 1994:195).

This visibility of non-Russians on the streets of big cities is reflected in the Soviet joke lore where previous jokes about Georgians were gradually replaced by Caucasians/persons of ‘Caucasian *natsional’nost*’ (Draitser 1998:37). Georgian economic uplift allowed by the trade provoked uneasy feelings among Russian counterparts, leading to the emergence of an image of Georgians and Caucasians as big money spenders, flaunting their wealth and exploiting innocent Russians. The former were imagined as ‘materialistic people – wheel dealers, crooks, bribe-takers, and bribe givers’ (Draitser 1998:39). Soviet anecdotes about Georgians are often built around the contrast between ‘presumed-to-be-prosperous southern foreigners’ flaunting their prosperity and success, ‘pilfering from the Russians’, whereas the latter were portrayed as victims: simple but exploited honest ethnic Russian alcoholic men (Smirnova 2017:217). Russell traces how many Chechens were pushed into these profitable trades, which provoked resentment among ethnic Russians who felt ripped off, which led to stereotyping Chechens as bandits and thieves (Russell 2005:104). These developments later led to the emergence of the imaginaries of Chechen, Caucasian, or ‘Southern’ mafias, infiltrating ‘Russian’ cities and reaping the fruits of capitalist transition. In the 1970s, during the Thaw, the discourse of economic exploitation of ethnic Russians by Caucasians, propelled by the market encounters, was instrumentalized by Russian nationalists and was reflected in the so-called Russian village prose with elements of xenophobia (Mitrokhin 2003:65).

In early post-Soviet Russia, ‘many Russians used race to account for the new market enemies,’ layering ‘economic discourses with moral statements linking race to nation to territory, painting impoverished Russians as inhabiting a vast country rich in natural resources, tapped by foreigners and the mafia’ (Lemon 2000:67). Suspicion towards commerce is rooted in the socialist notions of order and im(morality): in post-Soviet times citizens draw on these notions ‘to deal with present business practices and profits made by “foreigners” in Russia’ (Goluboff 2012:112).

The links between commerce as immorality and non-Russians found reflections in Soviet popular culture. Soviet anecdotes are described as permeated by the rhetoric that ‘allows for the reinterpretation of the social group as successful entrepreneurs into hedonistic hypersexual animals who seek to prey upon the misfortune of honest Russians. Party rhetoric valorized an ascetic lifestyle in the name of the higher cause (communism); as a result, groups that appeared rich or greedy were constructed negatively’ (Smirnova 2017:18). Moreover, these linkages connecting imaginaries of race, commerce, and immorality could also be reproduced to make a distinction *within* one group, as a study of racial discourses in the Jewish community in Moscow’s synagogue in the 1990s demonstrates: ‘Mountain and Russian Jews conflated class with race; they made value judgments equating the morality or immorality of money and commerce with the “natural” characteristics of both groups. These racializing narratives embody socialist and post-socialist notions of order, further elucidating how Russian citizens

draw on the Soviet past to deal with present business practices and profits made by "foreigners" in Russia' (Goluboff 2012:122).

Il'in links the production of racial slurs applied to non-Russian traders to everyday encounters in public spaces. In the context of fleeting interactions in urban life (market, street, public transport), the impossibility of ethnic differentiation is compensated through racial generalization, i.e., traders from distinct ethnic collectivities get grouped based on common phenotypical characteristics differentiating them from the majority Slavic population, into the category of generalized others, leading to the production of racializing slurs such as *чёрные* ('blacks') (Il'in 1994:192–94). This hypervisibility in public spaces via street trade and markets firmly tethered trade to non-Russians, resulting in that 'in the 1990s, Muscovites were asserting with confidence that goods circulated through foreign, "black" hands. It was these people who were visibly distinct at the newly multiplied street bazaars, with oranges and leather coats for sale' (Lemon 2000:67). Having introduced the post-Soviet imaginaries tying images of commerce and trade both to immorality and to race and non-Russians, I consider how these imaginaries might help account for how Timati's hip-hop is read as chronically inauthentic.

No celebrity figure could better embody this image of commerce and the ethos of commercial, mainstream hip-hop oriented to business success than Timati. Timati's ethnoracial ambiguity makes him a persistent target of misrecognition and ethnoracial slurs in Russia; he can be hailed interchangeably as Roma, Jewish, Caucasian, or as having African descent. This ethnoracial ambiguity helped him approximate US hip-hop racial authenticity and was exploited for creating the memetic figure of the Teymuraz. However, as Lemon argues, discourses of race in Russia as elsewhere not only concern skin color and phenotypic features but relate to the dialectics of visible and invisible, surface and interiority. Located in the body, they manifest in hidden traits, proclivities, and behavioral dispositions. These proclivities are conceived of as something lurking in the blood, waiting to be exposed or revealed:

Of Gypsies, it was said that "trading is in their blood," that "stealing horses is in their blood," that metal working is "in their blood," just as "talent," especially in music or dancing, was said to lie "in the blood," passed along through the generations. This Russian phrase, "in the blood," was not simply a metaphoric extension from a notion of ingrained habit; "national" practices were seen as innate (Lemon 2000:69).

Timati also adopts this rhetoric of inherited proclivities to music and commerce in describing his cultural productions and artistic trajectory. In his 2015 interview, Timati answers the question about the balance between art and business in his music by drawing on the Russian popular discourses of race:²⁹⁹

I'm originally a businessman (*коммерсант*). I've never concealed that; I'm a manager and producer, and I see everything from that angle, but the creativity is there too. When I started, I didn't do it for the money, but I wanted to be famous. Now it's all turned into a big business - my own company, clothing line,

²⁹⁹ daily.afisha.ru/archive/vozduh/music/glavnaya-problema-heyterov-oni-zarabatyvayut-menshe-chem-my/

organizing events, and other artists. It's a business structure that works daily. On top of that, I love to perform and make a good product that people admire and demand. I had always had an entrepreneurial streak in me. My father's side of the family is primarily diplomats and businessmen. (*Коммерческая жилка изначально была во мне — по отцовской линии у меня все в основном дипломаты и коммерсанты*). On my mother's side, they were musicians. I grew up with both, and then, when I went to live in the States at 13, I realized - after looking at American labels, at what Puff, Jay-Z did, after reading magazines, after studying a lot of programs that we didn't have - what and how I would like to do here in my country. The priority for me is not even what's going on with my solo career - I like how things are going, I have my audience, my listener that's growing with me - the priority for me is the company. To bring out as many young artists as possible, bring the clothing line to a proper quality level. In my case, the entrepreneurial streak (*коммерческая жилка*) probably takes precedence; I am more of a manager and a musician at the same time.

Predisposition to commerce is articulated here through the idiom *коммерческая жилка*, which, if translated literally to English, would mean 'business vein' or, more loosely, 'business runs in my blood.' The trope of predisposition towards both trade and music as transmitted by blood and running in the Jewish and Tatar ancestry reveals how racial discourses are articulated vernacularly in the Russian language, often adopted by the non-Russians. Notably, this proclivity towards music and commerce is flaunted by Timati as an expression of inner truth and authenticity; one should not hide it since it runs deep. He says he is 'originally' a businessman and has never tried to conceal it. If the propensity for music and business runs in the blood, it is only natural for it to find an expression. Immersive adolescent maturation in California and encounters with US hip-hop culture and industries activate what is already lurking deep inside. Timati's hip-hop figures as authentically commercial - committed to business growth, quality, and expansion. Later in the interview, when asked about the difference between Russian and US hip-hop, L'One describes US hip-hop as follows: 'There everything is tied to rhythm, dances, drums; this is in their genes.' Timati adds: 'But with us, melody prevails; it is emphasized in things played on TV and radio. It can't be changed; it is a national peculiarity' (*Это не переделать, это национальная особенность*). The slippage between the terminology of race and nation is especially apparent here. Afro-American proclivities to dancing and rhythm are tied to their genes, while Russian melodicism is a national-biological trait. The discursive connection between race, hip-hop, and commerce also finds reflection among Timati's critics. In what follows, I dwell on three cases exemplifying this discourse: a parody video on Timati by Satyr, a commentary by music critic Oleg Karmunin and a music review on Timati's 2016 album *Olimp* by Lyosha Gorbash.

In June 2019, popular YouTube Russian comedian Satyr specializing in YouTube and pop celebrities parody videos, released a parody on Timati and Black Star label called *Дорого (Expensive)*.³⁰⁰ As Lempert reminds us, parodies 'incite evaluation of the target imitated rather than the imitating self' (Lempert 2014:382). This hugely popular parody, nearing 8 million views, vividly crystallizes vernacular criticisms of Timati's hip-hop inauthenticity, weaving together imaginaries of the commercial quality of his hip-hop

³⁰⁰ [youtube.com/watch?v=XUH_uRoB5XY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUH_uRoB5XY)

and its illegitimacy. I explore below how this delegitimization of hip-hop commercialism ties to post-Soviet imaginaries of race.



Figure 71. Clean respectability of civilized Muscovites staged against dirty racialized business immorality of Timati. Screenshots from the video parody of Timati by Satyr. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=XUH_uRoB5XY

The parody starts with a short sketch of Timati's meeting with respectable business representatives styled as upper-class ethnic Russian Muscovites who want to offer him a deal for product placement in one of the future videos. Timati and his bodyguards appear identical in visually corresponding aesthetics: black beards, black clothing, golden jewelry, and golden teeth. These traits index non-Russian racialized masculinities and highlight these men's clannish solidarity with each other. Clean civilized, Europeanized business upper-class masculinities are staged against honor-driven, respect-oriented 'dirty' and criminal non-Russian entrepreneurship of Timati and his clique, merging racialized imaginaries of honor and Caucasian masculinity with images of illegitimate commerce. Respectable Muscovite businessmen are individualized through sartorial styles, and one even has a dark beard, illustrating how some Russianness may approximate what reads vernacularly as a 'non-Russian' appearance. At the same time, 'dirty' 'Eastern' businessmen are staged as a group, as one undifferentiated collective whose members lack individuality and sophistication.

The video mocks excessive product placements in Timati's videos by presenting it as a ubiquitous propensity of Timati as a particular type of person prone to commerce, which is almost beyond his control. When Muscovite businessmen offer to do a commercial integration, for a second, the rapper gets offended yet immediately starts promoting a credit card as they speak. The print on Timati's hoodie says *Zashkvar Wear*, mocking his clothing brand Black Star Wear. *Zashkvar* is a Russian word often used to characterize Timati's music and persona as an embodiment of chronic hip-hop inauthenticity, standing for something ridiculous and shameful. Timati's commercialism is presented in the parody as his nature, resonating with how the rapper talks about his inborn proclivity to commerce in the interview I addressed above. This ludic video, chastising Timati's capitalist realism and uber-commercialization of Black Star label music, also plays with the symbols of extreme wealth, oriental opulence, and despotism, referencing both Timati and metonymically Kadyrov, but also Caucasian men as a whole.

As I described earlier, Timati’s friendship with Kadyrov and frequent visits to Chechnya with *lezginka* performances routinely provoke angry reactions among the general Russian public and add to the already over-abundant xenophobic vitriol targeted against the rapper. Part of it concerns the reputation of Kadyrov, associated with human rights abuses, despised by Russian liberal opposition who frame him as a medieval barbarian. European media outlets such as the German-French channel ARTE employ animalistic metaphors, calling Kadyrov a ‘dragon of Putin.’ The criticism of Kadyrov’s policies often relies on highly Orientalizing and racist tropes. For example, the rhetoric *Хватит кормить Кавказ* (Stop feeding the Caucasus) espoused by liberal opposition politicians feeds into the perception of North Caucasian republics whose budget is financed by the federal center as leeches. Their presentation as leeches sucking out resources from the rest of the country easily maps onto racialized portrayals of wealthy non-Russian businessmen and ethnic mafia who extract resources and exploit naive, suffering ethnic Russian folk. Timati played with these signifiers early on by using the name ‘Black mafia’ to denote the ‘gang’ of artists on the Black star label, thereby uniting imaginaries of cool foreign hip-hop blackness from the USA and fuzzy post-Soviet ‘blackness,’ linking discourses of ethnic criminality, corruption, and commerce.



Figure 72. Timati’s immoral commercialism linked to the imagery of Oriental despotism and slavery. Exploited artists from Black Star label presented as sitting on their knees, feeding Timati or cooling him off with fans. Screenshots from the Satyr’s video parody on Timati. Source: youtube.com/watch?v=XUH_uRoB5XY

In other scenes of the video parody, Timati is presented sitting on a golden throne like a wealth-obsessed padishah. Black Star label artists are positioned as docile slaves, either sitting on their knees by his throne, cooling him down with giant fans and feeding him grapes, images that build on recognizable orientalist portrayals of Eastern

opulence and corrupt excess. The exploitation of Black Star label artists featured vividly in the video hints at several 2019 media scandals when two leading Black Star celebrities, Egor Kreed and L’One, left the label. Commercial exploitation of the artists on Black Star is framed through the racialized trope of slavery in other media, too, with sensationalist headlines like *Рабы Тимати: сколько стоит освободиться из Black star?* (Timati’s slaves: How much does it cost to break free from Black Star?).³⁰¹ In his video, Satyr also

³⁰¹ youtube.com/watch?v=AeeHzKDmcPE

builds on BDSM iconography to get his point across: Black Star label artists are presented on a leash, with a ball gag, whipped.

Lyricaly this parodic rap also hints at the ultimate corruptness of Timati's and Black Star's hip-hop, reiterating the tropes of human trafficking, theft, immoral commercialism, excessive wealth, and bazaar-style haggling, linking together the imaginaries of hip-hop, race, and markets:

Я первый человек в этой стране,
Который сделал деньги на игре.
И продолжаю делать — заносите денег.
И мы набьем название бренда у Скруджи на е.ле.

Снова мне твердят, что мой бит украден,
Я скажу: «Не вор, если не поймали!»
Свой респект мы честно покупали,
А на сдачу взяли — людей взяли.

Я в Black Star wear, ем Black Star burger
Рядом Мот и Дони, Black Star-слуги.
Назима и Terry — Black Star-с.ки,
Шучу, не с.ки, Black Star-шутки.

Вряд ли сможешь, парень, ты повторить успех,
Снова зажигаем мы, а горит у всех.
Это черная звезда, посмотри наверх,
Плачут небеса — дождь из монет.

Это бизнес, мэн, и я — бизнесмен,
Ем бургер в перчатках из золота.
За понты Тимати заплати Тимати,
Продаю хип-хоп. Дорого!

Ну, как тебе, братан, мой товар?
Выбирай любого, по цене сойдемся.
Это я еще не всех тебе показал,
Есть еще Натан, продам со скидосом!

I'm the first person in this country,
Who made money from the game.
And I'm still making it; bring in the money.
And we'll tattoo the brand name on Scrooge's face.

Again, they tell me my beat is stolen,
I'll say, Not a thief if you ain't caught!
We honestly paid for our respect,
And bought some people with what was left.

I'm in Black Star wear, eating a Black Star burger,
Next to me, Mot and Doni, Black Star servants.
Nazima and Terry, Black Star bitches
Just joking, not bitches, Black Star jokes.

I don't think you can repeat our success,
We are rocking again; everyone's on fire.
It's a black star, look up,
Heaven weeps - it's raining coins.

It's a business, man, and I'm a businessman,
Eating a burger in golden gloves.
Pay for Timati's swag to Timati,
I'm selling hip-hop. Expensive!

How do you like my goods, brother?
Pick anyone, and we will agree on the price.
I have not shown you everyone yet,
There is also Natan; I will give you a discount!

The vocabulary of illegitimate commerce, which permeates the lyrics, is undergirded by the visuals, which connect the imaginaries of race, hip-hop, and markets. The lyrics portray Timati through familiar tropes of imitation and theft: stealing from US hip-hop beats and melodies. The line used by Satyr in the chorus, 'It's a business, man, and I'm a businessman,' referencing a famous line from Jay-Z's remix of Kanye West's *Diamonds from Sierra Leone*, emphasizes Timati's commercialism. 'Uniquely modern' figure of Jay-Z, running a 'global black empire' 'rooted in ideology and commerce' (Drake 2016:194), has greatly inspired Timati's hip-hop entrepreneurship. In Satyr's parody, Timati is portrayed as a capitalist oppressor: stealing the labor of his overexploited, inhumanly treated Black Star artists. Timati's commerce is read as immoral because his hip-hop entrepreneurship trades in what is cast as pure and not for sale (hip-hop as art). The song's hook: 'I am selling hip-hop, expensively,' targets the perceived over-commercialization of Timati's and Black Star hip-hop but links it to the imaginary of racialized immorality, sexualized and commercial exploitation, and excessive greedy

desire for profit. Timati's immoral entrepreneurialism and Orientalness are highlighted in stressing his propensity for Bazar-style haggling, presenting him as aspiring to push his goods no matter what (*Есть еще Натан, продам со скидосом!*). The ludic juxtaposition between selling hip-hop and selling and buying human beings (Black Star label artists) reinforces the image of corrupt, immoral trade in which Timati engages. At the same time, it supports the distinction between 'real' and 'fake' hip-hop: the former is not for sale, a form of high art, while the latter, exemplified by Timati and Black Star, is of the lower order of tarnished, dirty commerce that transforms art into commodities, music into a business. Such pairings overlook that other Russian hip-hop artists are also hip-hop entrepreneurs who earn money by selling their music and starring in commercials and movies, yet rarely attracting vitriol comparable to what Timati receives.

Timati's hip-hop is cast as impure, contaminated, business-like, and immoral through the ludic exposures of his alleged stealing and plagiarism. In contrast, those doing the labor of exposure, defending moral hip-hop (construed as art, uncontaminated by the market) reproduce both socialist discourses of (dis)order and (im)morality but also Soviet intelligentsia discourses (associations with both the state and commerce as contamination and vulgarity). Timati's hip-hop, especially after the patriotic turn in 2015, becomes doubly immoral, both too commercial and state-affiliated. It is essential to bear in mind the distinct Cold War ring to the (post)-Soviet discourses linking commerce to immorality. These discourses tethered commercialism not only to the bodies of non-Russians but also to the imaginaries of the capitalist West and especially the USA, framed as vulgarly commercial. American culture was cast as banal, mediocre, and superficial as opposed to the ideal of Soviet culturedness, reinforcing discourses of exceptionalism. The USA itself, in Soviet discourses, was perceived as a source of immoral commercialism but also 'uncultured commercialism.' When seen as vulgar copying of US rappers, Timati's rap can be read as reproducing the immoral idea of music as commerce instead of as high art. By disidentifying with Timati, who is perceived as trading in hip-hop through excessive engagement with business, a moral topography of Russian hip-hop artists is produced: distinguishing pure, authentic Russian hip-hop and immoral commercial hip-hop of Timati tarnished by contacts with the authorities.

Another example of music criticism that summarizes the artistic trajectory of Timati is authored by music critic Oleg Karmunin on his Telegram channel Russian Shuffle.³⁰² In the post, Timati's early hip-hop is described in terms of immoral commercialism:

The rapper Timati burst onto our *Estrada* with a boorish provocation (*хамской провокации*). The man, covered head to toe in rhinestones (*облепленный стразами*), walked around the poor country (*нищей стране*) and told us how he drank a thousand dollars champagne on Fridays. With the help of television and radio, he went into every home to tell one hundred and forty million people: that there was no place for suckers in his club (*в его клубе лохам не место*). The land of suckers remained silent (*Страна лохов*

³⁰² t.me/rushuffle/391

молчала). Everyone hated Timati. Sitting across from a hungry person, eating a hamburger, slurping juice, smacking loudly, and burping. That was the whole point of Timati's work until 2012, when the singer suddenly turned into a Caucasian and became a guardian of spiritual bonds (*превратился в кавказца и стал хранителем духовных скреп*).

Karmunin accuses Timati of flaunting his wealth in front of impoverished Russian people and is presented as a capitalist exploiter and oppressor of the suffering country. Timati's entrepreneurialism is described as gluttonous, smug, and corrupt excess, as an immoral feast during the plague. Burger in the quote is a multilayered signifier, metonymically standing on the one hand for US-America as a quintessentially American food and Timati's fast food chain Black Star Burger. Although Black Star Burger was launched in 2016, capitalizing on Timati's strategy of patriotic localization of US culture, in Karmunin's narrative, Timati is presented as gluttonously devouring burgers in front of suffering and hungry Russian people before 2012. The voracious, vulgar, and immoral consumption of burgers stands for flaunting luxury in Timati's cultural productions. In the commentary, Timati figures as an avatar of post-Soviet capitalism, and the responsibility for this transition is placed on the rapper, not on the country's leadership. Russian people, hungry and speechless, are figured as the ultimate subaltern, remaining unable to articulate their revolt against the immoral commerce of Timati. Karmunin deliberately writes Timati outside the Russian nation's borders, pitting him against the rest of the country as external to it. Timati's post-2012 transformation manifested in his project of racial translation and patriotic turn feature as only one additional dimension of the rapper's inherent hip-hop inauthenticity and immorality.

Russian hip-hop music criticism and fans persistently position Timati outside the borders of Russian hip-hop as a genre. One review of Timati's 2016 album *Olimp* by Lyosha Gorbash is particularly instructive in understanding what is at stake in the boundary work separating 'real' Russian rappers from 'fake' Russian rappers like Timati.³⁰³ While Gorbash acknowledges the mainstream success of rappers like Oxxxymiron and Busta, indexed by their invitations to popular Russian TV shows, Busta is still described as the hip-hop of the people (*Заслуженный народный рэпер Василий Вакуленко*). In contrast, Timati's music is seen as only imitating to belong to hip-hop, not deserving the title 'the music of the people.' Timati's conditional belonging to the genre of Russian hip-hop is signaled through a claim that only unaware Russian *babushkas* would think of Black Star music as hip-hop. The review, repeatedly evoking the figure of Timati, performs the boundary work to separate Russian hip-hop from Russian pop music. Whereas the rapper's previous albums are characterized in the review as 'adequate pop music, pretending to be rap,' *Olimp* is viscerally rejected as 'shameful' pop music. For Gorbash, the album is said to leave a 'bad aftertaste' composed of both 'successful pop-rap' and 'disgusting KVN-rap.' *Maza* is described as a panoply of hyperbolized clichés and stereotypes in comparison to which 2015 *Баклажан* is an art piece:

³⁰³ the-flow.ru/music/timati-olimp-review

Намеренный эпатаж, игра на “взорванных жопох”, подыгрывание нужной аудитории — всё понятно, механизм отлично работает. Но существует грань. За которой все эти вещи начинают казаться фарсом и отсутствием вкуса. За примером далеко ходить не нужно: песня про бороду — это круто. “GQ” — это круто. “Утёсов” и “Мага”, пусть и апеллируют к совсем разным аудиториям, — это в одинаковой степени ужасно. За пару дней до выхода “Олимпа” Тимати называл его “народным” альбомом, где каждый найдёт свою тему. Помимо песен Теймураза (тоже ведь “народные” истории), здесь есть ещё один персонаж, появляющийся от песни к песне: простой пацан “с района”, который идёт к успеху [...] Но за народным альбомом помимо локальных фишек и персонажей должен считываться культурный код. А его тут нет. Группе 25/17 и Басте удаётся зацепиться за очень русские настроения, которые отражают всю страну. Тимати лепит из этих элементов (пацаны из народа, их районы и “лады”) яркую оболочку, внутри которой нет почти ничего.

Intentional outrage, playing on “blown assholes,” pleasing the right audience - it’s understandable; the mechanism works perfectly. But there is a line. Beyond it, all these things begin to seem farcical and lacking in taste. You don’t have to go far to find examples: The song about the beard is cool. “GQ” is cool. “Utesov” and “Mara,” though appealing to very different audiences, are equally awful. A couple of days before the release of “Olimp,” Timati called it a “people’s” album, where everyone would find their theme. In addition to Teymuraz’s songs (also allegedly “people’s” stories), another character appears from song to song: a simple lad “from the neighborhood” trying to succeed [...] But behind a people’s album, besides local tricks and characters, one must read a cultural code. And it’s not here. The band 25/17 and Basta manage to catch on to very Russian sentiments that reflect the entire country. Timati molds these elements (lads who come from the people, their neighborhoods, and “Ladas”) into a bright shell, inside which there is almost nothing.³⁰⁴

Gorbash recognizes the ‘aesthetic populism’ trend that Timati utilizes by harnessing memetics, yet dismisses it as manipulative and vulgar, lacking in taste. Timati’s appeal to ‘the people’ is rejected as an empty, half-baked, and hastily fabricated façade behind which there is no actual content, no constituency he represents. Most important for my analysis is the intricate wordplay in the quote around the polysemous Russian term *народный* (people’s/national/ethnonational). It is important to note that the term *народный* not only figured in Timati’s self-descriptions of both the album and the video *Баклажан*, but it is also used in the lyrics of Black Star artists such as L’One (*GTO* lyrics - *Я для народа, ведь я из народа!*) and descriptions of MC Doni as a musician coming from ‘the people’ (*музыкант из народа*).³⁰⁵ Black Star’s definitions of their musical products and musicians as *народный*, therefore, have inclusive connotations of Russia as a multi-national and multi-confessional country: it is ethnically non-Russian musicians such as MC Doni and L’One who metonymically stand for ‘the people.’ In the quote, Gorbash rejects Timati’s self-definition of the *Olimp* as truly *народный* album, arguing that what is missing in Timati’s self-declared appeal to ‘the people’ is a lack of ‘cultural code.’ This cultural code, in turn, is seen as abundant in the works of such Russian rappers as 25/17 and Busta: both are described as able to catch *очень русские настроения, которые отражают всю страну* (very Russian sentiments able to reflect the entire country). Earlier, I have shown how the practices of authentication and

³⁰⁴ I choose to quote both Russian original and my translation for the sake of the ensuing analysis of the quote.

³⁰⁵ [youtube.com/watch?v=NBw5Yth_Wso](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBw5Yth_Wso)

discernment between ‘real’ and ‘fake’ hip-hop may be underpinned by the logic of connoisseurship. This quote demonstrates that discernment of ‘fake’ hip-hop is connected not only to the logic of subcultural connoisseurship but also to the ideas of who exactly may constitute the Russian nation and the Russian people whose grievances Russian hip-hop supposedly reflects. Polysemy of the Russian term *народный*, which can stand both for nation/people and ethnic group/*natsional’nost’* and comparative pairing with Russian rappers such as 25/17, known for expressing Russian ethnonationalist sentiment in their lyrics and Busta, whose rap is claimed to ‘reflect the entire country’ allow suggesting that it is narrow ethnonational meaning of *народный* that is used in the Gorbash’s review. Timati’s hip-hop in such a reading is, therefore, implicitly placed outside the genre and the Russian nation, defined in the exclusionary ethnonational terms, whose ‘cultural code’ he allegedly cannot represent. Considering that the figure of Teymuraz in Timati’s videos stands metonymically for non-Russian racialized men, Gorbash’s quote may be read as designating some bodies as ‘foreign’ to the Russian nation through phrasings like ‘their neighborhoods and their ladas’ (*нацаны из народа, их районы и “лады”*), and by the same logic, some bodies as ‘foreign’ to Russian rap, such as Timati’s. My analysis allows me to conclude that within Russian hip-hop commentary and music criticism, Russian ethnonational and ethnoracial bias inform the discourses of Timati’s inauthenticity and (non)belonging to the genre.

Rap panics, homo-hauntings, and nesting hierarchies of masculine realness

In her article “‘Bury Their Hearts’”: Some Thoughts on The Specter of Homosexuality Haunting Russia,’ Laurie Essig suggested that ‘Russia’s history of sexuality shaped homophobia in a particular way, marking the gay body as foreign and a threat to native populations’ (Essig 2014:40). My analysis of Timati’s project of racial translation throughout this thesis reveals that exploring the question of who counts as foreign and who counts as native to the elusive Russian nation and Russian hip-hop requires thinking the ethnoracial and the sexual together. Throughout this thesis, I have traced how Timati instrumentalized the rhetoric of homophobia through the virality of social media to distance himself from the Russian pop music scene coded as gay in pursuit of domestic hip-hop authenticity. In tracking the viral circulations of homophobic rhetoric as used by Timati, I wanted to shift the analytical focus away from considering Russian homophobia as exclusively associated with state repressions or geopolitical confrontations with the West. Instead, I wanted to explore how homophobic rhetoric moves across domains, entangled in multiple dynamics, some with semi-autonomous logics implicated in but not reducible to state-sponsored projects of homophobia. Attention to Russian popular culture as a discursive arena where homophobic rhetoric

circulates allows us to see how homo-haunting permeates the politics of Russian popular music. Refracted through US black hip-hop masculinities with its hierarchies of realness, the narratives of sexual modernity and Russian political homophobia were deployed in Timati's hip-hop to produce multiple (dis)identifications within the field of Russian music: *within* Russian rap with its own hierarchies of authenticity and *between* Russian rap and Russian pop music, metonymically tied to camp aesthetics of Eurovision. Paradoxically, the results of these mobile circulations are hardly pre-determined.

I illustrate this point with a final example that closes this thesis, where the virality and affects mobilized by the homophobic rhetoric this time targeted an artist from the Black Star label and involved competing hierarchies of masculine realness. When Russian rap as a genre took over the country, gaining prominent domestic and international attention, it also attracted governmental concern.³⁰⁶ Between 2018 and 2019, Russia witnessed intense moral panics around rap, leading to what Ilya Kukulin aptly calls the 'securitization of youth politics' performed by elites and parents' associations (Kukulin 2021). The artists whose performances were banned in this period encompassed the entire spectrum of contemporary Russian pop and rap: from oppositional artists, lionized by the intelligentsia for their protest spirit and non-conformism, to more controversial hip-hop figures such as Husky, to those perceived as apolitical, if not explicitly loyalist as some would frame Black Star label artists' affinities.



Figure 73. Egor Creed's photo. Photo credit: starhit.ru/interview/egor-krid-soderjanki-nedilya-menya-122136/

Between 2018 and 2019, several concerts by Egor Kreed, one of the most famous artists of the Black Star label (2012-2019), were banned across Russia by concerned grassroots parents' committees, accusing the artist of misogyny, 'LGBT propaganda,' and corruption of Russian youth.³⁰⁷ Egor Kreed has been repeatedly accused of concealing his homosexuality, transforming these allegations into juicy gossip savored by Russian tabloid media and social networks.³⁰⁸ One of the most well-known examples of charged moral panic around Russian rap's alleged corrupting influences was a homophobic anti-Kreed flash mob launched by concerned Dagestani citizens with a telling title: *Кто пойдет на Крйда — тот немых* (Those

who will visit Kreed's concert are fags). In 2018 in the wake of this social media uproar, the Black Star label had to cancel fully booked shows of the label's artists, Egor Kreed

³⁰⁶ globalvoices.org/2017/08/15/a-viral-rap-battle-has-everyone-in-russia-including-business-journalists-and-politicians-talking/;

rferl.org/a/russia-rap-battle-moral-squalor-modern-poetry-oxxyimiron-gnoyny/28680235.html

³⁰⁷ 360tv.ru/news/tekst/egor-krid-no-kid

³⁰⁸ radiokp.ru/znamenitosti/100-ne-gey-nastya-ivleeva-ob-orientacii-egora-krida_nid157989_au21005au

and MC Doni, in the North Caucasian republic of Dagestan. The reasons included fears for fans' safety and multiple online rape and murder threats both artists received on their social media accounts.³⁰⁹ The controversy sparked on Dagestani's social media when a collage claiming that everyone who will attend Kreed's concert is not a 'real' man was posted.³¹⁰ The ensuing wave of harassment and threats drew on the rhetoric of defending local religious traditions and culture against the corrupt mores of Moscow's misogynistic and LGBT-friendly cultural industries, now, ironically, symbolized by the very Black Star label. This Dagestani pushback, in turn, was later deployed in subsequent moral panics spurred by concerned parents' associations in other Russian cities, layering upon country-wide concerns about the alleged 'LGBT propaganda for minors.' Russian pop music, immensely popular among Russian youth, emerges through this story as a battleground where struggles over morality, sexuality, and Russia's futures are fought.

Reacting to the moral panic on social media, UFC world champion Khabib Nurmagomedov,³¹¹ a world celebrity fighter icon and a figure of considerable authority



Figure 74. Khabib Nurmagomedov. Global MMA icon from the Dagestan republic. Photo credit: fightnews.info/abdulmanap-nurmagomedov-habib-pashet-polnym-hodom-zhdem-kogda-i-kuda-uletat

in the republic of Dagestan, claimed that the cancellations of Black Star label concerts were not a significant loss for the republic.³¹² This, in turn, provoked a reaction from Timati, who labeled Khabib's words in a legalistic Russian anti-racist idiom of an 'incitement to inter-ethnic and inter-religious hatred'

and questioned Khabib's ability to live up to the ideals of Muslim piety when one is involved in the entertainment industry of sports.³¹³ In his reply to Timati, Khabib simultaneously addressed all men of Dagestan: *Многое упущено и многое не вернуть, но за будущее нашей республики в ответе мы и только мы, а не всякие петушары* (A lot is lost forever, but only we are responsible for the future of our republic, not random faggots).³¹⁴ Herein lies the story's irony: Timati's hip-hop authentication strategy, which I traced in this thesis since 2012, was built on the homophobic bashing and outing of Russian pop stars and revalorization of non-Russian racialized men in 2014-2016 cultural productions. This 'realness' now has been challenged by someone performing even harder Caucasian warrior masculinity, Khabib Nurmagomedov, known

³⁰⁹ meduza.io/slides/ostavte-nas-v-pokoe-so-svoey-kulturoy-dagestantsy-i-habib-nurmagomedov-possorilis-s-timati-i-leyblom-black-star-a-pomirit-ih-pytaetsya-kadyrov

³¹⁰ oc-media.org/cancelled-rap-concert-sparks-freedom-of-speech-debate-in-daghestan

³¹¹ [instagram.com/khabib_nurmagomedov/](https://www.instagram.com/khabib_nurmagomedov/)

³¹² rferl.org/a/no-flow-zone-russian-pop-stars-cancel-gigs-in-conservative-daghestan-after-threats/29500824.html

³¹³ [instagram.com/p/BnHZD5jCe0/?taken-by=timatiofficial](https://www.instagram.com/p/BnHZD5jCe0/?taken-by=timatiofficial)

³¹⁴ eurosport.ru/mixed-martial-arts/ufc-229/2018/story_sto6960809.shtml, rt.com/sport/438206-khabib-nurmagomedov-russian-rap-stars/

for flaunting the iconic *papakha* hat during his appearances in the ring. Moreover, homophobic bashing was now applied to Black Star label artists accused of corrupting influence on Dagestani youth. Paradoxically, no other but Ramzan Kadyrov intervened in the beef between Timati and Khabib. According to Difato (Difato 2021) and Zidan (Zidan 2019), Kadyrov's cordial relationships with the UFC champion are connected to the former's patronage of MMA and combat sports and are embedded in regional North Caucasian geopolitics.³¹⁵ Posting an ironic appeal on his social media, Kadyrov called for his two friends, Timati and Khabib, not to waste time quarreling with each other and instead unite efforts in developing the Caucasus as a region and its tourist industries.³¹⁶

This strange case of boomeranging homophobia suggests a need to theorize the nesting character of Russian celebrity masculinities with shifting and relational hierarchies of masculine realness. This requires foregrounding the mutual intertwining of gender and sexuality with the ethnoracial dynamics and entangled legacies of nation and empire in contemporary Russian contexts. Such analysis would also require retheorizing the deployment of homophobic rhetoric within Russian media as slippery, mobile, and viral, generating excitement and engagement through its circulations. Homosexuality, far from being a suppressed theme in Russian public discourse despite the conservative state rhetoric, remains a haunting presence, if not a stubborn obsession, of Russian popular culture. It generates affective attachments and anxieties: if pop stars can mimic heterosexuality so well, homosexuality is a possibility that can never be finally disproved, despite the ostentatious displays of heterosexual performance: 'The strain of mimesis can also stress and warp mimesis. In drawing attention to mimetic performance, this strain can create a feedback loop that intensifies suspicions, that makes actors mimic harder, that makes their strain more apparent, that ratchets up suspicions; and so on' (Lempert 2014: 389). An example of such viral homo-haunting is vernacular hermeneutics of suspicion regarding Creed's alleged homosexuality, believed by many to be leading to a strategy of compensatory performances of heterosexuality. One of the illustrative attempts was Creed's participation in the 2018 *Холостяк* (*Bachelor*) show on the Russian TV channel TNT, where a group of model-like women competed to win Egor's heart. Paradoxically, some fans speculated that the excessive stress on Egor's heterosexuality in the show is just a facade, serving as a cover-up for Creed's homosexuality. The cycle of suspicion is never closed:

Paradoxically, the notion of homosexual visibility as a problem often goes hand in hand with the notion of homosexual invisibility (i.e., the homosexual's ability to "pass"), which is an even bigger problem. The threat of gay visibility is only intensified by the possibility of gay invisibility, that is, the ability of a gay man to disguise his homosexuality, to "pass" as straight (Baer 2013: 41)

³¹⁵ bloodyelbow.com/2019/6/13/18662837/chechen-expansion-ramzan-kadyrov-ufc-champ-khabib-nurmagomedov-politics-karim-zidan-mma-feature

³¹⁶ instagram.com/p/Bno5sEgFkbb/?utm_source=ig_embed

Indeed, Kreed's alleged homosexuality has agitated not only concerned parents' committees and instigated moral panics, but this gossip also circulates virally as a beloved topic of oppositional YouTube mediasphere, featuring prominently in Yuri Dud's interview with Kreed³¹⁷ and a famous Satyr's parody constructing Kreed's entire career as the attempts to convince others he is not gay.³¹⁸ It was Dud' who prompted Kreed to embrace Satyr's parody and invite him to make an irony-laden video together, which resulted in the 2019 production of *Сердцеедка (Female Heart Eater)*, where Russian village camp meets rap, actively playing with the imaginarity of Russian rural village life and the cultural trend of aesthetic populism.³¹⁹

The apogee of jovial celebrity-mediated reconciliations with former homophobic bullies was the spring of 2017, when Timati and Kirkorov, reunited by the singer Grigoriy Leps appeared together first in a Black Star Burger commercial, mediating this reconciliation in the format of comedy-sketch,³²⁰ and later in the melancholic video *Последняя весна (Last Spring)*, shot in Venice.³²¹ In 2018, Timati, Kreed, and Kirkorov released the video *Цвет настроения чёрный (Mood's color is black)*,³²² reinventing Kirkorov as keeping his pulse on the contemporary trends such as rap and camp aesthetics (Brock and Miazhevich 2021). What to make of this unusual incident of reconciliation? I believe it supports my contention on the need to theorize multiple uses of homophobic rhetoric by addressing its viral effects and provocations beyond an exclusive focus on Russian state discourses of homophobia understood exclusively as repressive. Tracing Russian popular culture's homo-hauntings allows one to grasp these circulations of homophobia, understood less than as an internalized hatred, genuine conviction, or a reflection of depth, but rather as a surface, as an affective capacity, a rhetorical tool in the mediatized economy of attention. Such an analysis would reveal how Russian celebrities harness the rhetoric of homophobia: it may be used to boost their popularity by flaunting it, rejecting it, or strategically not resolving the attention-generating tension, keeping the resolution perpetually deferred. However, more strikingly and perhaps more significantly for the story of racial translation, I have been tracing in this thesis is that in the 2018 video, *Цвет настроения чёрный* Timati and Kirkorov reconcile not only over homophobic hip-hop *meykhana* but also in their common ethnoracial malleability, as two post-Soviet imperial subjects, suffusing this time translated Russian word *чёрный* with new connotations of prestige, style, and class.

³¹⁷ [youtube.com/watch?v=CWXosALDP54](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CWXosALDP54)

³¹⁸ [youtube.com/watch?v=xAMA_MSWAIA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAMA_MSWAIA)

³¹⁹ [youtube.com/watch?v=6uHHWgJ6dsk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uHHWgJ6dsk)

³²⁰ [youtube.com/watch?v=p05yBnclFjw&t=23s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p05yBnclFjw&t=23s)

³²¹ [youtube.com/watch?v=eJRe5r6dzgo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJRe5r6dzgo)

³²² [youtube.com/watch?v=NcXNXnUri6Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcXNXnUri6Q)

13. Afterword

This dissertation has been motivated by the interest in the transnational circulation of ideas, and its central concern was exploring translation's constitutive role in this process. I set out to examine how race, gender, and sexuality travel into post-Soviet Russophone contexts through the circulation of US black cultural forms: intersectionality and hip-hop. Tracing their post-Soviet trajectories, I wanted to find ways of thinking about race and translation together, neither eliding the centrality of translation nor ignoring the transnational perspectives on racialization, including peculiarities of racialization in post-Soviet contexts. The central aim of this thesis was to explore the role of translation in the travels of US racial discourses through the vehicles of intersectionality and hip-hop. Drawing on Michael Banton and Yasuko Takezawa, I have conceptualized the circulating discourses of race as the idiom of 'race as resistance' (Banton 2020; Takezawa 2005), where race is used for counter-hegemonic purposes and is entangled ambivalently with US global dominance. My study was based on the empirical examination of two racial translation projects, bringing the idiom of 'race as resistance' into post-Soviet Russophone contexts through their adaptations of hip-hop and intersectionality from 2012 to 2018, the times of the so-called 'conservative turn' in Russia.

To intervene in the elision of translation and reproduction of English-language monolingualism and US-centrism both in gender and sexuality and race and ethnicity scholarship, I positioned the traveling US idiom of 'race as resistance' as Anglophone, requiring translation into non-Anglophone contexts. I placed translation at the center of my analysis, both theoretically and methodologically. Focusing my approach on the process of translation and those who perform it reveals that the US idiom of 'race as resistance' is actively sought by local entrepreneurs rather than imperialistically imposed (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999). The idiom of 'race as resistance' circulating through post-Soviet Russophone adaptations of intersectionality and hip-hop is framed by its translators as 'foreign and modern' (Pereira 2017). 'Race as resistance' as a 'foreign and modern' idiom signals simultaneously a different location and an alternative, progressive temporality. It exudes a cosmopolitan allure, a counter-hegemonic promise associated with US black cultural forms and the global influence of the US cultural industries, social movements, and academia. This idiom, in both cases, is brought into post-Soviet contexts with the ambition to repair, innovate and create more modern forms of discourse, genres, and personhoods modeled on the US activism and music industries.

Drawing on the digital ethnographic study of the Russophone grassroots intersectional translation-based feminist page FIO and close reading of a selection of hip-hop music videos by the Russian/Tatar/Jewish hip-hop artist Timati, I have demonstrated how the translation strategies of both projects are preoccupied with localizing the 'foreign and modern' Anglophone idiom of 'race as resistance' within

contemporary Russophone feminist and hip-hop scenes. Located at the intersection of gender and sexuality studies, research on race and ethnicity in the post-Soviet region, and Russophone/Eurasian cultural studies, the thesis has contributed to all these fields through its empirical materials, translational methodology, and theoretical reflections.

To answer my overarching research question about the role of translation in the travels of the US Anglophone idiom of ‘race as resistance’ through intersectionality and hip-hop into Russophone post-Soviet contexts, I have developed an approach to translation that seeks to move away from frameworks casting the process of travel and translation as a loss and an appropriation on the one hand, and as a secondary imitation of the original on the other. Drawing on feminist theory, feminist anthropology, translation studies, and sociolinguistics, I proceeded from the understanding of translation as a precondition of travel (Butler 2019), conceptualizing translation as a generative process (Gal et al. 2015) without romanticizing it as a manifestation of feminist resistance or subversiveness (Davis 2020). Approaching racial translation as generative rather than imitative allowed me to move away from looking at what is lost in translation or seeing the local as contrary to the foreign and as imminently a site of political resistance (Dahl et al. 2016). Apart from foregrounding generative effects, this approach to translation also enabled me to pay attention to how some things are ascribed as ‘foreign’ while other things are rendered familiar as ‘ours.’ In this regard, translation could be seen as the contact site through which cross-scale demarcations are (re)produced.

Given the ubiquity of translation within grassroots Russophone feminist scenes, a central question has been why, if everyone translates, some translation projects (such as Russophone intersectionality) are perceived as more foreign than others. Similarly, when it comes to discourses of authenticity within Russian hip-hop, if everyone orients themselves to US hip-hop, why are only some translation projects persistently devalued as less authentic or even chronically inauthentic (such as Timati’s hip-hop)? My way of approaching these questions has been to carefully look at *what* is translated (the US Anglophone idiom of ‘race as resistance’), *how* it is translated (translation strategies), and *who* translates it. Sometimes the *how* of translation affects the way translators are construed (FIO moderators positioned as foreign: as bilingual feminist elites favoring foreignizing translation strategies). The *how* of the translation may also impact the ways in which *what* is translated is understood (Russophone intersectionality is marked ‘foreign’ by its critics who draw on the abundance of foreignizing translation strategies). Sometimes, *who* translates also matters greatly (the case of Timati’s chronic inauthenticity). Sometimes, no matter *how* they translate, they remain positioned as foreign and external to music scenes and ethnonational communities. Drawing on translation studies and transnational perspectives on racialization, I designed a methodology that tracks the circulations of the Anglophone racial categories (‘white,’ ‘black,’ ‘people of color,’ and ‘women of color’). I then analyzed translation strategies

used to mediate these categories into the Russian language and the post-Soviet context of racialization and examined their multiple generative effects.

On a broader level, racial translation generates novel idioms: a Russophone grassroots intersectional feminist idiom that draws on US intersectional feminist discourse as the authorizing source and a Russian commercial hip-hop inspired by US mainstream hip-hop and hip-hop moguls. Racial translation also generates affective engagements, discursive battles over translation choices, dynamics of (dis)identification within Russophone feminist and hip-hop/music scenes, and types of personhoods associated with particular translation choices or resistance to them. Because the idiom of 'race as resistance' is positioned as both 'foreign and modern,' racial translation also has chronotopic aspects. The emergent idioms, the types of personhood, and the translation choices may be cast as more modern or, in contrast, anachronistic. In the empirical materials, foreignization is conceived as modernization, explaining the predisposition for foreignizing translation strategies. As the analysis also shows, however, the US idiom of 'race as resistance' might be positioned by Russophone intersectional feminists and Timati as 'foreign and modern,' but this neither guarantees its enthusiastic embrace nor alleviates the need to negotiate the stigma of foreignness and imitation. Translation seems to be at odds with projects of authenticity. Foreignizing translation strategies may generate discursive effects such as rendering translators foreign, instigating the critique of translators as uncreative copyists or cosmopolitan elites distant from 'authentic' listeners of Russian hip-hop, or problems of 'real' Russophone feminists.

Using the methodology developed throughout my analysis of the intersectional feminist community, that is, conceiving of both English and Russian ethnoracial categories as realia, tracking their translation strategies and their effects, I applied these insights in my empirical examination of Timati's hip-hop. Theorizing only partial equivalence of the pair black and *чёрный* allowed me to demonstrate how Timati used US hip-hop blackness as cosmopolitan cultural capital in the context of the 2000s to alleviate the violence of post-Soviet racialization, leaving the foreign 'black' in his Black Star label/album untranslated. These foreignizing translation strategies inaugurated Timati's domestic reputation of chronic hip-hop inauthenticity, perceived as mimicking US hip-hop too closely. Attempts to repair the stigma of chronic inauthenticity instigated the quest for originality and pursuit of more solid Russian hip-hop authenticity. Drawing on the indexical perspectives on language and race helped me to go beyond the semantic categories in analyzing the process of racial translation in Timati's hip-hop from 2012. I conceptualized racial translation instead as operating multimodally, arguing that the genre of hip-hop videos that combines visual, gestural, sonic, speech, and lyrical aspects offer unique possibilities for exploring this process. Such an approach helped me discover the vital role of racial/sexual metonymy in Timati's project of racial translation.

One of my research questions asked how racial translation is embedded in gender and sexuality dynamics. Juxtaposing the two translation projects with a focus on the politics of gender and sexuality enacted by a grassroots feminist community and Timati's hip-hop, respectively, allowed me to illuminate how important cross-scale demarcations were being made within both fields. For Russophone feminist translators of intersectionality, the struggle against racism within Russophone feminisms was a joint struggle against transphobia and homophobia in the movement. At the same time, this translation project, with the ambition to modernize and repair Russophone feminisms, must be positioned within and against the geopolitical context of the 'conservative turn' that proclaims feminism and LGBT positions as foreign and Western. In contrast, Timati's project of racial translation was built on the instrumentalization of hip-hop homophobia and later, in the wake of Eurovision and the Sochi Olympics, geopolitically inflected discourses of homophobia and transphobia. The 2012 turn from mimetism to memetics harnessed the nascent power of social media platforms and ludic virality where 'regional originals'; the geo-social space of North and South of the Caucasian mountains provided a way of translating US black hip-hop masculinity into the locally familiar gendered idiom of ethnoracial difference in terms of Caucasian masculinities. The Azerbaijani spoken word tradition of *meykhana* was fused with hip-hop homophobia, embroiled in the logic of symbolic demarcation and disassociation from Russian *Estrada* and pop music through the homophobic outing of Fillip Kirkorov. Timati's chronic hip-hop inauthenticity was negotiated through vicarious realness, a strategy of proximity to 'real' racialized non-Russian masculinities: the hip-hop realness of Georgian L'One, the Central-Asian migrant realness of MC Doni, and the Caucasian warrior realness of Ramzan Kadyrov. Hip-hop modernity was deployed to challenge the sexual modernity paradigm revalorizing the racialized bearded men as homophobic, modern, and cool, allegedly safeguarding Russia's multi-national future against the sexually corrupt Europe, implicating Timati's hip-hop in the ambivalent patriotic anti-racist project.

Like translation, research involves inevitable belatedness. Things change quickly; translation and research come after the original text/event and involve inevitable delays. Since my study was conducted, things have profoundly changed, both for the Russophone feminist activisms and popular culture and music, not to mention the broader geopolitical situation in the region. After leaving the Black Star label in 2020, Timati mostly stopped his musical career, switching towards new commercial projects such as a surfing camp in the Maldives and various restaurant and club businesses. Between 2019 and 2021, the main hip-hop star and enfant terrible of Russian rap, Bashkir-Jewish Morgenstern, self-proclaimed the 'new Timati,' perfected the art of mediatized spectacles and the social media economy of hype and dominated the vibrant scene of Russian rap before his enforced exile. Morgenstern's flight from the country was due to allegations of propaganda for drugs in his songs. This might reflect increased governmental anxieties over the influence of hip-hop on Russian youths, thus

intensifying the securitization of youth politics (Kukulin 2021), as well as the politicization of Russian popular culture and music (Morozov, Reshetnikov, and Gaufman 2022).

Several trends shaped grassroots feminist activism between 2018-2021. One of them, facilitated by the increased state control of the Russian-language internet, is the drift away from anonymous and horizontal feminist grassroots social media projects towards increasing personalization and monetization of feminist activism. Social media platforms like Telegram, YouTube, and Instagram allow for curating individualized activist portfolios that provide possibilities for monetization, giving rise to feminist influencers such as Nixel Pixel and several other activist microcelebrities. The rise of the Russophone feminist expert discourse and the collision between feminism and neoliberal governmentality is perhaps best symbolized by the emergence of Russophone platforms such as *She is an expert*, self-describing as ‘making female expertise visible.’³²³ Another example of this trend is the increasing monetization of feminist knowledge through commercial feminist educational initiatives with invited experts facilitated by digital technologies. Another significant trend, perhaps partly facilitated by grassroots feminist popularity, is the emergence of feminist celebrities such as Manizha, who represented Russia on Eurovision in 2021. These trends allowed for the paradoxical coexistence of vibrant grassroots feminisms, celebrity, and post-feminism, as well as a new queer renaissance in Russian popular culture (Engström 2021) on the one hand, and the Russian state rhetoric of ‘traditional values’ and anti-LGBT propaganda legislation, as well as increasing repressions of the oppositional figures in the period prior to 2022, on the other.

When it comes to Russophone intersectional feminism, it was both incorporated in and somewhat superseded by the growing popularity of decolonial feminism, with a variety of grassroots projects paying attention to these topics. Decolonial feminism drawing on the scholarship of Madina Tlostanova, among others, offered a new conceptual language to approach the entanglements of Empire and nation within Eurasian space and history and to deconstruct Russo-centric perspectives. Digital feminist projects such as Feminist Translocalities, Aggashin, FEM TALKS, and many others have more or less replaced grassroots feminist projects, including FIO (Biktimirova and Kravtsova 2022). At the same time, similar chronotopic ideologies undergirding the FIO project keep haunting the emergent feminist Russophone anti-racist idiom. It has apparently become ever more difficult to talk about anti-racism in Russian. We have also seen calls to abandon Soviet vocabularies of human diversity, construed in these activist discourses as ossified relics from the past to be overcome.³²⁴

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, launched in February 2022, introduced a tectonic shift, leading to suffering on a grand scale: thousands of people were killed, millions of

³²³ she-expert.org

³²⁴syg.ma/@antiuniversitet/trudnosti-pierievoda-pochiemu-na-russkom-pochti-nievozmozhno-govorit-o-rasovykh-etnichieskikh-i-kulturnykh-iiarkhiakh

Ukrainians became refugees, and thousands of oppositional Russians had to flee the country. With the heaviest sanctions ever imposed on the country, Russian banks were disconnected from the Western financial infrastructure, and hundreds of Western companies left the country while Facebook and Instagram, in turn, were banned in spring 2022, labeled as extremist. Multiple anti-war diasporic initiatives emerged as a response, amongst the most visible Feminist Anti-War resistance. Moreover, the invasion launched a decolonial moment of great intensity, propelling intensified discussions about decolonization and Russian imperialism. Previously restricted to academic and relatively small activist circles, discourses of decolonization and Russian imperialism suddenly became very popular amongst media pundits, bloggers, and even US government agencies calling for the urgency to decolonize Russia. Numerous grassroots and exilic non-Russian ethnic anti-war initiatives, combining decolonial and feminist standpoints, have emerged, such as the *Beda media* research project dedicated to studying Russian imperialism. Some affective legacies of the Cold War (Zhang, Liu, and Lee 2022) seem to underpin circulations of the discourses of Russian (anti)imperialism and decolonization, also sustained by claims about (un)freedom and (in)justice. In the wake of the invasion, the Russian authorities have, for their part, invoked and intensified some familiar tropes, such as the Russian Empire's non-participation in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Soviet legacies of anti-imperialism (and decolonization) to boost its legitimacy amongst African, Asian and Latin American countries. These claims about anti-imperialism are contested by Central and Eastern European scholars and activists and by indigenous minorities and non-Russian peoples within Russia. The affectively charged claims about Russian (anti)imperialism circulate across multiple publics and domains, instrumentalized for various – and sometimes competing – projects.

The trends towards moral panics about youths and the increased politicization of music and popular culture have created new adversaries amongst anti-war musicians and oppositional figures, filling up an ever-expanding list of 'foreign agents.' The exile of Russian rap and popular music artists has intensified, too, leading to a mass exodus of anti-war musicians finding new audiences in Europe. In turn, Timati's localization of hip-hop through performances of homophobia and patriotism in the mid-2010s allowed his adaptation of the genre to be utilized in large-scale performances of patriotism. One such performance happened shortly after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine during the concert Crimean Spring at the Luzhniki Stadium in March 2022. In company with dancers from the Todos ballet, Timati, styled in a leather jacket and a Soviet-like fur hat, performed the 2020 song *Звездонад (Starfall)* as if to comment on the exodus of Western brands from the country. Timati's speech at the end of the performance fused the pragmatic spirit of capitalist realism with multi-national patriotism and the elusive pursuit of high-quality Russian products:

You know, never in my life was I ashamed that I am a citizen of Russia. I think it is those who are now in different countries, ashamed of that, who really should be ashamed. I was born in this country; I love it

with all my heart and sincerely think that we have the best country in the world, no matter who says what. Yes, we live in difficult times, and the situation in the world is quite difficult. You know, many brands, Western brands, turned away, slammed the door, and left the Russian market. Some are worried, but there are also those people for whom unlimited opportunities have opened now to introduce Russian products to the market. And no matter who says what or laughs, many of them exist. Therefore, just ahead! Now is the best time for a high-quality, cool Russian product! And for those Western brands that left (or left temporarily), we will say *Давай* (waives the hand, waiting for the audience) *До свиданья! Давай, До свиданья!* Russia, ahead!

The reuse of the memetic phrase *Давай, До свиданья!* from a 2012 song, which inaugurated the reorientation of Timati's project of racial translation in hip-hop, *meykhana*, this time targeted not Russian *Estrada* in the closet but instead 'the West' itself, as well as 'Western brands.' The indexicality of the phrase *Давай, До свиданья!* (that is, to whom it points), shifted once again. When Western companies left the Russian markets, new business possibilities opened quickly for 'high-quality Russian products.' In the summer of 2022, the media announced the news of Timati, with several business partners buying the infrastructure of the Starbucks coffee chain leaving Russia. To what extent this trend will continue remains to be seen, but the fact that Russia is cutting ties with the Western world will affect the field of Russian popular culture and feminist activism and will impact future possibilities for translation.

Finalizing my writing throughout 2022 against the backdrop of the ongoing invasion of Ukraine, I am reminded that the post-Soviet era and Russophone identifications are perhaps forever disappearing. However, the temporalities of research and translation are strangely queer in their belatedness. Although this thesis has been primarily thinking through events unfolding between 2012 and 2018, I believe that the analysis is still relevant for understanding current socio-cultural events and geopolitical dynamics.

Bibliography

- Achkasov, Andrei. 2018. 'Ideologization of Translation History: The Case of Russian Democrats and Aesthetes'. *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities and Social Sciences* 11(10). doi: 10.17516/1997-1370-0320.
- Agadjanian, Victor, Cecilia Menjivar, and Natalya Zotova. 2017. 'Legality, Racialization, and Immigrants' Experience of Ethnoracial Harassment in Russia'. *Social Problems* 64(4):558-76. doi: 10.1093/socpro/spw042.
- Agha, Asif. 2007. 'Recombinant Selves in Mass Mediated Spacetime'. *Language and Communication* 27(3):320-35. doi: 10.1016/j.langcom.2007.01.001.
- Aidi, Hishaam. 2011. 'The Grand (Hip-Hop) Chessboard: Race, Rap and Raison d'État'. *Middle East Report* (260):25-39.
- Aksiumov, Boris, and Viktor Avksentev. 2022. 'Nation-Building in Contemporary Russia: Four Vectors of Political Discourse'. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 28(2):186-205. doi: 10.1080/13537113.2021.2001206.
- Alexseev, Mikhail A. 2010. 'Majority and Minority Xenophobia in Russia: The Importance of Being Titulars'. *Post-Soviet Affairs* 26(2):89-120. doi: 10.2747/1060-586X.26.2.89.
- Alim, H. Samy, Awad Ibrahim, and Alastair Pennycook. 2008. *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*. Routledge.
- Alim, H. Samy, John R. Rickford, and Arnetta F. Ball, eds. 2016. *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Amico, Stephen. 2014. *Roll Over, Tchaikovsky!: Russian Popular Music and Post-Soviet Homosexuality*. University of Illinois Press.
- Ammaturo, Francesca Romana. 2015. 'The "Pink Agenda": Questioning and Challenging European Homonationalist Sexual Citizenship'. *Sociology* 49(6):1151-66. doi: 10.1177/0038038514559324.
- Androutsopoulos, Jannis, and Arno Scholz. 2003. 'Spaghetti Funk: Appropriations of Hip-Hop Culture and Rap Music in Europe'. *Popular Music and Society* 26(4):463-79. doi: 10.1080/0300776032000144922.
- Armstrong, Edward G. 2004. 'Eminem's Construction of Authenticity'. *Popular Music and Society* 27(3):335-55. doi: 10.1080/03007760410001733170.
- Arnold, Richard. 2010. 'Visions of Hate'. *Problems of Post-Communism* 57(2):37-49. doi: 10.2753/PPC1075-8216570203.
- Arnold, Richard. 2015. 'Systematic Racist Violence in Russia between 'Hate Crime' and "Ethnic Conflict"'. *Theoretical Criminology* 19(2):239-56.
- Asad, Talal. 1986. 'The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology'. Pp. 141-64 in *Writing Culture*, edited by James Clifford and George E. Marcus. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Atanasoski, Neda. 2013. *Humanitarian Violence: The U.S. Deployment of Diversity*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Avedissian, Karena. 2016. "Clerics, Weightlifters, and Politicians: Ramzan Kadyrov's Instagram as an Official Project of Chechen Memory and Identity Production." *Caucasus Survey* 4(1):20-43. doi: 10.1080/23761199.2015.1119998.
- Avedissian, Karena. 2020. "New Media and Digital Activism: Comparing Armenia and Chechnya." Pp. 416-27 in *Routledge Handbook of the Caucasus*, edited by Galina M. Yemelianova, Laurence Broers. London: Routledge.

- Avrutin, Eugene M. 2007. 'Racial Categories and the Politics of (Jewish) Difference in Late Imperial Russia'. *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 8(1):13–40.
- Avrutin, Eugene Michael. 2022. *Racism in Modern Russia: From the Romanovs to Putin*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Ayoub, Phillip M., and David Paternotte. 2014. 'Introduction'. Pp. 1–25 in *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe: A Rainbow Europe?, Gender and Politics series*, edited by Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Azov, Andrey. 2012. 'K Istorii Teorii Perevoda v Sovetskom Soyuze. Problema Realisticheskogo Perevoda'. *Filosofsko-Literaturnyi Zhurnal «Logos»* (3 (87)):131–52.
- Baer, Brian James. 2011a. 'Introduction: Cultures of Translation'. Pp. 1–15 in *Contexts, Subtexts and Pretexts: Literary Translation in Eastern Europe and Russia*, edited by Brian James Baer. John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Baer, Brian James. 2011b. 'Queer in Russia: Othering the Other of the West'. Pp. 173–188 in *Queer in Europe: Contemporary Case Studies*, edited by Robert Gillett, Lisa Downing. Routledge.
- Baer, Brian James. 2013. 'Now You See It: Gay (in) Visibility and the Performance of Post-Soviet Identity'. Pp. 35–36 in *Queer Visibility in Post-Socialist Cultures*, edited by Náracsiz Fejes and Andrea P. Balogh. Intellect Books.
- Baer, Brian James. 2015. *Translation and the Making of Modern Russian Literature*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Baer, Brian James. 2017a. 'Beyond Either/or: Confronting the Fact of Translation in Global Sexuality Studies'. Pp. 38–57 in *Queering Translation, Translating the Queer*, edited by Brian James Baer, Klaus Kaindl. Routledge.
- Baer, Brian James. 2017b. 'De-Sacralizing the Origin(al) and the Transnational Future of Translation Studies'. *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology* 25(2):227–44. doi: 10.1080/0907676X.2016.1211157.
- Baer, Brian James. 2020a. 'From Cultural Translation to Untranslatability: Theorizing Translation Outside Translation Studies'. *Alif* (40):139–63.
- Baer, Brian James. 2020b. 'On Origins: The Mythistory of Translation Studies and the Geopolitics of Knowledge'. *The Translator* 26(3):221–40.
- Baer, Brian James. 2021. *Queer Theory and Translation Studies: Language, Politics, Desire*. Routledge.
- Baker, Catherine. 2017. 'The "Gay Olympics"? The Eurovision Song Contest and the Politics of LGBT/European Belonging'. *European Journal of International Relations* 23(1):97–121. doi: 10.1177/1354066116633278.
- Baker, Catherine. 2018. 'Postcoloniality Without Race? Racial Exceptionalism and Southeast European Cultural Studies'. *Interventions* 20(6):759–84. doi: 10.1080/1369801X.2018.1492954.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. 1981. 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel'. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. University of Texas Press.
- Baldwin, Kate A. 2002. *Beyond the Color Line and the Iron Curtain: Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922–1963*. Duke University Press.
- Banton, Michael. 2020. 'The Idiom of Race: A Critique of Presentism'. Pp. 55–67 in *Theories of race and racism*, edited by Les Back, John Solomos. Routledge.

- Barchunova, Tatiana. 2020. 'The Uneasy Transfer of Feminist Ideas and Gender Theory: Post-Soviet English-Russian Translations'. Pp. 276–90 in *The Routledge Handbook of Translation, Feminism and Gender*, edited by Luise von Flotow and Hala Kamal. Routledge.
- Baril, Alexandre. 2017. 'Intersectionality, Lost in Translation? (Re)Thinking Intersections between Anglophone and Francophone Intersectionality'. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 38(1):125-137.
- Baum, Bruce. 2006. *Rise and Fall of the Caucasian Race, The: A Political History of Racial Identity*. New York University Press.
- Belle, Crystal. 2014. 'From Jay-Z to Dead Prez: Examining Representations of Black Masculinity in Mainstream Versus Underground Hip-Hop Music'. *Journal of Black Studies* 45(4):287–300. doi: 10.1177/0021934714528953.
- Bennett, Andy. 1999. 'Hip Hop Am Main: The Localization of Rap Music and Hip Hop Culture'. *Media, Culture & Society* 21(1):77–91.
- Bessudnov, Alexey. 2016. 'Ethnic Hierarchy and Public Attitudes towards Immigrants in Russia'. *European Sociological Review* 32(5):567–80.
- Bessudnov, Alexey, and Andrey Shcherbak. 2018. 'Ethnic Hierarchy in the Russian Labour Market: A Field Experiment'. SocArXiv. October 18. doi:10.31235/osf.io/2qzus.
- Bhabha, Homi K. 2012. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.
- Biasioli, Marco. 2021. 'Russophone or Anglophone? The Politics of Identity in Contemporary Russian Indie Music'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 73(4):673–90.
- Biktimirova, Alexandra, and Victoria Kravtsova. 2022. 'Feminist Translocalities'. *Baltic Worlds* 15(1-2): 92-104.
- Bilge, Sirma. 2013. 'Intersectionality Undone: Saving Intersectionality from Feminist Intersectionality Studies'. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race* 10(2):405–24.
- Blakely, Allison. 1986. *Russia and the Negro: Blacks in Russian History and Thought*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2005. *Discourse: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Blommaert, Jan. 2007. 'Sociolinguistics and Discourse Analysis: Orders of Indexicality and Polycentricity'. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 2(2):115–30. doi: 10.2167/mdo89.o.
- Bonnett, Alastair. 1999. *Anti-Racism*. London: Routledge.
- Bonnett, Alastair. 2002. 'Communists like Us: Ethnicized Modernity and the Idea Ofthe West'in the Soviet Union'. *Ethnicities* 2(4):435–67.
- Bonnett, Alastair. 2006. 'The Americanisation of Anti-Racism? Global Power and Hegemony in Ethnic Equity'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 32(7):1083–1103.
- Bonnett, Alastair. 2018. 'Multiple Racializations in a Multiply Modern World'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41(7):1199–1216. doi: 10.1080/01419870.2017.1287419.
- Bonnett, Alastair. 2021. *Multiracism: Rethinking Racism in Global Context*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Borenstein, Eliot. 2021. 'Post-Soviet Masculinities: Sex, Power, and the Vanishing Subject'. Pp. 80–88 in *The Routledge Handbook of Gender in Central-Eastern*

- Europe and Eurasia*, edited by Kathalin Fábíán, Janet Elise Johnson and Mara Lazda. Routledge.
- Borenstein, Eliot. 2022. *Meanwhile, in Russia...: Russian Internet Memes and Viral Video*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Borisenko, Aleksandra. 2017. 'Bukvalizm v Hudozhestvennom Perevode: Oshibka, Eksperiment, Metod?' *Vestnik Moskovskogo Universiteta. Seriya 9. Filologiya* (5):132–42.
- Bourdieu, Pierre, and Loïc Wacquant. 1999. 'On the Cunning of Imperialist Reason'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 16(1):41–58.
- Brah, Aviar. 1991. 'Difference, Diversity, Differentiation'. *International Review of Sociology* 2(2):53–71. doi: 10.1080/03906701.1991.9971087.
- Brock, Maria, and Emil Edenborg. 2020. "You Cannot Oppress Those Who Do Not Exist". *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 26(4):673–700. doi: 10.1215/10642684-8618730.
- Brock, Maria, and Galina Miazhevich. 2021. 'From High Camp to Post-Modern Camp: Queering Post-Soviet Pop Music'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 13675494211021412.
- Brodkin, Karen, and Karen Brodtkin Sacks. 1998. *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America*. Rutgers University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2004. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Harvard University Press.
- Brubaker, Rogers. 2009. 'Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 35:21–42.
- Bucholtz, Mary, and Kira Hall. 2005. 'Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach'. *Discourse Studies* 7(4–5):585–614. doi: 10.1177/1461445605054407.
- Buchowski, Michal. 2006. 'The Specter of Orientalism in Europe: From Exotic Other to Stigmatized Brother'. *Anthropological Quarterly* 79(3):463–82. doi: 10.1353/anq.2006.0032.
- Buden, Boris, Stefan Nowotny, Sherry Simon, Ashok Bery, and Michael Cronin. 2009. 'Cultural Translation: An Introduction to the Problem, and Responses'. *Translation Studies* 2(2):196–219. doi: 10.1080/14781700902937730.
- Burak, Alexander. 2011. 'Some Like It Hot-Goblin-Style:" Ozhivliazh" in Russian Film Translations'. *Russian Language Journal/Русский Язык* 61:5–31.
- Butler, Judith. 2019. 'Gender in Translation: Beyond Monolingualism'. *PhiloSOPHIA* 9(1):1–25.
- Carbin, Maria, and Sara Edenheim. 2013. 'The Intersectional Turn in Feminist Theory: A Dream of a Common Language?' *European Journal of Women's Studies* 20(3):233–48.
- Cassiday, Julie A. 2014. 'Post-Soviet Pop Goes Gay: Russia's Trajectory to Eurovision Victory'. *The Russian Review* 73(1):1–23. doi: 10.1111/russ.10717.
- Cassiday, Julie A., and Emily D. Johnson. 2010. 'Putin, Putiniana and the Question of a Post-Soviet Cult of Personality'. *Slavonic and East European Review* 88(4):681–707.
- Castro, Olga, and Emek Ergun, eds. 2017. *Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Cerwonka, Allaine. 2008. 'Traveling Feminist Thought: Difference and Transculturation in Central and Eastern European Feminism'. *Signs* 33(4):809–32. doi: 10.1086/528852.

- Chamberlain, Lori. 1988. 'Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13(3):454–72. doi: 10.1086/494428.
- Chironova, Irina I. 2014. 'Literalism in Translation: Evil to Be Avoided or Unavoidable Reality'. *Journal of Translation and Interpretation* 7:1–28.
- Choi, Chatterjee, and Petrone Karen. 2014a. 'Transnational Feminisms: Gender and Historical Knowledge in Post-Soviet Russia (Part 2)'. *Tractus Aevorum: Эволюция Социокультурных и Политических Пространств* 1(2):153–66.
- Choi, Chatterjee, and Petrone Karen. 2014b. 'Transnational Feminisms: Gender and Historical Knowledge in Post-Soviet Russia (Part 1)'. *Tractus Aevorum: Эволюция Социокультурных и Политических Пространств* 1(1):3–14.
- Christian, Michelle. 2019. 'A Global Critical Race and Racism Framework: Racial Entanglements and Deep and Malleable Whiteness'. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 5(2):169–85. doi: 10.1177/2332649218783220.
- Clark, Katerina. 2016. 'The Representation of the African American as Colonial Oppressed in Texts of the Soviet Interwar Years'. *The Russian Review* 75(3):368–85. doi: 10.1111/russ.12081.
- Clay, Andreana. 2003. 'Keepin' It Real: Black Youth, Hip-Hop Culture, and Black Identity'. *American Behavioral Scientist* 46(10):1346–58. doi: 10.1177/0002764203046010005.
- Clelland, Donald A., and Wilma A. Dunaway. 2021. 'Toward Theoretical Liberation: Challenging the Intellectual Imperialism of the Western Race Paradigm'. *Journal of Labor and Society* 24(4):487–524. doi: 10.1163/24714607-bja10042.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. 2002. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Routledge.
- Condee, Nancy. 2009. *The Imperial Trace: Recent Russian Cinema*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Condry, Ian. 2007. 'Yellow B-Boys, Black Culture, and Hip-Hop in Japan: Toward a Transnational Cultural Politics of Race'. *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique* 15(3):637–71.
- Conway, Kyle. 2012. 'A Conceptual and Empirical Approach to Cultural Translation'. *Translation Studies* 5(3):264–79. doi: 10.1080/14781700.2012.701938.
- Coombs, Adam. 2019. "'There's a Disconnect": The Entrepreneurial Ethics of JAY-Z and Donald Trump'. *Black Camera* 11(1):348–65.
- Copeman, Jacob. 2019. 'Exposing Fakes'. Pp. 63–90 in *Fake: Anthropological Keywords*, edited by Jacob Copeman and Giovanni da Col. Hau Books.
- Crane, William. 2018. 'Cultural Formation and Appropriation in the Era of Merchant Capitalism'. *Historical Materialism* 26(2):242–70. doi: 10.1163/1569206X-00001635.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1989. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *The University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140:139–67.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1990. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color'. *Stanford Law Review* 43:1241.
- Cronin, Michael. 1998. 'The Cracked Looking Glass of Servants'. *The Translator* 4(2):145–62. doi: 10.1080/13556509.1998.10799017.
- Cutler, Cecelia. 2010. 'She's so Hood': Ghetto Authenticity on the White Rapper Show'. Pp. 300–329 in *The Languages of Global Hip Hop*, edited by Marina Terkourafi. Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Dahl, Ulrika, Marianne Liljeström, and Ulla Manns. 2016. *The Geopolitics of Nordic and Russian Gender Research 1975–2005*. Södertörns högskola.
- Darling-Wolf, Fabienne. 2015. *Imagining the Global: Transnational Media and Popular Culture Beyond East and West*. University of Michigan Press.
- Dattatreyan, Ethiraj Gabriel. 2020. *The Globally Familiar: Digital Hip Hop, Masculinity, and Urban Space in Delhi*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.
- Davidson, Judy, and Mary G. McDonald. 2018. 'Rethinking Human Rights: The 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics, LGBT Protections and the Limits of Cosmopolitanism'. *Leisure Studies* 37(1):64–76. doi: 10.1080/02614367.2017.1310284.
- Davis, Kathy. 2020. 'Who Owns Intersectionality? Some Reflections on Feminist Debates on How Theories Travel'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 27(2):113–27. doi: 10.1177/1350506819892659.
- Davydova, Darja. 2019. 'Between Heteropatriarchy and Homonationalism: Codes of Gender, Sexuality, and Race/Ethnicity in Putin's Russia'. Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies, York University.
- De Fina, Anna, and Sabina Perrino. 2020. 'Introduction: Chronotopes and Chronotopic Relations'. *Language and Communication* 70:67–70. doi: 10.1016/J.LANGCOM.2019.04.001.
- Delfino, Jennifer B. 2021. 'White Allies and the Semiotics of Wokeness: Raciolinguistic Chronotopes of White Virtue on Facebook'. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 31(2):238–57.
- Denisova, Anastasia, and Aliaksandr Herasimenka. 2019. 'How Russian Rap on YouTube Advances Alternative Political Deliberation: Hegemony, Counter-Hegemony, and Emerging Resistant Publics'. *Social Media + Society* 5(2). doi: 10.1177/2056305119835200.
- Dick, Hilary Parsons. 2010. 'Imagined Lives and Modernist Chronotopes in Mexican Nonmigrant Discourse'. *American Ethnologist* 37(2):275–90.
- Difato, Luca Leonardo. 2021. 'The Hidden Politics of Sport: The Chechen Mixed Martial Arts Experiment.' *Luca Difato*. Retrieved April 2022. difato246.wordpress.com/2021/06/28/the-hidden-politics-of-sport-the-chechen-mixed-martial-arts-experiment.
- Dikötter, Frank. 2008. 'The Racialization of the Globe: An Interactive Interpretation'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(8):1478–96. doi: 10.1080/01419870802208388.
- Djagalov, Rossen. 2021. 'Racism, the Highest Stage of Anti-Communism'. *Slavic Review* 80(2):290–98.
- Dorcin, Uri, and Gabriella Djerrahian. 2020. *Blackness in Israel: Rethinking Racial Boundaries*. Routledge.
- Draitser. 1998. *Taking Penguins to the Movies: Ethnic Humor in Russia*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.
- Drake, Simone C. 2016. "6. 'I'm Not a Businessman, I'm a Business, Man': A Hip-Hop Genealogy of Black Entrepreneurship." Pp. 170–203 in *When We Imagine Grace*. University of Chicago Press.
- Drissel, David. 2011. 'Hybridizing Hip-Hop in Diaspora: Young British South Asian Men Negotiating Black-Inflected Identities.' *International Journal of Diversity in Organisations, Communities & Nations* 10(5).

- Durham, Aisha, Brittney C. Cooper, and Susana M. Morris. 2013. 'The Stage Hip-Hop Feminism Built: A New Directions Essay'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38(3):721-37. doi: 10.1086/668843.
- Edenborg, Emil. 2017. *Politics of Visibility and Belonging: From Russia's 'Homosexual Propaganda' Laws to the Ukraine War*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Edenborg, Emil. 2021. 'Anti-Gender Politics as Discourse Coalitions: Russia's Domestic and International Promotion of "Traditional Values"'. *Problems of Post-Communism* 0(0):1-10. doi: 10.1080/10758216.2021.1987269.
- Edgar, Adrienne. 2019. 'Children of Mixed Marriage in Soviet Central Asia'. Pp. 208-33 in *Ideologies of Race, Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, edited by David Rainbow. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Eichler, Maya. 2006. 'Russia's Post-Communist Transformation'. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8(4):486-511. doi: 10.1080/14616740600945065.
- Elafros, Athena. 2013. 'Greek Hip Hop: Local and Translocal Authentication in the Restricted Field of Production'. *Poetics* 41(1):75-95. doi: 10.1016/j.poetic.2012.11.002.
- Engström, Maria. 2019. 'Little Big: Neo-Camp and a New Generation of Russian Identity'. *Riddle*. Retrieved January 2023. ridl.io/little-big-neo-camp-and-a-new-generation-of-russian-identity
- Engström, Maria. 2020. 'Alexander Gudkov and Russia's Queer Turn in the 2020s'. *Riddle*. Retrieved January 2023. ridl.io/alexander-gudkov-and-russia-s-queer-turn-in-the-2020s
- Engström, Maria. 2021. 'Transgressing the Mainstream: Camp, Queer and Populism in Russian Visual Culture'. Pp. 97-119 in *Satire and Protest in Putin's Russia*, edited by Aleksei Semenenko. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Essig, Laurie. 1999. *Queer in Russia: A Story of Sex, Self, and the Other*. Duke University Press.
- Essig, Laurie. 2014. "'Bury Their Hearts": Some Thoughts on the Specter of Homosexuality Haunting Russia'. *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1(3):39-58. doi: 10.14321/qed.1.3.0039.
- Essig, Laurie, and Alexander Kondakov. 2019. 'A Cold War for the Twenty-First Century: Homosexuality vs. Heterosexuality'. Pp. 79-102 in *Soviet and post-Soviet sexualities*, edited by Richard C.M. Mole. Routledge.
- Etkind, Alexander. 2013. *Internal Colonization: Russia's Imperial Experience*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Ewell, Philip. 2017. 'Russian Rap in the Era of Vladimir Putin'. Pp. 45-62 in *Hip Hop at Europe's Edge: Music, Agency, and Social Change*, edited by Adriana Helbig and Milosz Miszczyński. Indiana University Press.
- Feyh, Kathleen Eaton. 2012. 'Russian Hip-Hop: Rhetoric at the Intersection of Style and Globalization'. PhD Dissertation, Department of Communication Studies, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Fikes, Kesha, and Alaina Lemon. 2002. 'African Presence in Former Soviet Spaces'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1):497-524. doi: 10.1146/annurev.anthro.31.040402.085420.
- Foucault, Michel, and Paul Rabinow. 1997. *Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1988*. Oxford University Press

- Forman, Murray. 2021. "‘Things Done Changed’: Recalibrating the Real in Hip-Hop." *Popular Music and Society* 44(4):451–77. doi: 10.1080/03007766.2020.1814628.
- Foxall, Andrew. 2013. 'Photographing Vladimir Putin: Masculinity, Nationalism and Visuality in Russian Political Culture'. *Geopolitics* 18(1):132–56. doi: 10.1080/14650045.2012.713245.
- Frolova, Evgeniya. 2015. 'Rap Kak Forma Social'no-Politicheskoy Refleksii v Sovremennoj Rossijskoj Kul'ture (2009–2013)'. Bachelor Thesis, Department of Cultural Studies, Higher School of Economics.
- Gal, Susan, Julia Kowalski, and Erin Moore. 2015. 'Rethinking Translation in Feminist NGOs: Rights and Empowerment Across Borders'. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 22(4):610–35. doi: 10.1093/sp/jxv041.
- Gapova, Elena. 2006. 'Klassovyy Vopros Postsovetского Feminizma, Ili Ob Otvlechenii Ugnennykh Ot Revolyucionnoy Bor'by'. *Gendernye Issledovaniya* 15:144.
- Gapova, Elena. 2009. 'Itogi S"ezda: Eshhe Raz o Klassovom Voprose Postsovetского Feminizma'. *Zhurnal Issledovaniy Social'noj Politiki* 7(4):465–84.
- Gerasimov, Ilya, Sergey Glebov, and Marina Mogilner. 2013. 'The Postimperial Meets the Postcolonial: Russian Historical Experience and the Postcolonial Moment'. *Ab Imperio* 2013(2):97–135. doi: 10.1353/imp.2013.0058.
- Gilroy, Paul. 1993. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*. Harvard University Press.
- Gilroy, Paul. 2000. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*. Harvard University Press.
- Gilroy, Paul. 2013. "... We Got to Get over before We Go under..." fragments for a History of Black Vernacular Neoliberalism'. *New Formations* 80(80):23–38.
- Goldberg, David Theo. 2009a. 'Racial Comparisons, Relational Racisms: Some Thoughts on Method'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 32(7):1271–82. doi: 10.1080/01419870902999233.
- Goldberg, David Theo. 2009b. *The Threat of Race: Reflections on Racial Neoliberalism*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Goluboff, Sascha L. 2012. *Jewish Russians: Upheavals in a Moscow Synagogue*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Gorbachev, Alexander. 2016. 'Rossia, Ne Revi Dushu v Klochya: Ya Takoy Zhe Kak Ty'. *Kontrapunkt* 4. Retrieved December 2022. ponarseurasia.org/wp-content/uploads/attachments/gorbachev_countepoint4.pdf
- Gorzelay-Mostak, Dana. 2016. 'Keepin' It Real (Respectable) in 2008: Barack Obama's Music Strategy and the Formation of Presidential Identity'. *Journal of the Society for American Music* 10(2):113–48. doi: 10.1017/S1752196316000043.
- Gosa, Travis L., and Erik Nielson. 2015. *The Hip Hop & Obama Reader*. Oxford University Press.
- Goscilo, Helena, ed. 2013. *Putin as Celebrity and Cultural Icon*. Routledge.
- Goscilo, Helena, and Vlad Strukov, eds. 2010. *Celebrity and Glamour in Contemporary Russia: Shocking Chic*. Routledge.
- Gould, Rebecca Ruth, and Kayvan Tahmasebian, eds. 2020. *The Routledge Handbook of Translation and Activism*. London: Routledge.
- Gradskova, Yulia. 2019. 'A Decolonial Perspective: Writing the "Other" Women into Soviet Gender History'. Pp. 108–25 in *Borderlands in European Gender Studies*, edited by Teresa Kulawik, Zhanna Kravchenko. Routledge.

- Gradskova, Yulia. 2020. 'Recovering Traditions?: Women, Gender, and the Authoritarianism of "Traditional Values" in Russia'. *Baltic Worlds* 13(1):31–36.
- Gressgård, Randi, and Nadzeya Husakouskaya. 2020. 'Europeanization as Civilizational Transition from East to West: Racial Displacement and Sexual Modernity in Ukraine'. *Intersections. East European Journal of Society and Politics* 6(3).
- Gritsenko, Elena, and Alexandra Laletina. 2016. 'English in the International Workplace in Russia'. *World Englishes* 35(3):440–56.
- Guillory, Sean. 2014. 'Culture Clash in the Socialist Paradise: Soviet Patronage and African Students' Urbanity in the Soviet Union, 1960–1965'. *Diplomatic History* 38(2):271–81. doi: 10.1093/dh/dhu007.
- Gusejnov, Gasan. 2018. 'Gruzinskij Akcent v Russkom Diskurse Pozdnesovetskoi i Pervoi Chetverti Veka Postsovetskoi Epohi'. Pp. 56–79 in *Rossiya—Gruziya posle imperii*, edited by Elena Ch'haidze and Mir'ya Lekke. Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie.
- Hall, Karl. 2012. "Rasovye Priznaki Koreniatsia Glubzhe v Prirode Chelovecheskogo Organizma": Neulovimoe Poniatie Rasy v Rossiiskoi Imperii'. Pp. 194–258 in *Poniatiia o Rossii: K Istorii Semantiki Imperskogo Perioda* Vol.2, edited by Alexei Miller, Denis Sdvizhkov, Ingrid Schirle. Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie.
- Harrison, Anthony Kwame. 2008. 'Racial Authenticity in Rap Music and Hip Hop'. *Sociology Compass* 2(6):1783–1800. doi: 10.1111/j.1751-9020.2008.00171.x.
- Healey, Dan. 2017. *Russian Homophobia from Stalin to Sochi*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Helbig, Adriana N. 2014. *Hip Hop Ukraine: Music, Race, and African Migration*. Indiana University Press.
- Hemmings, Clare. 2011. *Why Stories Matter*. Duke University Press.
- Hess, Mickey. 2005. 'Hip-Hop Realness and the White Performer'. *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 22(5):372–89. doi: 10.1080/07393180500342878.
- Hill, Jane. 2009. *The Everyday Language of White Racism*. Hoboken: Wiley.
- Hill, Marc Lamont. 2009. 'Scared Straight: Hip-Hop, Outing, and the Pedagogy of Queerness'. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 31(1):29–54.
- Hirsch, Francine. 2002. 'Race without the Practice of Racial Politics'. *Slavic Review* 61(1):30–43.
- Hirsch, Francine. 2005. *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Hoffart, Amund Rake. 2021. 'Intersectional Intersectionality? Interpretative Politics in Metacommentaries on Intersectionality'. PhD Dissertation, Institutionen för humaniora, utbildnings- och samhällsvetenskap, The University of Örebro.
- Holmes Smith, Christopher. 2003. "I Don't Like to Dream about Getting Paid": Representations of Social Mobility and the Emergence of the Hip-Hop Mogul'. *Social Text* 21(4):69–97.
- hooks, bell. 1981. *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism*. Pluto Press.
- Hutchings, Stephen, and Vera Tolz. 2015. *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television: Mediating Post-Soviet Difference*. Routledge.
- Ibrahim, Awad El Karim M. 1999. 'Becoming Black: Rap and Hip-Hop, Race, Gender, Identity, and the Politics of ESL Learning'. *TESOL Quarterly* 33(3):349–69. doi: 10.2307/3587669.
- Il'in, Vladimir. 1994. 'Otechestvennyi Rasizm'. *Rubezh: Al'manakh Sotsial'nykh Issledovanii* (5):189–204.

- Irvine, Judith T., and Susan Gal. 2000. 'Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities'. Pp. 35–83 in *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Politics, and Identities*, edited by Paul V. Kroskrity. Santa Fe: NM: School of American Research Press.
- Isurin, Ludmila. 2014. "THEY CALL US NAMES, THEY CALL US RUSSIANS!" NATIONALITY AND CONCEPTUAL NON-EQUIVALENCE'. *The Slavic and East European Journal* 663–85.
- Ivanov, Sergey. 2013. 'Track 4 Hip-Hop in Russia: How the Cultural Form Emerged in Russia and Established a New Philosophy' Pp. 87–102 in *Hip-Hop in Europe. Cultural Identities and Transnational Flows*, edited by Sina A. Nitzsche and Walter Grünzweig. LIT Verlag Münster
- Ivasiuc, Ana. 2017. 'Securitizations of Identities and Racial Eastern-Europeanization'. *Europe Now*. Retrieved January 2023. europenowjournal.org/2017/12/05/securitizations-of-identities-and-racial-eastern-europeanization.
- Jaffe, Alexandra. 1999. 'Locating Power: Corsican Translators and Their Critics'. Pp. 39–66 in *Language Ideological Debates*, edited by Jan Blommaert. De Gruyter Mouton.
- Jeffries, Michael P. 2011. *Thug Life: Race, Gender, and the Meaning of Hip-Hop*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnstone, Barbara, Jennifer Andrus, and Andrew E. Danielson. 2006. 'Mobility, Indexicality, and the Enregisterment of "Pittsburghese"'. *Journal of English Linguistics* 34(2):77–104. doi: 10.1177/0075424206290692.
- Kappeler, Andreas. 2014. *The Russian Empire : A Multi-Ethnic History*. Routledge.
- Karpenko, Oksana. 2010. 'Teaching "Ethnic" and "National" Differences: The Concept of "Narod" in Russian School Textbooks'. Pp. 195–219 in *Dilemmas of Diversity after the Cold War: Analysis of Cultural Difference by US and Russia-Based Scholars* edited by Michele R. Rivkin-Fish and Elena Trubina. Woodrow Wilson Center.
- Keevak, Michael. 2011. *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking*. Princeton University Press.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. 2006. *The Vinyl Ain't Final: Hip Hop and the Globalization of Black Popular Culture*. Pluto Press.
- Kiselev, Mihail, and Polina Hanova. 2020. 'Modern, postmodern, metamodern: russkij rap kak territoriya bol'shih kul'turnih konfliktov.' Pp. 234–61 in *Novaya kritika. Konteksty i smysly rossijskoj pop-muzyki*, edited by Aleksandr Gorbachev. Institut muzykal'nyh iniciativ.
- Kirey-Sitnikova, Yana. 2015. *Transgendernost' i Transfeminizm*. Salamandra.
- Kirey-Sitnikova, Yana. 2016. 'The Emergence of Transfeminism in Russia: Opposition from Cisnormative Feminists and Trans* People'. *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 3(1–2):165–74. doi: 10.1215/23289252-3334343.
- Kirey-Sitnikova, Yana. 2020. "Borrowing and Imitation in Post-Soviet Trans Activisms." Pp. 774–97 in *The SAGE handbook of global sexualities. Vol. 2*, edited by Zowie Davy, Ana Cristina Santos, Chiara Bertone, Ryan Thoreson, Saskia E. Wieringa. Sage Publications.
- Kivelson, Valerie and Ronald Suny. 2017. *Russia's Empires*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

- Knight, Nathaniel. 2012. 'Vocabularies of Difference: Ethnicity and Race in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia'. *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13(3):667-83.
- Knight, Nathaniel. 2017. 'Geography, Race and the Malleability of Man: Karl von Baer and the Problem of Academic Particularism in the Russian Human Sciences'. *Centaurus* 59(1-2):97-121.
- Knight, Nathaniel. 2019. 'What Do We Mean When We Talk about Race? Methodological Reflections on the Theory and Practice of Race in Imperial Russia'. *Etnograficheskoe Obozrenie* (2):114-32.
- Kolstø, Pål. 2019. 'Is Imperialist Nationalism an Oxymoron?' *Nations and Nationalism* 25(1):18-44.
- Koven, Michele E. J. 2013. 'Antiracist, Modern Selves and Racist, Unmodern Others: Chronotopes of Modernity in Luso-Descendants' Race Talk'. *Language and Communication* 33(4):544-58. doi: 10.1016/j.langcom.2013.04.001.
- Kruglyj stol. 2005. '«Doing Gender» Na Russkom Pole: Kruglyj Stol'. *Gendernye issledovaniya* (13):190-216.
- Kukulin, Ilya. 2021. 'The Culture of Ban: Pop Culture, Social Media and Securitization of Youth Politics in Today's Russia'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 27(2):177-90.
- Kulawik, Teresa. 2019. 'Introduction: European Borderlands and Topographies of Transnational Feminism'. Pp. 1-38 in *Borderlands in European Gender Studies*, edited by Teresa Kulawik and Zhanna Kravchenko. Routledge.
- Kulpa, Robert, and Joanna Mizielińska. 2011. *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central and Eastern European Perspectives*.
- Kulpa, Robert, Joanna Mizielińska, and Agata Stasinska. 2012. '(Un)Translatable Queer?, Or What Is Lost and Can Be Found in Translation...' Pp. 115-147 in *Import - Export - Transport. Queer Theory, Queer Critique and Activism in Motion*, edited by Sushila Mesquita, Maria Katharina Wiedlack, and Katrin Lasthofer. Vienna: Zaglossus.
- Labrot, Christopher. 2015. "«He Будь, Как Баба!» The Bodies of Conchita Wurst, Pussy Riot, and Russian Homo Pornography Against the Russian Future'. Master Thesis, New York University.
- Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 2008. *Metaphors We Live By*. University of Chicago Press.
- Laruelle, Marlène. 2010. 'The Ideological Shift on the Russian Radical Right'. *Problems of Post-Communism* 57(6):19-31. doi: 10.2753/PPC1075-8216570602.
- Laruelle, Marlene. 2019. *Russian Nationalism: Imaginaries, Doctrines, and Political Battlefields*. Taylor & Francis.
- Laryš, Martin, and Miroslav Mareš. 2011. 'Right-Wing Extremist Violence in the Russian Federation'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 63(1):129-54.
- Law, Ian. 2012. *Red Racisms: Racism in Communist and Post-Communist Contexts*. Springer.
- Law, Ian. 2020. 'Racialization, Polyracism, and Global Racism'. Pp. 97-118 in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*, edited by John Stone, Rutledge M. Dennis, Polly Rizova, Xiaoshuo Hou. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
- Law, Ian, and Nikolay Zakharov. 2019. 'Race and Racism in Eastern Europe: Becoming White, Becoming Western'. Pp. 113-39 in *Relating Worlds of Racism*:

- Dehumanisation, Belonging, and the Normativity of European Whiteness*, edited by Philomena Essed, Karen Farquharson, Kathryn Pillay, and Elisa Joy White. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Layton, Susan. 1995. *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Laznovsky, Nicholas Scott. 2021. 'The Mutated Chechen Identity: "Akhmat Sila!" The Significance of a Slogan and Its Proliferation in the Digital and Physical Space'. Master Thesis, Department of Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, The University of Texas at Austin.
- Lemon, Alaina. 1995. "'What Are They Writing about Us Blacks?'--Roma and "Race" in Russia'. *Anthropology of East Europe Review* 13(2):34-40.
- Lemon, Alaina. 2000. *Between Two Fires*. Duke University Press.
- Lemon, Alaina. 2002. 'Without a "Concept"? Race as Discursive Practice'. *Slavic Review* 61(1):54-61.
- Lemon, Alaina. 2019. 'The Matter of Race'. Pp. 59-76 in *Ideologies of Race, Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, edited by David Rainbow. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Lempert, Michael. 2014. 'Imitation'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43:379-95.
- Lewis, Gail. 2013. 'Unsafe Travel: Experiencing Intersectionality and Feminist Displacements'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38(4):869-92.
- Liebig, Anne. 2020. 'No Face, No Case: Russian Hip Hop and Politics under Putinism'. *FORUM: University of Edinburgh Postgraduate Journal of Culture & the Arts* (30). doi: 10.2218/forum.30.4473.
- Liljeström, Marianne. 2016. 'Constructing the West/Nordic: The Rise of Gender Studies in Russia'. Pp. 133-175 in *The Geopolitics of Nordic and Russian Gender Research 1975-2005*. Södertörns högskola.
- de Lima Costa, Claudia, and Sonia E. Alvarez. 2014. 'Dislocating the Sign: Toward a Translocal Feminist Politics of Translation'. *Signs* 39(3):557-63. doi: 10.1086/674381.
- Litvinenko, Anna. 2021. 'YouTube as Alternative Television in Russia: Political Videos during the Presidential Election Campaign 2018'. *Social Media+ Society* 7(1):2056305120984455.
- Loveman, Mara. 1999. 'Is "Race" Essential?' *American Sociological Review* 64(6):891-98.
- Ludwig, David. 2019. 'How Race Travels: Relating Local and Global Ontologies of Race'. *Philosophical Studies* 176(10):2729-50. doi: 10.1007/s11098-018-1148-x.
- Maitland, Sara. 2017. *What Is Cultural Translation?* Bloomsbury Academic.
- Malakhov, Vladimir. 2019. 'Why Tajiks Are (Not) Like Arabs: Central Asian Migration into Russia Against the Background of Maghreb Migration into France'. *Nationalities Papers* 47(2):310-24.
- Mamedov, Mikail. 2008. "'Going Native" in the Caucasus: Problems of Russian Identity, 1801-64'. *The Russian Review* 67(2):275-95.
- Marable, Manning, and Vanessa Agard-Jones, eds. 2008. *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line*. Springer.
- Martin, Terry. 2000. "Modernization or Neo-Traditionalism? Ascribed Nationality and Soviet Primordialism." Pp. 161-82 in *Russian Modernity: Politics, Knowledge, Practices, 1800-1950* edited by David L. Hoffmann and Yanni Kotsonis. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

- Matusevich, Maxim. 2008a. 'Black in the USSR'. *Transition* (100):56–75.
- Matusevich, Maxim. 2008b. 'Journeys of Hope: African Diaspora and the Soviet Society Voyages d'espoir: La Diaspora Africaine et La Société Soviétique'. *African Diaspora* 1(1–2):53–85.
- Matusevich, Maxim. 2012. 'Expanding the Boundaries of the Black Atlantic: African Students as Soviet Moderns'. *Ab Imperio* 2012(2):325–50.
- McLeod, Kembrew. 1999. 'Authenticity Within Hip-Hop and Other Cultures Threatened with Assimilation'. *Journal of Communication* 49(4):134–50. doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02821.x.
- McMichael, Polly. 2008. 'Translation, Authorship and Authenticity in Soviet Rock Songwriting'. *The Translator* 14(2):201–28.
- Means Coleman, Robin R., and Jasmine Cobb. 2007. 'No Way of Seeing: Mainstreaming and Selling the Gaze of Homo-Thug Hip-Hop'. *Popular Communication* 5(2):89–108. doi: 10.1080/15405700701294053.
- Miazhevich, Galina. 2010. 'Sexual Excess in Russia's Eurovision Performances as a Nation Branding Tool'. *Russian Journal of Communication* 3(3–4):248–64.
- Miazhevich, Galina. 2017. 'Paradoxes of New Media: Digital Discourses on Eurovision 2014, Media Flows and Post-Soviet Nation-Building'. *New Media & Society* 19(2):199–216.
- Michelotti, Valentina. 2016. 'Opinion: Russian Rap Needs to Kick Its Addiction to America'. *The Calvert Journal*. Retrieved January 2023. calvertjournal.com/articles/show/6873/russian-rap-america-skriptonit.
- Mills, Scout. 2018. 'Hip-Hop Lifestyle Branding and Russian Ethno-Nationalism: The Case of Timati'. *NYU Jordan Center*. Retrieved December 2022. jordanrussiacenter.org/news/scout-mills-on-timati-part-i.
- Miszczyński, Miłosz, and Adriana Helbig. 2017. *Hip-Hop at Europe's Edge*. Indiana University Press.
- Miszczynski, Miłosz, and Przemysław Tomaszewski. 2014. "'Spitting Lines – Spitting Brands": A Critical Analysis of Brand Usage in Polish Rap'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 17(6):736–52. doi: 10.1177/1367549414544118.
- Mitchell, Tony. 2001. *Global Noise: Rap and Hip Hop Outside the USA*. Wesleyan University Press.
- Mitrohin, Nikolaj. 2003. *Russkaya Partiya: Dvizhenie Russkikh Nacionalistov v SSSR: 1953–1985 Gody*. Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Mogilner, Marina. 2008. *Homo Imperii. Istoriya Fizicheskoy Antropologii v Rossii (Konec XIX-Nachalo XX v.)*. Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Mogilner, Marina. 2021. 'When Race Is a Language and Empire Is a Context'. *Slavic Review* 80(2):207–15.
- Moreno Almeida, Cristina. 2017. *Rap Beyond Resistance*. Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
- Morgan, Marcyliena. 2016. "'The World Is Yours": The Globalization of Hip-Hop Language'. *Social Identities* 22(2):133–49. doi: 10.1080/13504630.2015.1121569.
- Morgan, Marcyliena, and Dionne Bennett. 2011. 'Hip-Hop & the Global Imprint of a Black Cultural Form'. *Daedalus* 140(2):176–96.
- Morozov, Viacheslav, Anatoly Reshetnikov, and Elizaveta Gaufman. 2022. "'F*** Tha Police!" À La Russe: Rancièrè and the Metamodernist Turn in Contemporary Russian Music'. *Nationalities Papers* 1–27. doi: 10.1017/nps.2022.112.

- Morozov, Viatcheslav. 2015. *Russia's Postcolonial Identity: A Subaltern Empire in a Eurocentric World*. Springer.
- Morris, Jeremy, and Masha Garibyan. 2021. 'Russian Cultural Conservatism Critiqued: Translating the Tropes of 'Gayropa' and 'Juvenile Justice' in Everyday Life'. *Europe-Asia Studies* 73(8):1487-1507.
- Moss, Kevin. 2017. 'Russia as the Saviour of European Civilization: Gender and the Geopolitics of Traditional Values'. *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against Equality* 195-214.
- Muravyeva, Marianna. 2014. 'Traditional Values and Modern Families: Legal Understanding of Tradition And Modernity in Contemporary Russia'. *Zhurnal Issledovaniy Social'noj Politiki* 12(4):625-38.
- Myskja, Kjetil. 2013. 'Foreignisation and Resistance: Lawrence Venuti and His Critics'. *Nordic Journal of English Studies* 12(2):1-23.
- Nash, Jennifer C. 2014. 'Institutionalizing the Margins'. *Social Text* 32(1):45-65.
- Nash, Jennifer C. 2016. 'Feminist Originalism: Intersectionality and the Politics of Reading'. *Feminist Theory* 17(1):3-20.
- Nash, Jennifer C. 2019. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Navickaitė, Rasa. 2014. 'Postcolonial Queer Critique in Post-Communist Europe - Stuck in the Western Progress Narrative?' *Tijdschrift Voor Genderstudies* 17(2):165-85. doi: 10.5117/TVGEND2014.2.NAVI.
- Nayak, Anoop. 2006. 'After Race: Ethnography, Race and Post-Race Theory'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29(3):411-30.
- Neumann, Birgit, and Ansgar Nünning. 2012. 'Travelling Concepts as a Model for the Study of Culture.' Pp. 1-22 in *Travelling Concepts as a Model for the Study of Culture*. edited by Birgit Neumann and Ansgar Nünning. De Gruyter.
- Nooshin, Laudan. 2017. 'Whose Liberation? Iranian Popular Music and the Fetishization of Resistance'. *Popular Communication* 15(3):163-91. doi: 10.1080/15405702.2017.1328601.
- Novitskaya, Alexandra. 2017. 'Patriotism, Sentiment, and Male Hysteria: Putin's Masculinity Politics and the Persecution of Non-Heterosexual Russians'. *Norma* 12(3-4):302-18.
- Omelchenko, Elena. 2021. 'Twenty Five Years of Youth Studies: Global Names—Local Trends'. Pp. 1-65 in *Youth in Putin's Russia*, edited by Elena Omelchenko. Springer.
- Osumare, Halifu. 2001. 'Beat Streets in the Global Hood: Connective Marginalities of the Hip Hop Globe'. *Journal of American & Comparative Cultures* 24(1-2):171-81. doi: 10.1111/j.1537-4726.2001.2401_171.x.
- Osumare, Halifu. 2007. *The Africanist Aesthetic in Global Hip-Hop: Power Moves*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Oushakine, Serguei. 1998. 'Pol Kak Ideologicheskij Produkt: O Nekotoryh Napravleniyah v Rossijskom Feminizme'. *Preobrazhenie* (6):5.
- Oushakine, Serguei. 2000. 'Gender (Naproskat): Poleznaya Kategoriya Dlya Nauchnoj Kar'ery'. *Gendernaya Istoriya: Pro et Contra* 34-39.
- Oushakine, Serguei. 1999. 'Pole Pola: V Centre i Po Krayam'. *Voprosy Filosofii* (5):71-85.

- Oushakine, Serguei. 2002. 'Chelovek Roda On»: Znaki Otsutstviya.' Pp. 7–40 in *O muzhe (N) stvennosti*, edited by Serguei Oushakine. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Oushakine, Serguei. 2012. 'Do i Posle Gendera: Interv'yu s Sergeem Ushakinym'. *Nauka* June(21).
- Ousmanova, Almira. 2003. 'On the Ruins of Orthodox Marxism: Gender and Cultural Studies in Eastern Europe'. *Studies in East European Thought* 55(1):37–50.
- Pang, Laikwan. 2008. 'China Who Makes and Fakes' A Semiotics of the Counterfeit'. *Theory, Culture & Society* 25(6):117–40.
- Pardue, Derek. 2004. 'Putting *Mano* to Music: The Mediation of Race in Brazilian Rap'. *Ethnomusicology Forum* 13(2):253–86. doi: 10.1080/1741191042000286211.
- Patil, Vrushali. 2013. 'From Patriarchy to Intersectionality: A Transnational Feminist Assessment of How Far We've Really Come'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 38(4):847–67.
- Patton, Desmond Upton, Robert D. Eschmann, and Dirk A. Butler. 2013. 'Internet Banging: New Trends in Social Media, Gang Violence, Masculinity and Hip Hop'. *Computers in Human Behavior* 29(5):A54–59.
- Pennycook, Alastair. 2006. *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows*. Routledge.
- Pennycook, Alastair. 2007. 'Language, Localization, and the Real: Hip-Hop and the Global Spread of Authenticity'. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 6(2):101–15. doi: 10.1080/15348450701341246.
- Pennycook, Alastair, and Tony Mitchell. 2008. 'Hip Hop as Dusty Foot Philosophy: Engaging Locality'. Pp. 25–42 in *Global Linguistic Flows: Hip Hop Cultures, Youth Identities, and the Politics of Language*, edited by H. Samy Alim, Awad Ibrahim, and Alastair Pennycook. Routledge.
- Perea, Juan F. 1997. 'The Black/White Binary Paradigm of Race: The "Normal Science" of American Racial Thought'. *California Law Review* 85(5):1213. doi: 10.2307/3481059.
- Pereira, Maria do Mar. 2014. 'The Importance of Being "Modern" and Foreign: Feminist Scholarship and the Epistemic Status of Nations'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 39(3):627–57.
- Pereira, Maria do Mar. 2017. *Power, Knowledge and Feminist Scholarship: An Ethnography of Academia*. Taylor & Francis.
- Perheentupa, Inna. 2022. *Feminist Politics in Neoconservative Russia: An Ethnography of Resistance and Resources*. Policy Press.
- Perry, Imani. 2004. *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*. Duke University Press.
- Pilkington, Hilary. 1994. *Russia's Youth and Its Culture: A Nation's Constructors and Constructed*. Routledge.
- Pilkington, Hilary. 2002. *Looking West?: Cultural Globalization and Russian Youth Cultures*. Penn State Press.
- Pilkington, Hilary. 2010. 'No Longer "On Parade": Style and the Performance of Skinhead in the Russian Far North'. *Source: The Russian Review* 69(2):187–209.
- Polfuß, Jonas. 2022. 'Hip-Hop: A Marketplace Icon'. *Consumption Markets & Culture* 25(3):272–86. doi: 10.1080/10253866.2021.1990050.
- Pough, Gwendolyn D. 2015. *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Womanhood, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*. Northeastern University Press.
- Pratt, Mary Louise. 2007. *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. Routledge.

- Pratt, Mary Louise, Birgit Wagner, Ovidi Carbonell i Cortés, Andrew Chesterman, and Maria Tymoczko. 2010. 'Translation Studies Forum: Cultural Translation'. *Translation Studies* 3(1):94–110. doi: 10.1080/14781700903338706.
- Proshina, Zoya. 2020. 'Slavic Englishes: Education or Culture?' Pp. 338–54 in *The Routledge handbook of world Englishes*, edited by Andy Kirkpatrick. Routledge.
- Puar, Jasbir K. 2012. "I Would Rather Be a Cyborg than a Goddess": Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory'. *PhiloSOPHIA* 2(1):49–66.
- Puar, Jasbir K. 2015. 'Homonationalism as Assemblage: Viral Travels, Affective Sexualities'. *Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais* 3(1):319–37.
- Pym, Anthony. 2010. 'On Empiricism and Bad Philosophy in Translation Studies'. Retrieved December 2022. usuaris.tinet.cat/apym/online/research_methods/2009_lille.pdf.
- Pym, Anthony. 2017. *Exploring Translation Theories*. Routledge.
- Pym, Anthony, and Nune Ayzazyan. 2015. 'The Case of the Missing Russian Translation Theories'. *Translation Studies* 8(3):321–41.
- Rabinovich, Tatiana. 2021. 'Becoming "Black" and Muslim in Today's Russia'. *Meridians* 20(2):396–413. doi: 10.1215/15366936-9547943.
- Rahier, Jean Muteba, Percy C. Hintzen, and Felipe Smith. 2010. *Global Circuits of Blackness: Interrogating the African Diaspora*. University of Illinois Press.
- Rainbow, David. 2019. 'Introduction': Pp. 3–26 in *Ideologies of Race, Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, edited by David Rainbow. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Reyes, Angela. 2017. 'Ontology of Fake: Discerning the Philippine Elite'. *Signs and Society* 5(S1):S100–127. doi: 10.1086/690067.
- Reznikova, Olya. 2014. 'Rol' Kategorii Gender i Race v Issledovanii Postkolonial'nosti v Rossii. Oplakivaemost' i Chechenskij Feminizm'. Pp. 24–41 in *Na pereput'e: metodologiya, teoriya i praktika LGBT i kvir-issledovaniy*, edited by Aleksandr Kondakov. Centr Nezavisimyh Sociologicheskikh Issledovaniy.
- Riabov, Oleg, and Tatiana Riabova. 2014. 'The Remasculinization of Russia? Gender, Nationalism, and the Legitimation of Power under Vladimir Putin'. *Problems of Post-Communism* 61(2):23–35.
- Rivkin-Fish, Michele. 2003. 'Anthropology, Demography, and the Search for a Critical Analysis of Fertility: Insights from Russia'. *American Anthropologist* 105(2):289–301. doi: 10.1525/aa.2003.105.2.289.
- Rodina, Elena, and Dmitriy Dligach. 2019. 'Dictator's Instagram: Personal and Political Narratives in a Chechen Leader's Social Network'. *Caucasus Survey* 7(2):95–109. doi: 10.1080/23761199.2019.1567145.
- Roman, Meredith L. 2002. 'Making Caucasians Black: Moscow Since the Fall of Communism and the Racialization of Non-Russians'. *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 18(2):1–27. doi: 10.1080/714003604.
- Roman, Meredith L. 2012. 'Forging Soviet Racial Enlightenment: Soviet Writers Condemn American Racial Mores, 1926, 1936, 1946'. *The Historian* 74(3):528–50. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6563.2012.00327.x.
- Roman, Meredith L. 2019. *Opposing Jim Crow: African Americans and the Soviet Indictment of U.S. Racism, 1928–1937*. U of Nebraska Press.

- Rondaryov, Artyom. 2015. 'Muzyka Mazhorov i Utyugov: Artem Rondaryov o Russkom Hip-Hope — Sputnik i Pogrom'. Retrieved January 2023. sputnikipogrom.com/music/23766/russian-hiphop/#.VFaMwYd_Gao.
- Rondaryov, Artyom. 2018. '«Iz Bronksa v Moskvu: Kak Menyalsya Hip-hop»'. Lekciya Artyoma Rondaryova'. Retrieved December 2022. youtube.com/watch?v=FWVDDxKTRKE.
- Rosa, Jonathan. 2016. 'Racializing Language, Regimenting Latinas/Os: Chronotope, Social Tense, and American Raciolinguistic Futures'. *Language and Communication* 46:106–17. doi: 10.1016/J.LANGCOM.2015.10.007.
- Rosa, Jonathan. 2019. *Looking like a Language, Sounding like a Race: Raciolinguistic Ideologies and the Learning of Latinidad*. 1st Edition. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Rose, Tricia. 1994. *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*. Wesleyan.
- Rose, Tricia. 2008. *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk about When We Talk about Hip Hop—and Why It Matters*. New York: BasicCivitas.
- Roth-Gordon, Jennifer. 2008. 'Conversational Sampling, Race Trafficking, and the Invocation of the Gueto in Brazilian Hip Hop'. Pp. 63–77 in *Global linguistic flows: Hip hop cultures, youth identities, and the politics of language*, edited by H. Samy Alim, Awad Ibrahim, and Alastair Pennycook. Routledge.
- Roth-Gordon, Jennifer. 2013. 'Racial Malleability and the Sensory Regime of Politically Conscious Brazilian Hip Hop'. *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 18(2):294–313. doi: 10.1111/jlca.12021.
- Roth-Gordon, Jennifer. 2016. 'From Upstanding Citizen to North American Rapper and Back Again: The Racial Malleability of Poor Male Brazilian Youth.' Pp. 51-64 in *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas About Race*, edited by H. Samy Alim, John R. Rickford, and Arnetha F. Ball. Oxford University Press.
- Round, John, and Irina Kuznetsova. 2016. 'Necropolitics and the Migrant as a Political Subject of Disgust: The Precarious Everyday of Russia's Labour Migrants'. *Critical Sociology* 42(7–8):1017–34. doi: 10.1177/0896920516645934.
- Russell, John. 2005. 'Terrorists, Bandits, Spooks and Thieves: Russian Demonisation of the Chechens before and since 9/11'. *Third World Quarterly* 26(1):101–16.
- Sadowski-Smith, Claudia. 2018. *The New Immigrant Whiteness: Race, Neoliberalism, and Post-Soviet Migration to the United States*. NYU Press.
- Sahadeo, Jeff. 2007a. 'Druzhba Narodov or Second-Class Citizenship? Soviet Asian Migrants in a Post-Colonial World'. *Central Asian Survey* 26(4):559–79. doi: 10.1080/02634930802018463.
- Sahadeo, Jeff. 2007b. *Russian Colonial Society in Tashkent, 1865–1923*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Sahadeo, Jeff. 2012. 'Soviet “Blacks” and Place Making in Leningrad and Moscow'. *Slavic Review* 71(2):331–58. doi: 10.1017/S0037677900013644.
- Sahadeo, Jeff. 2016. 'Black Snouts Go Home! Migration and Race in Late Soviet Leningrad and Moscow'. *The Journal of Modern History* 88(4):797–826.
- Sahadeo, Jeff. 2019. *Voices from the Soviet Edge: Southern Migrants in Leningrad and Moscow*. Cornell University Press.
- Said, Edward W. 1983. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Harvard University Press.
- Said, Edward W. 1994. *Culture and Imperialism*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group.

- Salem, Sara. 2018. 'Intersectionality and Its Discontents: Intersectionality as Traveling Theory'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 25(4):403–18. doi: 10.1177/1350506816643999.
- Sansone, Livio. 2003. *Blackness without Ethnicity: Constructing Race in Brazil*. Springer.
- Savcı, Evren. 2021. *Queer in Translation: Sexual Politics under Neoliberal Islam*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Savkina, Irina. 2007. 'Faktory Razdrzhenija: O Vosprijatii i Obsuzhdenii Feministkoi Kritiki i Gendernyh Issledovanij v Russkom Kontekste'. *Novoje Literaturnoje Obozrenije* 2007(86):207–29.
- Schur, Richard. 2011. *Parodies of Ownership: Hip-Hop Aesthetics and Intellectual Property Law*. University of Michigan Press.
- Scicchitano, Dominic. 2021. 'The "Real" Chechen Man: Conceptions of Religion, Nature, and Gender and the Persecution of Sexual Minorities in Postwar Chechnya'. *Journal of Homosexuality* 68(9):1545–62.
- Selman, Brian Elliot. 2017. 'Power Flows to Rap Flows: Power Dynamics within the Cultural Sphere of Putin's Russia'. Master Thesis. Department of Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies, The University of Texas at Austin
- Sen'kova, Ol'ga. 2018. "ya s Ehtimi Lyud'mi v Odin Avtozak Ne Syadu": Solidarnosti i Konflikty v Feministskih Inicijativah Peterburga'. *Zhurnal Issledovanij Social'noj Politiki* 16(3):457–72.
- Sharafutdinova, Gulnaz. 2019. 'Was There a "Simple Soviet" Person? Debating the Politics and Sociology of "Homo Sovieticus"'. *Slavic Review* 78(1):173–95. doi: 10.1017/slr.2019.13.
- Shnirelman, Victor. 2011. "Porog Tolerantnosti": Ideologiya i Praktika Novogo Rasizma. *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*.
- Shnirelman, Victor. 2015. *Arijskij Mif v Sovremennom Mire*. *Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie*.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1979. 'Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology'. Pp. 193–247 in Paul Clyne, William Hanks and Carol Hofbauer (Eds.) *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*.
- Silverstein, Michael. 2003. 'Indexical Order and the Dialectics of Sociolinguistic Life'. *Language & Communication* 23(3):193–229. doi: 10.1016/S0271-5309(03)00013-2.
- Simon, Mark. 2020. 'Reprezentacii Migrantov v Klipah Rossijskih Nezavisimyh Artistov: Tri Strategii Konstruirovaniya Autentichnosti'. *Neprikosnovennyj Zapas. Debaty o Politike i Kul'ture* (6):199–211.
- Slobodian, Quinn, ed. 2015. *Comrades of Color: East Germany in the Cold War World*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Slootmaeckers, Koen. 2020. 'Constructing European Union Identity through LGBT Equality Promotion: Crises and Shifting Othering Processes in the European Union Enlargement'. *Political Studies Review* 18(3):346–61. doi: 10.1177/1478929919877624.
- Smirnova, Michelle. 2017. 'Multiple Masculinities: Gender Performativity in Soviet Political Humor'. *Men and Masculinities* 20(2):204–29.
- Smith, Tom W. 1992. 'Changing Racial Labels: From "Colored" to "Negro" to "Black" to "African American"'. *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 56(4):496–514.

- Solovey, Vanya Mark. 2020. "Global Standards" and "Internalized Coloniality": How Feminists in Russia See the "West". *Queer-Feminist Solidarity and the East/West Divide* 153–73.
- Solovey, Vanya Mark. 2021. 'On the Squares and in the Comments Sections: The Feminist Movement in Russia between Contentious and Discursive Politics'. *Journal of International Women's Studies* 22(11):16–30.
- Solovey, Vanya Mark. 2022. 'The Contemporary Feminist Movement in Russia'. PhD Dissertation, Kultur-, Sozial- und Bildungswissenschaftlichen Fakultät, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
- Souleimanov, Emil Aslan, and Jasper Schwampe. 2017. 'Devout Muslims or Tough Highlanders? Exploring Attitudes toward Ethnic Nationalism and Racism in Europe's Ethnic-Chechen Salafi Communities'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43(15):2616–33.
- Sperling, Valerie. 2014. *Sex, Politics, and Putin: Political Legitimacy in Russia*. Oxford University Press.
- Stam, Robert, and Ella Shohat. 2012. *Race in Translation: Culture Wars Around the Postcolonial Atlantic*. NYU Press.
- Stapleton, Katina R. 1998. 'From the Margins to Mainstream: The Political Power of Hip-Hop'. *Media, Culture & Society* 20(2):219–34.
- Stella, Francesca. 2013. 'Queer Space, Pride, and Shame in Moscow'. *Slavic Review* 72(3):458–80. doi: 10.5612/slavicreview.72.3.0458.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 1997. 'Racial Histories and Their Regimes of Truth'. *Political Power and Social Theory* 11(1):183–206.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. 2016. *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times*. Duke University Press.
- Strzemżalska, Aneta. 2020. 'Slam in the Name of Country: Nationalism in Contemporary Azerbaijani Meykhana'. *Slavic Review* 79(2):323–44.
- Suchland, Jennifer. 2018. 'The LGBT Specter in Russia: Refusing Queerness, Claiming "Whiteness"'. *Gender, Place & Culture* 25(7):1073–88. doi: 10.1080/0966369X.2018.1456408.
- Suchland, Jennifer. 2021. 'Locating Postsocialist Precarity in Global Coloniality: A Decolonial Frame for 1989?' Pp. 14–28 in *Postcolonial and Postsocialist Dialogues*, edited by Redi Koobak, Madina Tlostanova and Suruchi Thapar-Björkert. Routledge.
- Sumina, Ekaterina. 2014. 'Producing White and Black: The Caucasian Male Other and Boundaries of the Nation in Contemporary Russia.' Master Thesis, Department of Gender Studies, Central European University.
- Susam-Sarajeva, Şebnem. 2006. *Theories on the Move: Translation's Role in the Travels of Literary Theories*. Brill.
- Suzuki, Kazuko. 2017. 'A Critical Assessment of Comparative Sociology of Race and Ethnicity'. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 3(3):287–300. doi: 10.1177/2332649217708580.
- Takezawa, Yasuko. 2005. 'Transcending the Western Paradigm of the Idea of Race'. *The Japanese Journal of American Studies* 16:5–30.
- Temkina, Anna, and Elena Zdravomyslova. 2014. 'Gender's Crooked Path: Feminism Confronts Russian Patriarchy'. *Current Sociology* 62(2):253–70.
- Terkourafi, Marina. 2010. *The Languages of Global Hip Hop*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

- Tlostanova, Madina. 2010. *Gender Epistemologies and Eurasian Borderlands*. Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Tlostanova, Madina. 2015. 'Toutes Les Femmes Sont Russes, Tous Les Caucasiens Sont Des Hommes? Intersectionnalité, Pluriversalité et Les Autres Genre-Es Des Frontières Eurasiennes'. *Les Cahiers Du CEDREF. Centre d'enseignement, d'études et de Recherches Pour Les Études Féministes* (20).
- Tolz, Vera. 2012. 'Diskurs o Rase: Imperskaia Rossiia i Zapad'v Svravnenii'. Pp. 145-193 in *Poniatiia o Rossii: K istorii semantiki imperskogo perioda Vol.2*, edited by Alexei Miller, Denis Sdvizhkov, Ingrid Schirle. Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
- Tolz, Vera. 2014. 'Discourses of Race in Imperial Russia (1830-1914)'. Pp. 130-44 in *The Invention of Race*. Routledge.
- Tolz, Vera. 2019. 'Constructing Race, Ethnicity, and Nationhood in Imperial Russia': Pp. 29-58 in *Ideologies of Race, Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, edited by David Rainbow. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Tomlinson, Barbara. 2013. 'Colonizing Intersectionality: Replicating Racial Hierarchy in Feminist Academic Arguments'. *Social Identities* 19(2):254-72.
- Trivedi, Harish. 2007. 'Translating Culture vs. Cultural Translation'. Pp. 277-287 in *Translation Reflections, Refractions, Transformations* edited by St-Pierre, Paul, and Prafulla C. Kar. John Benjamins Publishing.
- Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 1997. 'Transitions as Translations'. Pp. 253-272 in *Transitions, Environments, Translations: Feminisms in International Politics*, edited by Kaplan, Cora, Joan Wallach Scott and Debra Keates. New York; London: Routledge.
- Tsarev, Aleksej. 2019. 'Gorodskoe Prostranstvo v Rossijskom Hip-Hope: Zony Otchuzhdeniya i Ego Preodoleniya'. *Neprikosnovennyj Zapas. Debaty o Politike i Kul'ture* (1):132-43.
- Tymoczko, Maria. 2000. 'Translation and Political Engagement'. *The Translator* 6(1):23-47. doi: 10.1080/13556509.2000.10799054.
- Tymoczko, Maria. 2010. *Translation, Resistance, Activism*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Tyulenev, Sergey, and Vitaly Nuriev. 2020. "'Sewing up' the Soviet Politico-Cultural System" Pp. 155-68 in *Transnational Russian Studies*, edited by Andy Byford, Connor Doak, and Stephen Hutchings. Liverpool University Press.
- Ustinova, Irina P. 2005. 'English in Russia'. *World Englishes* 24(2):239-52.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Vol. 30. London and New York: Routledge.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 1998. 'Strategies of Translation'. Pp. 240-244 in *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies*, edited by Mona Baker, Kirsten Malmkjær. Psychology Press.
- Venuti, Lawrence. 2017. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*. Routledge.
- Verkhovsky, Alexander. 2018. 'The Russian Nationalist Movement at Low Ebb.' Pp. 142-62 in *Russia Before and After Crimea, Nationalism and Identity, 2010-17*, edited by Pål Kolstø and Helge Blakkisrud. Edinburgh University Press.
- Vernallis, Carol. 2004. *Experiencing Music Video: Aesthetics and Cultural Context*. Vol. 42.
- Vlahov, Sergej, and Sider Florin. 1980. *Neperevodimoe v Perevode*. Moskva: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya.

- Voronina, Olga. 2007. 'Angliiskii Retsept Dlya Rossiiskikh Gendernykh Issledovaniĭ'. *Gendernye Issledovaniia* 15:174–78.
- Wachtel, Andrew. 1999. 'Translation, Imperialism, and National Self-Definition in Russia'. *Public Culture* 11(1):49–73. doi: 10.1215/08992363-11-1-49.
- Walke, Anika. 2019. 'Was Soviet Internationalism Anti-Racist?' Pp. 284–311 in *Ideologies of Race, Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union in Global Context*, edited by David Rainbow. McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Weiner, Amir. 2002. 'Nothing but Certainty'. *Slavic Review* 61(1):44–53.
- Weitz, Eric D. 2002. 'Racial Politics without the Concept of Race: Reevaluating Soviet Ethnic and National Purges'. *Slavic Review* 61(1):1–29. doi: 10.2307/2696978.
- Westinen, Elina. 2014. 'The Discursive Construction of Authenticity: Resources, Scales and Polycentricity in Finnish Hip Hop Culture'. Ph.D. Dissertation, Department of Languages, University of Jyväskylä.
- Wiedlack, Katharina. 2016. 'Pussy Riot and the Western Gaze: Punk Music, Solidarity and the Production of Similarity and Difference.' *Popular Music and Society* 39(4):410–22. doi: 10.1080/03007766.2015.1088281.
- Wiedlack, Katharina. 2020. '¿Un despertar feminista? La estancia soviética de Louise Thompson Patterson y Dorothy West'. *Feminismo/s* (36):103–28. doi: 10.14198/fem.2020.36.05.
- Wiedlack, Katharina. 2022. 'Decentering the West in the History of Feminism: Reclaiming Russian Influence on US Feminism and Black Women Radicals in the Early 20th Century'. *WiN: The EAAS Women's Network Journal* 3 (2022). women.eaas.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Wiedlack.pdf
- Wiedlack, Katharina, and Nasha Neufeld. 2014. 'Lost in Translation? Pussy Riot Solidary Activism and the Danger of Perpetuating North/Western Hegemonies'. *Religion and Gender* 4(2):145. doi: 10.18352/rg.9215.
- Wiedlack, Maria Katharina. 2018. "'Quantum Leap" 2.0 or the Western Gaze on Russian Homophobia'. *Adeptus* 0(11). doi: 10.11649/a.1662.
- Wiegman, Robyn. 2012. *Object Lessons*. Duke University Press.
- Wilkinson, Cai. 2014. 'Putting "Traditional Values" Into Practice: The Rise and Contestation of Anti-Homopropaganda Laws in Russia'. *Journal of Human Rights* 13(3):363–79. doi: 10.1080/14754835.2014.919218.
- Wolff, Janet. 1993. 'On the Road Again: Metaphors of Travel in Cultural Criticism'. *Cultural Studies* 7(2):224–39.
- Wolff, Larry. 1994. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford University Press.
- Woolard, Kathryn A., and Bambi B. Schieffelin. 1994. 'Language Ideology'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 23(1):55–82. doi: 10.1146/annurev.an.23.100194.000415.
- Yangeldina, Dinara. 2020. '#Russianrapisracist vs #RussianNaziPurgeParty: On Geopolitics, Trolling and the Mistranslation of Race in a Twitter Controversy' Pp. 78–106 in *The Cultural Is Political: Intersections of Russian Art and State Politics*, edited by Irina Anisimova and Ingunn Lunde. Slavica Bergensia. Department of Foreign Languages, University of Bergen.
- Yelenevskaya, Maria, and Ekaterina Protassova. 2021. 'Teaching Languages in Multicultural Surroundings: New Tendencies'. *Russian Journal of Linguistics* 25(2):546–68.

- Yurchak, Alexei. 2000. 'Privatize Your Name: Symbolic Work in a Post-Soviet Linguistic Market'. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 4(3):406–34. doi: 10.1111/1467-9481.00122.
- Yusupova, Marina. 2021. 'The Invisibility of Race in Sociological Research on Contemporary Russia: A Decolonial Intervention'. *Slavic Review* 80(2):224–33. doi: 10.1017/slr.2021.77.
- Zakharov, Nikolay. 2015. *Race and Racism in Russia*. 2015th Edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Zakharov, Nikolay. 2013. 'Attaining Whiteness: A Sociological Study of Race and Racialization in Russia'. Ph.D. Dissertation, Faculty of Sociology, Uppsala University.
- Zavalishin, Andrej, and Nadezhda Kostyurina. 2020. 'Russkaya Rap-Kul'tura: Specifika Nauchnogo Analiza'. *Zhurnal Integrativnyh Issledovanij Kul'tury* 2(1):60–68.
- Zdravomyslova, Elena, and Anna Temkina. 2000. 'Vvedenie. Feministskij Perevod: Tekst, Avtor, Diskurs'. *Hrestomatiya Feministskih Tekstov. Perevody* 5–28.
- Zdravomyslova, Elena, and Anna Temkina. 2013. 'The Crisis of Masculinity in Late Soviet Discourse'. *Russian Social Science Review* 54(1):40–61. doi: 10.1080/10611428.2013.11065500.
- Zhaivoronok, Daniil. 2018. 'Kirkorov-manifesto: renessans rossijskoj pop-kvir-estetiki'. *Nozh*. Retrieved December 2022. knife.media/queer-kirkorov/.
- Zhaivoronok, Daniil. 2018. 'Trevozhnost', *Perevod i Mechta Ob Obshhem Yazyke: Zachem Feministki Obsuzhdayut Kommercheskij Seks*'. *Sociologiya Vlasti* 30(1):33–59.
- Zhang, Charlie Yi, Wen Liu, and Casey Lee. 2022. 'Ethno-Racial Paranoia and Affective Cold Warism: Remapping Rival US-PRC Imperial Formations'. *American Quarterly* 74(3):499–521. doi: 10.1353/aq.2022.0032.
- Zidan, Karim. 2019. 'Feature: How Kadyrov Uses His Relationship with Khabib for Geopolitical Diplomacy'. *Bloody Elbow*. Retrieved April 2022. bloodyelbow.com/2019/6/13/18662837/chechen-expansion-ramzan-kadyrov-ufc-champ-khabib-nurmagomedov-politics-karim-zidan-mma-feature.
- Zimmermann, Susan. 2008. 'The Institutionalization of Women's and Gender Studies in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union: Asymmetric Politics and the Regional-Transnational Configuration'. *East Central Europe* 34–35(1–2):131–60. doi: 10.1163/18763308-0340350102007.
- Zvereva, Galina Ivanovna. 2001. 'Chuzhoe, Svoe, Drugoe...: Feministskie i Gendernye Koncepty v Intellektual'noj Kul'ture Postsovetskoj Rossii'. *Adam i Eva. Al'manah Gendernoj Istorii* (2):98–112.



Graphic design: Communication Division, UIB / Print: Skjipes Kommunikasjon AS



uib.no

ISBN: 9788230865194 (print)
9788230863831 (PDF)