

**Technology and Autobiographical Selves in Contemporary
Russian Life Writing**

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Abstract

The present work deals with the strategies of identity production which were characteristic of Russian LiveJournal during the first decade of its presence on the Russian online ego-writing scene. In this work, I argue that personal narratives found in blogs of this period reflect the process of self-writing's adaptation to a new technological reality. In addition, I suggest that LiveJournal texts of this period testify to the consolidation of a new socio-cultural group following in the footsteps of the Russian intelligentsia and defining the forefront of political and cultural discussion in Russia at a time of tightening media censorship.

In this work, I adopt William James' interpretation of identity as a complex structure which, along with material expressions of Self and introspective self-conceptualizations, includes numerous self-identifications related to different social situations.¹ I look at Russian LiveJournal as a specific socio-technological environment in which bloggers' various Selves are produced, and compare and contrast these Selves to those characteristic of traditional diaries as well as to those supported by contemporary social media.

For this purpose, I perform micro-analysis of the corpora of biographical texts by four bloggers belonging to a community of young intellectuals and creative professionals. The corpora include all of their open, semi-open, double-locked and private LiveJournal entries made between the years 2003 and 2016, as well as the comments to these entries. These data are supplemented by fragments of hand-written diaries and biographical interviews, used for reconstructing the contexts of narration, for defining the areas of untold experiences, and for providing the frames of reference for the Selves narrated in the journals. In addition, twenty-three journals

¹ William James, *The Principles of Psychology*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1891), vol. I, pp. 292, 401.

linked with the central sample and largely authored by the representatives of cultural and intellectual elites are analysed quantitatively to support the propositions about the community's trends of self-presentation.

I maintain that the production of identity in LiveJournal is mediated by synergic influence of three different forces - the cultural, the social and the technological. Following the methodological route of the Actor-Network Theory, developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law,² I discover the webs of semiotic, human and material actors conditioning the processes of identity production in LiveJournal. In the three chapters of this thesis, I successively describe how the application of various cultural scripts, the subjection to the gaze of various Others as well as the use of the website's technological capabilities allow bloggers to create and to cycle through their different Selves. I also show how the formation of the new types of identity in LiveJournal secures the transition of life writing from its traditional forms to the ones presented in today's social media.

² Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Michel Callon, 'Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay', in *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, ed. by John Law (London: Routledge, 1986), pp. 196-233; John Law, 'Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics', in *The New Blackwell Companion to Social Theory*, ed. by Bryan S. Turner (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 141-58.

Fuller Abstract

Created in 1999, the American blogging website LiveJournal was quickly appropriated by RuNet users. At an early stage in its presence on the landscape of RuNet, LiveJournal became recognized as a point of consolidation of the social group known as the Russian intelligentsia: educated in the culture of Samizdat, intellectual elites were the first to master new technology and to adapt their literary practice to the changing media environment.³ During that period, membership of the LiveJournal community was characterized by good writing skills and the production of the Self as a Westernized, politically and culturally aware individual in the context of tightening media censorship early in Putin's reign. By 2005, LiveJournal had been adopted by mass users and ceased to be distinguished by social stratification.⁴ In the following years, it experienced unprecedented popularity: it hosted half of all Russian bloggers, and formed the 'discussion core' of RuNet.⁵ Yet by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, new social media had entered the scene of RuNet and largely replaced LiveJournal as the prime locus of online communication.⁶

In spite of its very short heyday, LiveJournal played a remarkable role in the evolution of self-writing in Russia. It was on the platform of LiveJournal that the genre of the personal diary first made its transition from traditional form to online

³ Eugene Gorny, 'The Impact of Cultural Identity on the Development of a Virtual Community', in *Control+Shift: Public and Private Usages of Russian Internet*, ed. by Henrike Schmidt, Katy Teubener, and Natalja Kondratova (Norderstedt: Books on demand GmbH, 2006), p. 80. See also Olga Dragileva, 'The Story of LiveJournal: How Russians Started Blogging' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Tampere, 2009), p. 75 <<http://tampub.uta.fi/handle/10024/81329>> [accessed 14 December 2016].

⁴ Dragileva, p. 76.

⁵ Bruce Etling et al., 'Public Discourse in the Russian Blogosphere: Mapping RuNet Politics and Mobilization', *Berkman Center Research Publication*, 11 (2010), 1-45 (p. 11).

⁶ Ilya Utekhin, 'Social Networking on the Internet: Is the Russian Way Special?', in *Understanding Russianness*, ed. by Risto Alapuro, Arto Mustajoki, and Pekka Pesonen (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 245.

space and then mutated to a fundamentally different type of narrative. From a quantitative perspective, the practice of self-writing became increasingly more widespread, with writers incarnating greater numbers of alternative Selves in their texts. From a qualitative point of view, the texts that initially closely mimicked personal diaries, with their intimate melancholic narration, gradually increased the degree of interactivity with the reader, which ultimately resulted in the co-production of narratives. Simultaneously, the development of the website's technological capabilities induced dramatic changes in the strategies of ego-narration, which could now make use of multimedia elements, hyperlinks and visualized archives of records. In this sense, LiveJournal became a socio-technical laboratory in which the policies of subjectivity articulated in today's cyber-environment were cultivated.

This mutational period is of particular interest for the cultural history of identity production, as it allows us to reconstruct the processes of self-writing's adaptation to a new technological reality and fill the gap between its traditional forms and the ones presented in today's social media. This reconstruction can be achieved through the micro-analysis of LiveJournal's biographical narratives, where the meeting of the patterns of identity production characteristic of personal diaries with technological capabilities and interactive audiences can be captured.

Although diary writing, as a practice of identity production, is commonly perceived as an intimate soul-searching activity, it is the implicit presence of the Other (real or imaginary) that enables the production of an ego-monologue.⁷ The relational nature of identity production has been increasingly highlighted in twentieth-century theories of personality. Mikhail Bakhtin considered consciousness as 'microdialogue', in which the individual's voice was always predetermined by the

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, 4 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), vol. IV, p. 417.

presence of other voices talking on the same subject.⁸ William James described identity as a complex structure which, along with material expressions of Self and introspective self-conceptualizations, included numerous self-identifications related to different social situations. He maintained that individuals had as many identities as the number of referential groups they were involved in.⁹ By the end of the twentieth century, the production of polyphonic and audience-oriented Selves became increasingly associated with evolving computer technologies. Sherry Turkle has proposed that computer-mediated experiences lead to the mass multiplication of individuals' identities and condition their awareness of their Selves as multiple and decentred.¹⁰

As loci of identity production, LiveJournal narratives present amalgams of the cultural, the social and the technological. Hence, to reconstruct the topology of self-writing in LiveJournal, one needs to account for all three dimensions of this practice. In order to do so, in this study, the cultural backgrounds that shape bloggers' 'microdialogues', the audiences of the journals, and websites' technological capabilities are all interpreted as groups of actors, as proposed by the Actor-Network Theory.

Actor-Network Theory, developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law, is an empirical case-studies-based approach, which treats investigated phenomena as 'continuously generated effects of the webs of relations within which

⁸ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problemy poetiki Dostoevskogo* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1972), pp. 335-36.

⁹ James, pp. 292, 401.

¹⁰ Sherry Turkle, *Life on Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). The role of technology in the production of Self was first outlined by Kenneth Gergen. See Kenneth Gergen, 'Technology and the Self: From the Essential to the Sublime', in *Constructing the Self in a Mediated Age*, ed. by Debra Grodin and Thomas Lindlof (London: Sage, 1996), pp. 127-41.

they are located'.¹¹ The relations in the webs emerge between three types of actors: semiotic (such as ideas, concepts and social norms); material human; and material non-human (such as objects, animals or natural phenomena). According to Actor-Network Theory, these three types of actors are involved in the production of anything in the social or natural world – from objects to practices to ideas. Actor-Network Theory-based studies aim to describe the architectures of the world's phenomena by discovering the webs of actors conditioning them.

Among numerous other fields, this approach has been successfully applied to research on the production of identity.¹² However, the interpretation of Selves narrated in online journals as products of the synergetic action of the media environment's specific actors, has not so far been attempted. This work aims to reconstruct the topology of the practice of self-production in Russian LiveJournal by looking at four interlinked cases and discovering the network of semiotic, material and human actors responsible for the appearance of bloggers' multiple biographical Selves. The blogs are supplemented by fragments of hand-written diaries and biographical interviews, used for reconstructing the contexts of narration, for defining the areas of untold experiences, and for providing the frames of reference for the Selves narrated in the journals. In addition, twenty-three journals linked with the central sample are analysed quantitatively to support the propositions about the community's trends of self-presentation.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I describe the array of core semiotic actors that are habitually involved in the production of identity in LiveJournal's community. In order to do so, I first, reconstruct the evolution of the thematic-

¹¹ Law, pp. 141-58.

¹² Attila Bruni and Silvia Gherardi, 'Omega's Story: the Heterogeneous Engineering of a Gendered Professional Self', in *Managing Professional Identities. Knowledge, Performativity and the New Professional*, ed. by Stephen Whitehead and Mike Dent (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 174-98.

stylistic profile of the group of twenty-three blogs over the period of eleven years. Next, I apply the method of narrative analysis elaborated by Jerome Bruner and Catherine Riessman¹³ to the four groups of stories found in the journals of my informants and discover the ideas with which the writers repeatedly enter the dialogue in their self-presentations. I illustrate how literature is addressed by bloggers as a source of emotional templates and explain how in some cases the adoption of literary scripts allows bloggers to simultaneously produce contrasting identities, and in other cases prevents the narrators from forming consistent Selves. Finally, I show how the adoption of the semiotic script of indirect and referential narration leads to the appearance of a new model of self-production, which becomes dominant in later social media.

Semiotic scripts do not exist in a vacuum, but are interlinked with human and material actors. In the second chapter of this thesis, I describe the role of the human actors in the production of bloggers' various Selves. First, I analyse commenting practices in the sample of twenty-three interlinked blogs over the course of eleven years, and describe the relationship between the receipt of bloggers' texts by the audiences and bloggers' subsequent narrative choices. Next, I perform comparative close readings of bloggers' biographical stories, illustrating how audience composition influences the production of bloggers' Selves when the same episode is told in different narrative contexts. I register the changes in bloggers' self-conceptualizations resulting from the transformations in the systems of characters in their stories. Finally, I explain how bloggers' reciprocal gazes influence the shaping of their Selves and how their narrative collaboration allows them to produce particular Selves favoured by their social circle.

¹³ Jerome Bruner, 'Life as Narrative', *Social Research*, 44 (1987), 11-32; Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Analysis* (London: Sage, 1993).

The agency of material actors in the production of bloggers' multiple Selves is addressed in the third chapter of this thesis. In this chapter, I explain how the introduction of audio-elements and hyperlinks, as well as the possibility of creating multi-thematic entries on one 'page', condition the polyphonic nature of writers' self-conceptualizations and enable simultaneous articulation of their different Selves. I also illustrate how the website's design enables its users to renegotiate their relationships with their past Selves. Finally, I combine the results of quantitative analysis of twenty-three blogs with close reading of the stories by one of my informants to demonstrate that LiveJournal's gradual shift from the inherently melancholic tone of traditional diaries to a more optimistic mode is accompanied by the migration of the conventions of photographic representation to ego-text.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	2
Fuller Abstract.....	4
Table of Contents.....	10
Preparation of the Manuscript.....	12
Introduction.....	13
Before Blogs: Personal Diaries and the Production of Identity.....	13
LiveJournal in Russia.....	18
<i>The History of the LiveJournal Community in Russia. LiveJournal and the Transformation of Russian Literary and Media Discourse. LiveJournal as an Attribute of Social Identity. LiveJournal as the Cradle of a New Social Class. LiveJournal in Academic Research.</i>	
Theoretical Grounds for Studying the Processes of Identity Production.....	37
Data.....	40
Method.....	43
Structure.....	47
Chapter One. Semiotic Actors and the Production of Self in LiveJournal.....	51
Section One. The Evolution of LiveJournal’s Thematic-Stylistic Profile....	54
<i>Building the Sample. Data Collection and Coding. Composing the Thematic-Stylistic Profile of the Sample. Measuring Average Frequencies of Topics and Narrative Features. Analysing the Evolution of Topics and Defining Significant Trends. Filtering the Results. Summarising the Findings. Discussion: LiveJournal and the Personal Diary; LiveJournal and Intelligentsia Identity.</i>	
Section Two. Literary Narration as LiveJournal’s Semiotic Script.....	83
<i>Literaturization and the Production of Different Selves. Literaturization as Conventionalization. Literaturization and Disintegration. Literature as a Source of Narrative models. The ‘Madeleine Moment’ and the Representation of Smells in LiveJournal. Interpreting Life through Literature.</i>	
Section Three. Indirect Self-Production.....	129
<i>The Discourse of Psychoanalysis as a Means of Indirect Self-Writing. LiveJournal Flashmobs and the Referential Self.</i>	
Conclusion.....	157
Chapter Two. Human Actors and the Production of Identity in LiveJournal.....	160
Section One. Human actors and LiveJournal’s Semiotic Spectrum.....	164

<i>Analysis of the data. Filtering and Summarizing the Results. Discussion.</i>	
Section Two. Audiences as Human Actors.....	177
Section Three. Particular Addressees as Human Actors.....	194
Section Four. The Characters of the Stories as Human Actors.....	201
Section Five. Reciprocity of Human Actors.....	215
Section Six. Co-Production of Selves.....	222
Conclusion.....	231
Chapter Three. The Agency of the Material in LiveJournal’s Ego-Narratives.....	234
Section One. Architecture of Entries and Polyphonic Selves.....	242
Section Two. LiveJournal Archives and Revision of the Past.....	256
Section Three. Photographs and Positive Narration.....	271
Conclusion.....	289
Conclusion.....	292
Appendices.....	304
Bibliography.....	357

Preparation of the Manuscript

The Library of Congress transliteration system is used throughout. Exceptions are made for Russian names well known in another form, such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo Tolstoy, and Lidiya Ginzburg. The names of Russian scholars who have published in English are transliterated in accordance with their preferred forms. Quotations from Russian language sources are given in Russian; obvious typographical errors are corrected. References are given in footnotes and in accordance with the conventions of the MHRA Style Guide, 3rd edn (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2013). Full references are given for the first citation of the work and abbreviated forms are used thereafter. Typography (use of quotation marks, capitalization, italicization, presentation of dates and numbers) also follows the conventions of the MHRA Style Guide.

INTRODUCTION

Before Blogs: Personal Diaries and the Production of Identity

I started to keep a diary at the age of thirteen. Although I sincerely believed that my feelings and thoughts were unique and worth registering and preserving, in fact, my diary was hardly different from that of any teenage girl. Along with accounts of daily events, it was full of romantic dreams, complaints about loneliness and boredom, musings about relationships with friends, and quotes from songs and books. At the same time, my relationship with my diary was rather complex. Although I believed that I was writing for myself only, I could not avoid fantasies about someone reading my diary. The face of this reader changed, and so did my stories. I was suddenly catching myself exaggerating my feelings or presenting myself differently – more confident, more light-hearted, more moral - from what I felt I truly was like. So I started to keep a second diary alongside the original one. I promised myself that in this second diary I would manage to write the pure truth about myself. I failed. I found it virtually impossible to grasp my essence, to convert my soul into text. The words had a life of their own. And when I read over my entries later, there was always something missing and something I could not fully agree with. I was hopelessly trying to make a record of an identity that I thought I had prior to writing, without understanding that the very process of wrapping it into a diary narrative transformed it. A few years later, I also found it hard to reconcile certain pages of my old diaries with my changed vision of myself. When I reread my old diaries at the age of twenty, I ended up crossing out almost a third of the text, so vehemently did I disagree with my past attitudes. As I learned later, I was not original in this either. When interviewing people about their practice of diary writing

for my research, I heard stories about editing diaries, tearing pages out, and burning them altogether.

In my experience of keeping a diary I unknowingly followed the same conventions as the majority of diarists. For instance, I believed that my diary was supposed to reflect my true Self and that I actually had one. Indeed, diaries are often perceived as the mirrors of their authors' identities, while in reality they are the instruments of the very creation of these identities. Telling stories is a fundamental human way of organizing life and self-conceptualizing.¹⁴ As a locus of stories about oneself, a personal diary presents an ideal tool for assembling an image of one's identity from the chaos of biographical material. However, when one's story of life is reassembled in later years, these past narrated self-images may come into conflict with one's new self-perception.¹⁵

When writing in my diary, I imagined a certain type of reader, in spite of having no intention of showing my personal notes to anyone. The scholarship on self-writing shows that, indeed, even the most intimate narratives from personal diaries not intended for sharing have addressees. Some diaries address real persons, while others have imaginary confidants. Typical addressees of personal diaries include the projections of diarists themselves in the future, or transcendent beings.¹⁶ According to Michel Foucault, this subjection of personal narratives to the gaze of the Other can be explained by the historical development of self-writing. Foucault tracks the origins of self-writing to the practices of subjectivization of discourse

¹⁴ Bruner, pp. 11-32.

¹⁵ On transformation of memories see Cathy McFarland, Michael Ross, and Mark Giltrow, 'Biased Recollections in Older Adults - the Role of Implicit Theories of Aging', *Journal Of Personality And Social Psychology*, 62.5 (1992), 837-50; Terence Mitchell et al., 'Temporal Adjustments in the Evaluation of Events: The "Rosy View"', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33.4 (1997), 421-48; Martin Conway and Christopher Pleydell-Pearce, 'The Construction of Autobiographical Memories in the Self-Memory System', *Psychological Review*, 107.2 (2000), 261-88.

¹⁶ Philippe Lejeune, *Le Moi des demoiselles* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1993), pp. 156, 240 ; Liz Stanley, 'On Autobiography in Sociology', *Sociology*, 27 (1993), 41-52 (p. 48).

(such as creation of memory aids) and interaction (such as letter writing) of the first centuries AD. He maintains that later, in Christian tradition, it was the implicit presence of the Other that set the foundation for confessional registrations of the impulses of the soul and thus enabled the production of ego-narratives.¹⁷

In my experience of keeping a diary I also selected certain biographical material (feelings, relationships, daily activities, dreams and reflections) and wanted my diary to serve me as a memory archive. As Béatrice Didier notes, this function of the personal diary can also be explained by its historical development. Didier writes that, along with Christian tradition, the consolidation of the genre of the personal diary as we know it today was affected by capitalist ideology. The interpretation of individuals' personal experiences, including both daily events and psychological reactions to them, as their spiritual capital, contributed to the spread of the practice of diary writing for preservation of this transient capital.¹⁸ Such an attitude to lived experiences has been retained until today, to a certain extent conditioning the flourishing and diversification of the practices of documenting and archiving biographical material.

Finally, I wanted to like myself in my diary – if for nothing else, at least for my efforts to acknowledge my faults and improve myself. Personal diaries' focus on self-improvement is linked to their historical use as instruments of religious self-discipline.¹⁹ With the course of time, the ideal of religious righteousness was replaced by behavioural models prioritized by the moral codes of diarists' social environments. Though taking different forms at different times in history, the assessment of thoughts and actions and the formulation of goals for self-improvement remained distinguishing features of the personal diary

¹⁷ Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, p. 417.

¹⁸ Béatrice Didier, *Le Journal intime* (Paris: PUF, 1976), pp. 52-54.

¹⁹ Lorna Martens, *The Diary Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 66.

Thus, in spite of the seeming freedom in the choice of writing modes, the genre of personal diary demonstrates well-established patterns of narration. And the specifics of the genre define particular qualities of identities that are habitually narrated in personal diaries – be it a diary of a seventeenth-century Puritan aiming to recount his or her sins before confession,²⁰ or a journal of a nineteenth-century girl written for education and preparation for marriage.²¹ Regardless of writers' personal characteristics, the protagonists of diaries' stories are usually narrated as introspective, sentimental, attentive to detail, and oriented towards self-improvement. As Béatrice Didier reveals through close reading of a large corpus of personal diaries, their protagonists are also usually presented as infantile, melancholic, frustrated, and passive.²²

As the identities produced through diary writing are closely linked to the specifics of the genre, changes in the conventions of diary writing inevitably lead to the formation of new models of Self. The last twenty years have been characterized by the most fundamental transformation in the whole history of the diary's existence. First, the replacement of the personally hand-written diary with a digital version led to changes in practices of revision and preservation. Then it entered the online world and became increasingly interactive, with stories of life and Self being composed from multi-media elements. Gradually, these heterogeneous and referential self-presentations replaced traditional textual first-person narratives as the dominant form of self-inscription. In Russia, these transformations largely took place on the blogging platform LiveJournal.com.

Created in 1999, the American blogging website LiveJournal quickly became popular among the users of RuNet. Unlike its American precursor, which at

²⁰ Martens, p. 66.

²¹ Lejeune, *Le moi des demoiselles*, pp. 158, 217, 344, 331, 426.

²² Didier, pp. 95-110.

that time was mostly populated by teenage female users, the Russian-language LiveJournal was predominantly appropriated by adults engaged in intellectual and creative professions, and soon became recognized as a point of consolidation of the social group known as the Russian intelligentsia.²³ As such, LiveJournal played a remarkable role in the evolution of self-writing in Russia. While other blogging platforms (such as Diary.ru), remained quite faithful to the model of the personal diary, LiveJournal users started to interlace their biographical narratives with literary exercises and alternative journalism. They also experimented enthusiastically with technological tools of self-expression: choosing the design of their journals' pages, inserting photographs in the texts, hyperlinking, reposting, commenting, participating in flashmobs, joining various communities, and later including videos and performing basic qualitative machine analysis of their texts. The metamorphosis of the genre meant the renegotiation of its scripts of self-production. In this sense, LiveJournal became a socio-technical laboratory in which the policies of subjectivity articulated in today's cyber-environment were cultivated.

This mutational period is of particular interest for the cultural history of identity production. It allows us to reveal the processes of self-writing's adaptation to a new technological reality presented by such platforms as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr (where ego-texts became substantially shorter and merged with multimedia self-representations), as well as YouTube, Instagram, Pinterest, Reddit, We Heart It, and Snapchat (where first-person textual narratives fully gave place to principally visual, collage-like, and referential self-production). Thus, this study aims to examine the transition from traditional forms of self-writing and the ones found in today's social media by reconstructing the evolution of the strategies of identity

²³ Gorny, p. 80.

production in LiveJournal, from its adoption by Russian internet users to the time when it ceased functioning as RuNet's main locus of self-inscription.

LiveJournal in Russia

The History of the LiveJournal Community in Russia

As outlined above, the formation of diary rhetoric was closely linked to the functions of diary writing. Therefore, in order to account for the narrative specifics of Russian LiveJournal, we first need to consider it as a practice shaped by certain socio-historical conditions, and then to identify bloggers' rationale behind keeping their journals. The arrival of internet culture in Russia coincided with major political and social change related to the fall of the Soviet Union and the beginning of the globalization process. RuNet's nascent culture was imbued with the ideas of freedom. Yet, from the beginning of the twenty-first century, this culture was placed in the context of the tightening media censorship characteristic of Putin's reign. In this context, LiveJournal functioned as a flagship of free discussion.²⁴

In spite of numerous publications on Russian LiveJournal which shed light on certain aspects of its historical development, the link between the formation of LiveJournal's ego-rhetoric and the history of the website's social functioning has not been given much attention. In order to describe this link, I therefore conducted an interview with the first user of Russian LiveJournal: Roman Leibov, professor of philology at the University of Tartu.²⁵ I inquired about the specifics of LiveJournal

²⁴ Henrike Schmidt and Katy Teubener, "'Our Runet". Cultural Identity and Media Usage', in *Control+Shift: Public and Private Usages of Russian Internet*, p. 14; Bruce Etling et al., p. 11.

²⁵ The first LiveJournal entry in Russian was made by Aleksei Tolkachev in 1999. However, Tolkachev soon abandoned his journal. Roman Leibov was the first to maintain his Russian-language blog. See interview by Roman Leibov with Aleksei Tolkachev, Roman Leibov, 'Shashki nagolo!', *Russkii zhurnal*, 2006 <<http://www.russ.ru/layout/set/print/pole/SHashki-nagolo!>> [accessed 23 October 2]

narratives, the website's social composition, and the role that it played for its users during the first decade of its existence.²⁶

Leibov dates the formation of the Russian LiveJournal community to 2001, when he heard from a friend about a website hosting the diary entries of a thousand American teenagers. On 1 February 2001, Leibov made eighteen short entries in Russian, using the Cyrillic alphabet. Soon colleagues and friends from Tartu joined him in using LiveJournal as a filter of interesting information and a means of communication. LiveJournal was offering a solution to a problem that had long been on their minds: that of creating an online space that would allow them to keep their journals and communicate with each other as well as to build interesting new friendships. Having been unable to come up with a suitable design themselves, they now found that LiveJournal was ideally suited to their needs. The attractiveness of LiveJournal consisted not only in its functionality, but also in the simplicity of its usage and suitability for writing Russian texts.²⁷

In the first year of its existence, Russian LiveJournal operated as a rather closed community, consisting mainly of Leibov's circle of friends and acquaintances. These were computer-oriented people with an interest in the humanities, mainly residing in Estonia – which, in contrast to Russia, benefited from fast internet connection speeds. The Estonian linguists' ability to master new technology quickly, and to adapt their literary practice to the changing media environment, was also enabled by the specifics of their academic approach to humanities which included the use of the theory of information.²⁸

Gradually the LiveJournal community grew. According to Leibov, the prevalence of intellectuals in this community and resulting high standard of

²⁶ For the transcript of the interview, see Appendix 2.

²⁷ Roman Leibov. Interview. Appendix 2, pp. 297-98.

²⁸ Leibov, p. 327.

discussion was, on the one hand, related to the fact that LiveJournal attracted people of a particular kind – those who enjoyed and were skilled in creating long reflective texts (thanks to the simultaneous development of chat services, those who preferred other styles of communication could avail themselves of more suitable facilities elsewhere). On the other hand, the formation of this elitist community was to a certain extent the result of historical coincidence. LiveJournal could be discovered by other groups of individuals with other interests instead of being formed exclusively from the personal connections of Tartu's philologist.²⁹

When in the second half of 2001 the number of LiveJournal users increased sharply, the servers could no longer provide proper functioning of the website. In September 2001 the system of invitation codes was therefore introduced. In order to create an account, one now had to be invited by a member. Alternatively, one could buy an account, but this option was not popular, not least because of the difficulty of financial transactions at that time. For Russian LiveJournal, this meant that the increasingly popular online community kept being built up from its members' personal acquaintanceships – mainly involving individuals who were interested in linguistics, skilled in using computer technologies, and resident in big cities of Russia, in Estonia and popular immigration destinations.³⁰ This 'face-control' enabled the preservation of a high quality of discussion which determined both the growth of LiveJournal's readership and the increase in the amount of those who wanted to swell the ranks of its writers.

At the end of 2003, however, the system of invitation codes was abolished and LiveJournal was joined by thousands of new bloggers of diverse origins. The case of Russian LiveJournal revealed Russians' particularly high interest in – or even

²⁹ Leibov, p. 301.

³⁰ Dragileva, 12; Leibov, 300.

obsession with – writing. At the end of the twentieth century, Svetlana Boym claimed that such an obsession was an idiosyncratic feature of Russian identity resulting from ‘deep-seated national belief in art and in the possibility of aesthetic emancipation against all odds’. She pointed out, however, that over the course of the twentieth century this cultural phenomenon almost died out.³¹ The boom of LiveJournal revealed that, in contrast to Boym’s predictions, Russians had retained their deep interest in writing. In the years following the abolishment of invitation codes, LiveJournal was flooded with blogs of all kinds. The website was turning into a mass-market service, with alternative communities forming within its space.

Although the withdrawal of invitation codes led to the appearance of numerous LiveJournal communities, it also contributed to an increase in the number of blogs of a high literary and intellectual standard. As a result, the LiveJournal network of blogs by artists, journalists, scholars and writers remained one of the most influential discussion boards on the Russian internet. The website continued to be used as a means of self-inscription, communication and social consolidation by the representatives of intellectual and artistic elites.

At the same time, with the increase in popularity of the service came numerous conflicts of interests, resulting in confrontations not only between the members of different LiveJournal communities but also between the users and the owners of the website. In 2005, Brad Fitzpatrick, the creator of LiveJournal, sold the service to an American blogging software company Six Apart. Two years later, the Russian media company SUP Media purchased LiveJournal from Six Apart and started to move particular operations to offices located in the Russian Federation. This raised many concerns among users who feared the acquisition of LiveJournal by

³¹ Svetlana Boym, *Common Places: Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 172, 212.

a Russian company was a strategic move on the part of the government, allowing control to be exercised over its content, and facilitating access to users' private information and, overall, sabotaging the development of independent Russian blogging.³² Despite numerous protests organized by users and their calls for collective migration to another blogging platform, SUP Media kept introducing changes to LiveJournal: the accounts' structure was altered to enforce additional paid services, advertisements appeared in free 'basic' accounts, and unsolicited blogs (often by paid authors) were included in users' friends feeds.

Yet, despite strong discontent with SUP Media's decisions, the majority of bloggers kept writing in their journals, contributing to the website's further evolution into a powerful media player. Thus, during the State Duma and Presidential elections of 2010-2011 most of the popular bloggers were involved in political campaigns, while a wide range of media (from journals and newspapers to TV channels) strengthened their connection with LiveJournal by using blogs as suppliers of information and by creating their own pages on the website.³³

LiveJournal preserved its unprecedented popularity until the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, when new social media had entered the scene of RuNet and largely replaced it as a prime locus of online communication.³⁴ Despite the attempts to upgrade the website's design (such as providing the option to log in with other social media accounts and introducing various online games), LiveJournal could not catch up with the changing cultural model of social interaction that characterized social networks and micro-blogs.

³² Dragileva, p. 83.

³³ Dragileva, pp.81-82.

³⁴ Utekhin, p. 245; Dmitry Golyenko-Volfson, 'Sotsial'nye seti v nesetevom sotsiume (O biopolitike, istorizme i mifologii russkikh sotsial'nykh setei)', *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*, 1.2 (2009), 101-13.

At this stage, many individuals left LiveJournal, but many, including famous bloggers, kept writing their journals at the same time as using new social media, in spite of the decrease in their LiveJournal readership. As in the days when LiveJournal had just arrived in Russia, these authors were again writing their blogs for small circles of friends. As for the blogs of a journalistic nature, many of their authors became columnists and commentators of swiftly developing online media of various kinds.

LiveJournal and the Transformation of Russian Literary and Media Discourse

From the very beginnings of LiveJournal in Russia, blogs by representatives of intellectual and artistic circles followed non-articulated conventions of the new genre. Although the website's first users were attracted by the possibility of keeping personal diaries, their texts were never actually intended to function as such. Intimate and sentimental narratives were more likely to be found on the periphery of LiveJournal. Another blogging platform, Diary.ru, became their main locus. By contrast, LiveJournal was increasingly characterized by long reflective narratives of a social, philosophical or critical nature, often aimed at provoking polemics. These texts were often used by their authors to demonstrate their writing skills and in this way to make a positive impression upon their readers. According to Leibov, the status of the narrator in LiveJournal reflects the tradition of Russian literature, mainly established by Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky, where the narrator is characterized by privileged position, intellectual superiority and ironic vision. Another feature that LiveJournal narratives inherited from Dostoyevsky, in particular from *A Writer's Diary*, is the articulation of multiple genres and topics in each journal, except in

cases where the focus on one genre or theme is an intentional artistic technique.³⁵ Finally, LiveJournal texts and discussions are characterized by writers' constant and conscious committed work on improving their literacy and style and by the display of their expertise in the areas of Russian language and literature.

As the corpus of these polygeneric, polythematic, intellectual, ironic, literature- and logocentric narratives grew and the community of their authors widened, LiveJournal blogs secured their high position in cultural and intellectual life of Russian society. Many of the representatives of the community made blogging their profession. Many texts initially written in blogs were later published in the form of books. LiveJournal started to transform the discourse of literature, gradually contributing to the reestablishment of the privileged status of the writer in Russian public thought.

After Perestroika, literature had lost its traditionally high position in the Russian cultural hierarchy. This was caused by a network of factors, such as popularization of mass culture, pauperisation of intelligentsia, complete termination of censorship which used to make particular literary works inaccessible and consequently desirable, a shift towards global and liberal ideologies, the growing status of philosophy as an area independent from literature, and increasing competition with other cultural fields and communication channels.³⁶ The circulation of books and 'thick journals' dropped hundreds and – in some cases – thousands of times.³⁷ The book lost its status as a cult object and an attribute of symbolic capital

³⁵ Leibov, p. 319.

³⁶ Mikhail Berg, *Literaturokratiia. Problema prisvoeniia i pereosmysleniia vlasti v literature* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2000), pp. 23, 182; Boris Dubin, *Klassika, posle i riadom: Sotsiologicheskie ocherki o literature i kul'ture* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2010), p. 39.

³⁷ Berg, p. 183; Stephen Lovell, *The Russian Reading Revolution: Print Culture in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 128; Birgit Menzel, 'Writing, Reading and Selling Literature in Russia 1986-2004', in *Reading for Entertainment in Contemporary Russia: Post-Soviet*

and became an article of merchandise.³⁸ The status of the writer changed as well. The lack of financial support from the state made professional writing an almost unaffordable activity. And only those writers who could satisfy the demands of the literary market (usually, the authors of serial mass literature) could become widely known.³⁹ At the same time, the number of people who identified themselves as writers increased. These people, however, perceived writing as a hobby, rather than a profession.⁴⁰

The arrival of blogs and the consolidation of the intellectual community in LiveJournal was conducive to the formation of a niche suitable for professional writers in the transformed cultural market. It also contributed to the rehabilitation of the high status of the writer. Writers were again increasingly perceived as public intellectuals, and their works as valuable statements on philosophy, ideology, psychology, politics, art and social issues. This changing political and media environment also created a high demand for those bloggers who revealed a bias towards journalism rather than literary self-expression. Given that, from the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Russian media had largely fallen under state control, blogs' commitment to freedom of speech resulted in their functioning as spaces for alternative journalism. LiveJournal blogs (including many analysed in this study) were largely responsible for the production of the rhetoric of political opposition, particularly before and during the State Duma and presidential elections of 2011-2012.⁴¹

Popular Literature in Historical Perspective, ed. by Birgit Menzel and Stephen Lovell (München: Sagner, 2005), p. 43.

³⁸ Berg, p. 202.

³⁹ Dubin, p. 39; Menzel, p. 43.

⁴⁰ Andrew Wachtel, 'Writers and Society in Eastern Europe, 1989-2000: The End of the Golden Age', *East European Politics and Societies*, 17.4 (2003), 583-621 (p. 615).

⁴¹ Olessia Koltsova and Andrey Shcherbak, "'LiveJournal Libral!': The Political Blogosphere and Voting Preferences in Russia in 2011-2012', *New Media & Society*, 17.10 (2015), 1715-32.

LiveJournal as an Attribute of Social Identity

Along with practising fine writing and journalism, maintaining a LiveJournal account quickly became a way of securing and marking one's membership of a socio-cultural community. LiveJournal was actively used for forming relationships with interesting new people. In the early 2000s, LiveJournal became 'the most fashionable address on the net'.⁴²

Vasily Chernoperov and Sergey Usmanov suggest that forming elitist communities (such as literary circles, intellectual clubs, or magazines) is a distinctive strategy of the Russian intelligentsia's self-positioning in society. At the same time as isolating themselves from both the government and the people, the members of such communities make a significant impact upon the political and cultural climate.⁴³ In the early stages of its existence, LiveJournal – with its restricted access – formed just such an elitist community, which increasingly influenced art and literary fashion and voiced alternative political opinions to those found in the discourse of state-controlled media. A profile on LiveJournal functioned as an identity attribute of a participant in up-to-date intellectual discussion.

As membership restrictions were abolished and thousands of users created their own accounts, membership of the elitist intellectual community started to be marked by personal connections. Befriending famous bloggers became a way to acquire social capital. Yet, making one's social ties visible to others through the lists of friends and commentaries was not enough to get recognition from the group. One also had to master the genre of the online diary. The creation of online journals by so

⁴² Gorny, p. 82.

⁴³ Vasily Chernoperov and Sergey Usmanov, 'Russian Intelligentsia in the Socio-Political Transformations of the XX Century: Between Ideals, Virtuality and Creation Reality', *International Review of Management and Marketing*, 6.3 (2016), 65-70.

many people was not necessarily a result of their desire to practise this genre, but of the genre's functioning as a gateway to the discourse of a socio-cultural group that they wanted to belong to.⁴⁴

Employing self-writing as a tool of networking by intellectual elites is not new to Russian tradition, as Barbara Walker demonstrates in tracking this phenomenon back to the first gentry memoirs of the late eighteenth century. She maintains that the central themes of these texts were predominantly the appraisal of cult figures and what she calls 'partisanship' – the critique of offenders. Both types of narratives served the means of networking and self-positioning. As Walker puts it:

What distinguishes such a memoir is that its author seeks self-understanding and self-explanation not by looking inward, in the Romantic tradition of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but rather by focusing outward with an intense gaze on one particular community as it is located in time: that highly complex and divided social group which is often called the Russian intelligentsia.⁴⁵

Irina Paperno also emphasizes Russian self-writing's functioning as a means of community building. Through the analysis of more than two hundred self-writing sources from the twentieth century, Paperno identifies recurrent narrative techniques employed by writers to secure their membership of the circle.⁴⁶ By providing writers with a readership of a certain kind, by facilitating the discussions on published texts, and by exposing writers' activity within the community to increasing audiences, LiveJournal stimulated a social application of biographical narratives similar to the one described by Walker and Paperno.

⁴⁴ Leibov, pp. 318-19.

⁴⁵ Barbara Walker, 'On Reading Soviet Memoirs: A History of the "Contemporaries" Genre as an Institution of Russian Intelligentsia Culture from the 1790s to the 1970s', *The Russian Review*, 59.3 (2000), 327-52 (pp. 328-29).

⁴⁶ Among the techniques described by Paperno are 'joining the circle of victims', 'counteracting earlier portrayals of the intelligentsia circles', 'retelling the story that has already been told', and so on. See Irina Paperno, *Stories of the Soviet Experience: Memoirs, Diaries, Dreams* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp. 12-41.

LiveJournal as the Cradle of a New Social Class

As outlined above, the first LiveJournal users were technology- and humanities-oriented individuals, with a deep interest in language and literature, politics, journalism, and – most importantly – communication with like-minded people. Initially, the community of such people existed primarily in cyberspace. Enchanted by the possibilities of virtual life that the arrival of the internet offered, LiveJournal's first users considered offline relationships to be a matter of the past and were set on building new connections in the online world.⁴⁷ With the passage of time, however, more and more users 'de-virtualized' (met in 'real' life), despite living in different cities and countries. In this way LiveJournal became an instrument of consolidation of likeminded people not only online, but also offline. A particularly significant role in the shaping of the new socio-cultural group was played by LiveJournal (alongside Facebook, which was already actively taking on LiveJournal's social functions) during the Bolotnaya protests of 2011- 2012.⁴⁸ The newly formed group of people, occasionally referred to as 'Bolotnaya intelligentsia',⁴⁹ the 'creative class' or 'creative professionals',⁵⁰ mainly consisted of

⁴⁷ Leibov, p. 298.

⁴⁸ See how one of the informants, Tatiana, merges the themes of political activism and social consolidation in her account of these events: 'Я ходила на эти митинги, меня все это очень вдохновляло и как-то там был даже прекрасный один эпизод, когда после Триумфальной площади, где очень многих повязали, я с какими-то молодыми людьми бежала от омоновцев дворами. В общем, любовь и революция, как «Мечтатели» Бертолуччи [...]. После шестого мая начался Оккупай Абай. Этот лагерь с палатками длился недели две. Там организовали питание, лекции, даже спектакли. Я была в полном восторге. Действительно, казалось что сейчас в России все изменится и эти прекрасные люди начнут определять политический климат и общественная дискуссия возрастет [...]. Казалось, что Москва, Россия - это такое место где можно сейчас жить, потому что такие изменения будут скоро и уже происходят на наших глазах, потому что люди такие сознательные, политически ответственные и так далее. И там как раз я познакомилась с одним Сережиным другом и его друзьями. Его друзья - это такие интеллигентные мальчики из хороших московских школ, которые любят рассуждать об истории и политике'. (Tatiana. Interview 2, pp. 6-7).

⁴⁹ See the definition by blogger and columnist Iurii Magarshak: 'Болотными интеллигентами Федерации Русь стала молодежь, свободно путешествовавшая по миру, получившая

young people from Russia's big cities. These people were characterized by good education and intellectual ambition, oppositional political views, connoisseurship of trends at the forefront of literature, music and visual arts, and mastery in navigating cyberspace and using digital tools.

Iurii Magarshak's association of this social group with the Russian intelligentsia, and the parallels that I draw between the LiveJournal community and the communities described by Chernoperov and Usmanov, Walker, and Paperno, are not unproblematic. This is due to the heterogeneous nature of both the intelligentsia and the 'creative class' and the ambiguous status that intelligentsia identity acquired after Perestroika.

Economic reforms of the 1990s reshaped social hierarchies and conditioned the decrease in the financial and social status of the representatives of intellectual professions.⁵¹ Gradually, the cultural model of intellectuality and morality associated with the intelligentsia identity lost its prestige in comparison with the model of success and wealth. The very term 'intelligentsia' was renegotiated and association with it ceased to be desirable. In this context, a new generation of intellectuals rejected the discursive script of 'carrying the intelligentsia torch', and emphasized their membership of a new progressive community of reflective and creative individuals, largely formed through internet communication. Yet, in spite of the terminological change, the rhetoric of this community strongly resembled that

образование в лучших университетах Америки и Европы, но при этом не оторвавшаяся от России, вернувшаяся в нее, потому что притяжение русского поля (не поля пшеницы, а поля культуры) оказалось сильнее североамериканских полей. Имея образование, связи и родственников, болотные интеллигенты, молодые, полные сил одиночки, пытаются вписываться в аморальную российскую жизнь, в которой бал правят жулики, воры и силовисты, сохраняя мораль. Надеюсь свершить своим подвигом невозможное'. See Iurii Magarshak, 'Ot'ezd Gurieva kak indikator tret'ego unichtozheniia intelligentsii v Rossii', *Ekho Moskvy* <<http://echo.msk.ru/blog/ym4/1088244-echo/>> [accessed 7 July 2017].

⁵⁰ Ellen Rutten, *Sincerity After Communism: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 5.

⁵¹ Zhan Toshchenko et al., 'Sotsial'nyi status i imidzh gumanitarnoi intelligentsii: illiuzii i real'nost' ("Kruglyi stol")', *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniia*, 11 (2001), 58-68 (p. 60).

traditionally associated with the Russian intelligentsia. As Roman Leibov described it:

Вообще-то, конечно, это интеллигенция, просто в период, когда этого слова стеснялись. Сейчас уже перестают опять, как известно. Ну, пост-интеллигенция. Понятно, о чем идет речь. В принципе, это интеллигенция, которая не успела постареть. Я бы сказал, дети из интеллигентных семей.⁵²

In this study, I argue that instead of proclaiming the ‘the death of Russian intelligentsia’,⁵³ we can observe its mutation into a new social-cultural formation conditioned by social, economic, political, cultural and technological change. When analysing the narratives of the representatives of this new formation found in LiveJournal, I follow the approach of Inna Kochetkova in interpreting the intelligentsia not as a social group, but as a kind of narrated Self.⁵⁴ I maintain that narrated Selves of the representatives of the ‘creative class’ are to some extent inspired by narrative scripts characteristic of intelligentsia identity. At the same time, they reveal various transformations and deviations from these scripts conditioned by the shifts in socio-cultural context.

Hence, the evolution of the strategies of identity production in Russian LiveJournal presents a particularly interesting research case. On the one hand, it reflects the transformation of self-writing from personal diary to social media in the digital age, and the resulting shifts in individuals’ self-conceptualizations and self-presentations. On the other hand, these shifts are simultaneously conditioned by the larger socio-political context and reflect the formation of a new social class, partly

⁵² Leibov, p. 321.

⁵³ For a discussion of ‘the death of the Russian intelligentsia’ see Arkady Sokolov and Lyubov Afanasova, ‘On the Reproduction of the Russian Intelligentsia’, *Russian Education & Society*, 45.2 (2003), 5-21 (pp. 5-6).

⁵⁴ Inna Kochetkova, *The Myth of the Russian Intelligentsia: Old Intellectuals in the New Russia* (London: Routledge, 2009), *Bodleian library* ebook.

inspired by the ideals of Russian intelligentsia, with its own specific identity attributes.

LiveJournal in Academic Research

Early research on online self-writing tended to approach the subject by comparing online journals to traditional diaries. As a result, at the centre of academic inquiry were those aspects of blogging that seemingly distinguished it from earlier practices of self-inscription. Scholars paid particular attention to blogs' position at the crossroad of private and public, to the performative and literary nature of blogs' discourse, to individuals' motivations for self-exposure, and to the practices of tailoring narrated identities to the expectations of particular audiences.⁵⁵ It is worth mentioning that distinctions between blogs and diaries drawn according to these criteria have not always been well-founded, seeming to be affected by the ever-present myth about the personal nature of diaries. As José van Dijck rightly notices, such features as public exposure, collaborative nature and community building function were highly characteristic of diary writing for centuries of this practice's

⁵⁵ On private/public nature of blogs, see Denise Sevick Bortree, 'Presentation of Self on the Web: An Ethnographic Study of Teenage Girls' Weblogs', *Education, Communication & Information*, 5.1 (2005), 25-39; Hua Qian and Craig Scott, 'Anonymity and Self-Disclosure on Weblogs', *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12.4 (2007), 1428-51; Bonnie Nardi, Diane Schiano, and Michelle Gumbrecht, 'Blogging as Social Activity, or, Would You Let 900 Million People Read Your Diary?', *Proceedings of the 2004 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work* (ACM, 2004), pp. 222-31; Viviane Serfaty, 'Online Diaries: Towards a Structural Approach', *Journal of American Studies*, 38.3 (2004), 457-71. On performance and literary narration in blogs, see Lori Kendall, 'Shout into the Wind, and it Shouts Back: Identity and Interactional Tensions on LiveJournal', *First Monday*, 12.9 (2007) <<https://www.firstmonday.dk/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2004/1879>> [accessed 19 February 2018]; Kurt Lindemann, 'Live(s) Online. Narrative Performance, Presence, and Community in LiveJournal.com', *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 25.4 (2006), 354-72; Monica Foote, 'Userpicks: Cyber Folk Art in the Early 21st Century', *Folklore Forum*, 37 (2007), 27-38. On motivation, see Nar Bonnie Nardi et al., 'Why We Blog', *Communications of the ACM* 47.12 (2004), 41-46; Su-Houn Liu, Hsiu-Li Liao, and Yuan-Tai Zeng, 'Why People Blog: an Expectancy Theory Analysis', *Issues in Information Systems*, 8.2 (2007), 232-37. On audiences, see Kendall, <<https://www.firstmonday.dk/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2004/1879>>.

existence.⁵⁶ In this sense, early blogs were much closer to traditional diaries than they were perceived to be.

Studies of Russian LiveJournal have largely followed the trend of comparing blogs to earlier forms of self-writing and emphasizing their peculiar oscillation between intimacy and disclosure.⁵⁷ Thus far, relatively few authors have discussed Russian LiveJournal as a highly aesthetically charged mode of self-writing, or the website's contribution to community building among Russian intellectual elites. Irina Kaspé and Varvara Smurova, in their 2002 article, avoid associating LiveJournal with personal diaries. They emphasize blogs' incorporation of numerous preceding genres, such as forum correspondences, guest books, chat rooms, Fido, short prose, and personal letters. They also pinpoint the website's functioning as an online social club for literary-oriented individuals.⁵⁸ A description of Russian LiveJournal's early social structure can also be found in Eugene Gorny's 2006 article, which reconstructs the history of LiveJournal's adoption by Russian-speaking intellectuals. Gorny analyses LiveJournal's specific narrative style, explores its association with biography and literature, emphasizes its elitist nature and pinpoints its various social functions – from community building to information provision.⁵⁹

By the mid-2000s, the discussion of blogs as peculiar versions of personal diaries had largely given way to considerations of their interactivity, multimedia

⁵⁶ José van Dijck, 'Composing the Self: Of Diaries and Lifelogs', *Fibreculture*, 3 (2004) <<http://three.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-012-composing-the-self-of-diaries-and-lifelogs/>> [accessed 18 January 2018].

⁵⁷ Vladimir Volokhonskii, 'Psikhologicheskie mekhanizmy i osnovaniia klassifikatsii blogov', in *Lichnost' i mezhlchnostnoe vzaimodeistvie v seti Internet. Blogi: novaia real'nost'*, ed. by Vladimir Volokhonskii and Iuliia Zaitseva (Saint Petersburg: Saint Petersburg State University Publishing, 2006), pp. 117-31; Iuliia Zaitseva, 'Rol' vedeniia internet-dnevnika v stanovlenii individual'nosti', in *Lichnost' i mezhlchnostnoe vzaimodeistvie v seti Internet. Blogi: novaia real'nost'*, ed. by Vladimir Volokhonskii and Iuliia Zaitseva (Saint Petersburg: Saint Petersburg State University Publishing, 2006), pp. 104-16.

⁵⁸ Irina Kaspé and Varvara Smurova, 'Livejournal.com, russkaia versiia: poplach' o nem, poka on zhivoi...', *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, 24.4 (2002) <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2002/4/kaspe.html>> [accessed 19 February 2018].

⁵⁹ Gorny, pp. 73-90.

nature and social networking function.⁶⁰ However, these features soon ceased to be associated primarily with blogs. Consequently, the focus of research on online self-inscription moved from blogs to new social media.

During the second decade of the twenty-first century, Western blogs were mainly treated as suppliers of qualitative research data in the study of various socio-cultural phenomena.⁶¹ Russian LiveJournal was also often addressed by scholars as a source of data. These data were particularly illuminating in studies of various sensitive issues such as drug usage or the raising of children by same-sex parents in Russia.⁶² At the same time, interest in LiveJournal itself as a specific cultural

⁶⁰ On interactivity, see David Domingo et al., 'Participatory Journalism Practices in the Media and Beyond: An International Comparative Study of Initiatives in Online Newspapers', *Journalism Practice*, 2.3 (2008), 326-42; John Quiggin, 'Blogs, Wikis and Creative Innovation', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 9.4 (2006), 481-96; Kendall, <<https://www.firstmonday.dk/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2004/1879>>; Inna Kouper, 'The Pragmatics of Peer Advice in a LiveJournal Community', *Language@Internet*, 7.1 (2010) <<http://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2010/2464>> [accessed 19 February 2018]. On multimedia nature, see Grantham Aldred, 'Identity in 10,000 Pixels: LiveJournal Userpics and Fractured Selves in Web 2.0', *New Directions in Folklore*, 8.1/2 (2010), 6-35; Alek Tarkowski, 'Digital Petri Dishes: LiveJournal User Icons as a Space and Medium of Popular Cultural Production', in *Information Communication Technologies: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*, ed. by Shenja van der Graaf (Hershey, London, Melbourne, and Singapore: Idea Group, 2008), pp. 2372-86; Elizaveta Sivak, 'Vizual'nyi analiz virtual'noi kommunikatsii: obshchenie v Zhivyykh Zhurnalakh', in *Vizual'nyi Analiz Virtual'noi Real'nosti*, ed. by Nikita Pokrovskii (Moscow: HSE Publishing, 2007), pp. 23-34. On social networking function, see Kathryn Victoria McLellan, "'LiveJournal is a Conversation With the World": An Examination of the Effects of Interpersonal Communication on Personal Blogging' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Chicago, 2006), <http://www.kathrynmclellan.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/McLellan_MA.pdf> [accessed 19 February 2018]; Katie Davis, 'Adolescent Friendships on LiveJournal', *Rocky Mountain Communication Review*, 6.1 (2009), 47-50; Sarah Kate Merry and Anoush Simon, 'Living and Lurking on LiveJournal: The Benefits of Active and Non-Active Membership', *Aslib Proceedings*, 64.3. (2012), 241-61; Renee Perelmutter, 'Klassika Zhanra: The Flamewar as a Genre in the Russian Blogosphere', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 45.1 (2013), 74-89; Elena Kuz'mina, 'Soobshchestva v Zhivom Zhurnale — novye kommunikativnye vozmozhnosti dlia subkul'turnykh grupp i obshchestvennykh initsiativ', *Zhurnal issledovaniia sotsial'noi politiki*, 9.3 (2011), 365-90.

⁶¹ Julia Moore, 'Reconsidering Childfreedom: A Feminist Exploration of Discursive Identity Construction in Childfree LiveJournal Communities', *Women's Studies in Communication*, 37.2 (2014), 159-80; Darlene Rose Hampton, 'Bound Princes and Monogamy Warnings: Harry Potter, Slash, and Queer Performance in LiveJournal Communities', *Transform Works & Cult*, 18 (2015), <<http://journal.transformativeworks.org/index.php/twc>> [accessed 7 May 2018].

⁶² Jan Dijkstra et al., 'Inference of the Russian Drug Community from One of the Largest Social Networks in the Russian Federation', *Quality & Quantity*, 48.5 (2014), 2739-55; Vladimir Solodnikov and Alexandra Chkanikova, 'Children in Same-Sex Marriages', *Russian Education & Society*, 51.7 (2009), 13-34. It should be mentioned that this study is ethically problematic, since bloggers did not consent to the use of their narratives.

ecosystem decreased noticeably, except for the studies of its mutually influential relationship with the discourses of journalism and politics.⁶³

Only few works of that period attempted to give a more multifaceted picture of Russian LiveJournal. Among these are Olga Dragileva's study and books by Iuliia Ildis and Andrei Podshibiakin, all devoted to the first decade of LiveJournal's presence in RuNet. All three authors are experienced bloggers themselves, which explains their recurrent shifts between insider and outsider positions in their reconstructions of LiveJournal's history.

Olga Dragileva applies the method of narrative analysis to interviews with popular bloggers and secondary literature on LiveJournal (including media and academic publications), identifying those elements of the stories about LiveJournal that occur in the narratives across various sources. This allows her to suggest that in spite of minor discrepancies, the majority of opinion-makers agree on the story of LiveJournal's development and its role in Russian society. Dragileva repeatedly emphasizes both the role of intellectual and artistic elites in the introduction of blogging to the Russian cultural scene, and the website's impact upon the consolidation of these social groups at the beginning of the twenty-first century. At

⁶³ Elena Johansson, 'Blogging in Russia: The Blog Platform LiveJournal as a Professional Tool for Russian Journalists,' *Baltic Worlds*, 7 (2014), 27-36; Aleksandr Asmolv and Grigorii Asmolv, 'Ot my-media k ia-media: transformatsii identichnosti v virtual'nom mire', *Voprosy Psikhologii*, 3 (2009), 3-15; Mariia Kochetkova and Inna Tubalova, 'Dinamika razvitiia bloga kak zhanra diskursa blogosfery: sotsiolingvisticheskii aspekt', *Vestnik Tomskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Filologiya*, 1.27 (2014), 39-52; Dila Beisembayeva, *Exploring the Impact of Online Political Activism on Political Processes in Kazakhstan: the Zhanaozen Uprising* (unpublished master's thesis, Unitec Institute of Technology, 2016) <<http://unitec.researchbank.ac.nz/handle/10652/3660>> [accessed 20 February 2018]; Florian Toepfl, 'Blogging for the Sake of the President: The Online Diaries of Russian Governors', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 64.8 (2012), 1435-59; Robert Greenall, 'LiveJournal: Russia's Unlikely Internet Giant', *BBC News*, 29 February 2012 <<http://homepages.spa.umn.edu/~shifman/LJ.pdf>> [accessed 20 February 2018]; Adi Kuntsman, 'Webs of Hate in Diasporic Cyberspaces: the Gaza War in the Russian-Language Blogosphere', *Media, War & Conflict*, 3.3 (2010), 299-313; Natalia Moen-Larsen, "'Normal Nationalism": Alexei Navalny, LiveJournal and "the Other"', *East European Politics*, 30.4 (2014), 548-67; Ekaterina Grishaeva, 'Heretical Virtual Movement in Russian LiveJournal Blogs: Between Religion and Politics', in *Digital Orthodoxy in the Post-Soviet World: The Russian Orthodox Church and Web 2.0*, ed. by Michail Suslov (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2016), pp. 141-61.

the same time, Dragileva's interest in the evolution of LiveJournal mainly concerns its various social implications. In Dragileva's account, the story of LiveJournal is the story of the formation of free media and the development of new forms of horizontal communication.⁶⁴ The specifics of ego-narration in LiveJournal remain outside the scope of her research.

Interestingly, Iuliia Idlis and Andrei Podshibiakin also avoid mentioning LiveJournal's genealogical link with life writing. Idlis's book presents a mixture of her interviews with famous bloggers, excerpts from their journals and Idlis's own commentaries. Idlis allows her interviewees to tell their stories about their experience of blogging. As with the interviews conducted by Dragileva, these stories are characterized by their nostalgic tone and tend to focus on social aspects of LiveJournal. They describe the strategies of interaction with other bloggers, the politics of befriending, the role of LiveJournal in bloggers' advancement in their careers, the formation of various online and offline communities, and the shaping of a specific LiveJournal slang. Although Idlis does not directly raise the question of narrated identity, the stories of her interviewees provide evidence that they reproduce similar cultural models: they all narrate themselves as independently minded individuals with sharp sense of humour, confident, intelligent and at times sarcastic, exceptionally hard-working, creative and successful.⁶⁵

Podshibiakin's book also presents LiveJournal as a specific social environment with its own professional communities, job market, leisure activities, and wars. Unlike the works by Dragileva and Idlis which mainly give voice to LiveJournal's earliest and most famous representatives, Podshibiakin strives to describe LiveJournal in its diversity. He discusses the website's regimes of privacy,

⁶⁴ Dragileva, p. 56.

⁶⁵ Iuliia Idlis, *Runet. Sotvorennye kumiry* (Moscow: Alpina Non-fiction, 2010).

the role of immediate feedback in the formation of LiveJournal's narrative canon and its subsequent impact upon Russian journalism, and the role of LiveJournal in the development of new slang and the overall rejuvenation of the Russian language. He also pinpoints the website's applications as an advertising and marketing tool and its effective functioning as an instrument of social activism – mainly directed against corruption and scams. In a similar way to Dragileva and Idlis, however, Podshibiakin reduces blogging to semi-professional activity focused on networking and the circulation of information.⁶⁶

As can be inferred from the examples above, early literature on blogging largely interpreted LiveJournal as a form of personal diary while ignoring its socio-historical origins. By 2010, the opposite was true: academic studies inquired into LiveJournal's functioning as a specific social environment, while silencing its biographical dimension. To a certain extent this trend can be regarded as a symptom of changes in the content of LiveJournal itself. On the other hand, in spite of its noticeable shift away from intimacy and soul-searching, LiveJournal never ceased to be a medium of self-conceptualization for its users. Moreover, as an early social networking platform, it became a space where the new techniques of self-inscription were forged and tested before migrating to the world of new social media.

LiveJournal's role in the transformation of the conventional techniques of Self has yet to be recognized. So far no study has comprehensively described the evolution of the strategies of identity production in LiveJournal, approaching LiveJournal simultaneously as a literary form and social practice, and considering LiveJournal's ego-narratives in the light of a wide scope of socio-cultural, historical and technological factors. This thesis therefore aims to bring together the existing

⁶⁶ Andrei Podshibiakin, *Po zhivomu. 1999-2009. LiveJournal v Rossii* (Saint Petersburg: Azbuka-Attikus, 2010).

threads of research on the evolution of Russian LiveJournal as well as to introduce new hypotheses and provide new findings concerning LiveJournal's role in the transformation of the techniques of identity production in online worlds. To create a multifaceted description of these processes, it combines analysis of quantitative data with close reading of bloggers' narratives. In contrast with the majority of studies on LiveJournal which only refer to public posts, it considers and compares entries with various privacy settings. It also compares and contrasts the entries relating to different stages of LiveJournal's evolution. This heterogeneous dataset allows for the identification of an array of specific cultural scripts that regulate online self-presentations of the bloggers, the explanation of how LiveJournal's social environment triggers the production of certain Selves, and the exploration of the role of the website's evolving technological capabilities in these processes.

Theoretical Grounds for Studying the Processes of Identity Production

In 1890, William James introduced his theory of identity. In his book *The Principles of Psychology*, James suggested viewing identity as a complex structure of Selves, consisting of an endless number of *Me*-s – transient and contextually conditioned self-identifications, and an *I* – a thought which is appropriative of all its versions.⁶⁷ James emphasized the relational nature of identity, which he interpreted as 'the sum of all that he [a man] can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank-account'.⁶⁸ James categorized all possible self-identifications as material, spiritual and social Selves. According to James, material Selves are expressed through body,

⁶⁷ James, pp. 292, 401.

⁶⁸ James, p. 292.

clothes, possessions and family connections. Spiritual Selves relate to individuals' psychic faculties and moral sensibilities.⁶⁹ Social Selves result from the need to get the recognition of others. James maintained that individuals had as many identities as the number of referential groups they were involved in.

The relational nature of identity production outlined by James has been increasingly highlighted in twentieth-century theories of personality. Sociologists Charles Horton Cooley and George Herbert Mead emphasized the role of social dimensions in the production of various Selves.⁷⁰ Similarly, Erving Goffman suggested viewing identity as a repertoire of social roles.⁷¹ In philosophy, the model of the Cartesian rational subject gradually gave way to the interpretation of identity as a decentred, fragmented and transient configuration of meanings. Mikhail Bakhtin considered consciousness as 'microdialogue', in which the individual's voice was always predetermined by the presence of others' voices talking on the same subject.⁷² Julia Kristeva introduced her 'subject-in-process' – the subject having no fixed or unitary identity and emerging from the collision of unconscious semiotic material and symbolic order realized through language.⁷³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari developed the concept of 'rhizome' – a nonlinear, heterogenous, unstable set of elements, where objects and meanings emerge from an endless amount of possibilities and function to form and dissolve configurations continuously. Following this basic principle, the Self, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is also decentred and composed from the interplay of multiple 'desire machines', i.e. the connections of

⁶⁹ James, p. 294.

⁷⁰ Charles Horton Cooley, *Human Nature and the Social Order* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), p. 152; George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1959), pp. 186-92.

⁷¹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre, 1956), pp. 107-32.

⁷² Bakhtin, pp. 335-36.

⁷³ Julia Kristeva, *The Subject in Process* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 133-78.

acquired desires with their potential realizations.⁷⁴ Finally, psychology also followed the trend of renegotiating identity, with Jacques Lacan viewing identity as ‘fractured’, consisting of numerous and sometimes – conflicting, versions.⁷⁵ Jerome Bruner and Kevin Murray regarded individuals’ Selves as the characters of their storyworlds.⁷⁶ Michael Bamberg, and Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré presented identities as the ways in which individuals positioned themselves against others in various situations.⁷⁷

By the end of the twentieth century, the production of polyphonic and audience-oriented Selves became increasingly associated with evolving computer technologies. Kevin Gergen pointed out that the uncontrolled stream of information enabled by new technologies caused individuals’ doubts about what they thought of as foundations of their Selves and contributed to the dissolution of Selves.⁷⁸ And Sherry Turkle proposed that computer-mediated experiences lead to the mass multiplication of individuals’ identities and condition their awareness of their Selves as multiple and decentred.⁷⁹

In the twenty-first century, the idea that the practice of online communication was responsible for revealing online users’ numerous identities has become widely accepted. In academic literature on identity production in online worlds, including LiveJournal, users’ Selves have most often been described as

⁷⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen Lane (London: Athlone Press, 2004), p. 5.

⁷⁵ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. by Bruce Fink, Heloise Fink, and Russel Grigg (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), pp. 468-72.

⁷⁶ Bruner, pp. 11-32 (pp. 15, 19-20); Kevin Murray, ‘Life as Fiction’, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 15.2 (1985), 173-87.

⁷⁷ Michael Bamberg, ‘Positioning Between Structure and Performance’, *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7 (1997), 335-42; Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré, ‘Positioning: The Discursive Production of Selves’, *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20 (1990), 43-63.

⁷⁸ Kenneth Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), pp. 6-7.

⁷⁹ Turkle, pp. 15, 17, 165, 180.

multiple and contextually-determined.⁸⁰ In this thesis, I adopt the same perspective on identity, considering LiveJournal as a specific socio-technological environment, in which bloggers' multiple – and sometimes contrasting – Selves are produced. Through the analysis of bloggers' narratives, I aim to reveal the cultural scripts that shape bloggers' 'microdialogues', as well as the effects of the gaze of various Others and the impact of technological progress upon the diversification of the versions of Self.

Data

In order to reveal the shifting mechanics of identity production in LiveJournal and to account for the role of the specific social environment in this process, it was necessary to conduct the micro-analysis of the narratives constructed by the first generation of LiveJournal users in different periods of time and for different audiences. To build a sample of representative cases for this study, I had to get access to bloggers' full archives of entries, including their semi-public and private posts. To do so, I first contacted thirty-five bloggers who belonged to the first generation of LiveJournal users and whose journals demonstrated a high level of literary awareness and contained contrasting self-presentations of their authors. Five bloggers granted me access to their friends-only entries. When reading them, I realized that in order to account fully for the role of audiences in the co-production of meaning, I needed to consider a set of interlinked journals. I applied the snowball data-collection method and asked my informants to recommend to me some of their

⁸⁰ Davis, <http://www.informatik.uni-bremen.de/soteg/gict2009/proceedings/GICT2009_Davis.pdf>; Aldred, pp. 6-35; Erika Pearson, 'All the World Wide Web's a Stage: The Performance of Identity in Online Social Networks', *First Monday*, 14.3 (2009) <<http://www.firstmonday.dk/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2162/2127>> [accessed 13 February 2018].

blogger-friends. Four informants provided me with lists of candidates. I contacted six suggested by my informant Inna Novoklenova, and three of them agreed to participate in this study.

Although the journals suggested by all the initial informants demonstrated high literary skills on the part of their authors, and most of them covered the targeted time frame, I recognized the sample provided by Inna as the most representative of the intelligentsia online community because of the biographical characteristics of the bloggers. They were all engaged in intellectual professional activities, all practised creative writing (poems and short stories) in their journals, and all mentioned their acquaintanceships with famous members of literary and theatrical circles. The resulting dataset consisted of three journals with open access settings, four journals with limited access settings, two journals accessible for small groups of readers, and two journals with closed access settings. They belonged to one writer, one Sinologist and photographer, one fiction translator, and one journalist and playwright. The informants knew each other personally and participated in the production of stories in each other's journals. The blogs were supplemented by the fragments of the handwritten diaries of three informants and six biographical interviews with three bloggers, used for reconstructing the contexts of narration, for defining the areas of untold experiences, and for providing the frames of reference for the Selves narrated in the journals. The overall volume of narrative data amounted to 1,491,604 words.⁸¹ All the informants consented to the use of their personal data and the study received approval from The Central University Research Ethics Committee. To protect potentially sensitive content, the names of the informants were replaced with pseudonyms with the exception of Pavel who preferred for his real name to be

⁸¹ A detailed overview of the dataset can be found in the Appendix 1.

preserved in the thesis. The names of the individuals mentioned in bloggers' stories were changed as well.

In addition, in order to support the propositions about the community's trends of self-presentation, I analysed twenty-three journals linked with the central sample quantitatively. To build a sample of blogs that would be representative of this social group's writings, I needed to trace my informants' connections with other bloggers and to separate those who allegedly belonged to the targeted virtual group from those whose connections with the informants derived from other discursive contexts. To do so, I compared my informants' lists of friends in LiveJournal and selected those bloggers who were followed by at least two of the informants. As all the informants originated from different cities and later lived in different countries, their mutual friendships were expected to reflect online, rather than offline, relationships. This search resulted in a list of twenty-four journals. In the process of data collection, one blogger (a famous Russian poet) deleted her journal, bringing the sample to twenty-three cases. Eighteen journals of this sample were written by individuals related to intellectual and artistic circles: writers, musicians, photographers, artists, journalists, fiction translators, literary and art agents. Most of these journals did not contain any entries made prior to 2003, and more than half of them had no entries after 2013. For this reason, an analysis of the content of the entries for the period from 2003 to 2013 for this group of twenty-three interlinked bloggers offered the most representative sample of my population.

This sample included 21,097 texts with open access settings. Each text was hand-coded by me. The coding sheets were preserved for future reference. The coding procedure included the allocation of tags referring to texts' thematic, stylistic, paratextual and communicative specifics. Every time a certain feature was registered,

the number of comments to the entry in which it was identified was recorded. Two blogs in the sample had ‘screened comments’, meaning their comments could not be seen by readers. As a result, the working sample for the analysis of commenting practices in LiveJournal was reduced to twenty-one blogs, containing a total of 17,076 entries and 207,474 comments.

Method

As outlined above, in this study I aim to describe the specifics of the production of Selves in LiveJournal. I combine case study methodology with quantitative approaches such as topic modelling and sentiment analysis. The cases are considered through the prism of narrative and discourse analysis. At each stage of the analysis, appropriate theories are utilized to interpret particular aspects of identity production. Bloggers’ narratives are successively considered as constructs affected by cultural, social and technological factors.

In social sciences, this approach is known as the Actor-Network Theory, developed by Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law. It is an empirical case studies-based approach, according to which anything in the perceptible world can be interpreted as ‘continuously generated effects of the webs of relations within which they are located’.⁸² Actor-Network Theory-based studies aim to describe the architectures of the world’s phenomena by discovering the webs of actors conditioning them.

One of the most distinctive features of Actor-Network Theory is its claim that material objects play just as important a role as cultural scenarios and

⁸² Law, pp. 141-58.

interpersonal relations in the assembling of world's phenomena.⁸³ Hence, Actor-Network Theory-based studies usually distinguish three types of actors forming the networks: semiotic (such as ideas, concepts and social norms), material human, and material non-human (such as objects, animals or natural phenomena). In addition, Actor-Network Theory differentiates two types of agency that the actors can exert. Intermediaries can deliver the force of other actors, but do not make any transformation to it. Although included in the network, they constitute auxiliary actors. By contrast, mediators exert transformative action, resulting in relationships of mutual impact between the actors. The type of agency is, however, never fixed. Intermediaries can become mediators at any moment, and vice versa.⁸⁴

In *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Bruno Latour emphasizes that the Self – as any other phenomenon – should be regarded as an effect of the relationship of various actors:

But what about me, the ego? Am I not in the depth of my heart, in the circumvolutions of my brain, in the inner sanctum of my soul, in the vivacity of my spirit, an 'individual'? Of course I am, but only as long as I have been individualized, spiritualized, interiorized. It is true that the circulation of these 'subjectifiers' is often more difficult to track. But if you search for them, you will find them all over the place: floods, rains, swarms of what could be called psycho-morphs because they literally lend you the shape of a psyche.⁸⁵

Taking the methodological route of the Actor-Network Theory for studying the production of identity opens great research potential. Being an open hypothesis approach, Actor-Network Theory allows the researcher to stay flexible and to adjust the vector of analysis in response to new findings. This approach is particularly promising when working with such complex and heterogenous phenomenon as

⁸³ Latour, p. 63.

⁸⁴ Latour, pp. 37-42.

⁸⁵ Latour, p. 212.

identity production where additional variables may be discovered in the process of data collection and analysis. Actor-Network Theory is also uniquely suited for working with dynamic research objects such as personal narratives created by bloggers in different narrative contexts and at different periods in time. The descriptive nature of the Actor-Network Theory enables me to include a wide range of actors in the scope of analysis, and to take stock of the combined influences of these actors, as well as to register temporal transformations in their agency. With these goals in mind, I adopt the propositions of Actor-Network Theory in this study and describe an array of semiotic, material human and material non-human actors which function as mediators in the network of identity production in LiveJournal.

Semiotic actors of any studied network are represented by those cultural clichés, mythologies and discursive templates that condition the existence of a phenomenon in a particular form.⁸⁶ When the Selves produced in LiveJournal's biographical narratives are interpreted as networks, the semiotic actors operating in them are represented by systems of values that determine what should or should not be represented, the non-articulated conventions of the social group to which bloggers belong, and the cultural scenarios according to which bloggers narrate their biographical experiences.

The impact of human actors roughly corresponds to what is commonly referred to as social influence, although it should be mentioned that Latour himself is critical of the habitual usage of the concept of 'social force'.⁸⁷ Leaving aside terminological disagreements, it can be said that from the standpoint of Actor-Network Theory, no action can be ascribed to one single individual. Latour uses the metaphor from the poem by Arthur Rimbaud – '*We, like I, is a wasp's nest*' – to

⁸⁶ Latour, pp. 208-209.

⁸⁷ Latour, p. 4.

emphasize that no one knows how many people are simultaneously at work in any given individual.⁸⁸

In the network of identity production in LiveJournal, human actors are represented by those individuals who form the audiences of the bloggers, those who function as characters in bloggers' stories and, more generally, those who influence their self-conceptualizations in any way. These human actors produce and channel semiotic scripts and organize material objects, included in the network. At the same time, the inclusion of particular human actors in the network is, in its turn, subjected to the action of ideas and objects at play.

Finally, material actors in the Actor-Network Theory can be represented by any objects or natural phenomena that are interwoven with human actors and semiotic scripts in a network of causal relationships. In this study, I treat technological specifics of LiveJournal affecting the production of bloggers' identities as material actors. Although technologies can hardly be compared to material objects, the studies that approach internet phenomena from the perspective of Actor-Network Theory agree on allocating them to the third group of actors due to their functional congeniality to objects as interpreted by Latour.⁸⁹

Structure

The structure of this thesis is based upon Actor-Network Theory's typology of actors, with each of the three chapters devoted to one category of actors. In the first chapter of this thesis, I describe the array of the core semiotic actors that are habitually involved in the production of identity in LiveJournal's community. In

⁸⁸ Latour, pp. 45, 54.

⁸⁹ An overview of the applications of Actor-Network Theory to studies of the internet can be found in the work of Rocci Luppicini. See Rocci Luppicini, 'Illuminating the Dark Side of the Internet with Actor-Network Theory: An Integrative Review of Current Cybercrime Research', *Global Media Journal*, 7.1 (2014), 35-49 (p. 38).

order to do so, I first reconstruct the evolution of thematic-stylistic profile of the group of twenty-three blogs over the period of eleven years. The analysis of these data reveals LiveJournal's strong preference for narrative features associated with the conventional scripts of personal diaries summarized by Béatrice Didier,⁹⁰ and the rhetoric of the Russian intelligentsia described by Inna Kochetkova.⁹¹ The thematic trends identified during the analysis also point to the gradual disappearance of certain tropes, such as dreams, romance and depression, from bloggers' narrative repertoire between the years 2003 and 2013.

Next, I apply the method of narrative analysis elaborated by Jerome Bruner and Catherine Riessman⁹² to the four groups of stories found in the journals of my informants, and identify the semiotic scripts from literature that are involved in bloggers' self-production. I illustrate how literature is addressed by bloggers as a source of emotional templates and explain how, in some cases, the adoption of these scripts allows bloggers to simultaneously produce contrasting identities, and in other cases prevents the narrators from forming consistent Selves.

Finally, I show how the adoption of the semiotic scripts of indirect and referential narration leads to the appearance of the new models of self-production, which become dominant in later social media. The micro-analysis of the two groups of stories that draw on the symbolic resources of popular psychoanalysis and the overview of the flashmob genre illustrate bloggers' experiments with this type of identity.

The second chapter of this thesis is devoted to the role of human actors involved in the production of identity in LiveJournal. I start by linking thematic and

⁹⁰ Didier, pp. 95-110.

⁹¹ Kochetkova, *The Myth of the Russian Intelligentsia: Old Intellectuals in the New Russia*.

⁹² Bruner, pp. 11-32; Riessman, *Narrative Analysis*.

stylistic choices of bloggers with the preferences of their community. I measure and analyse the dynamics of commenting rates for each thematic and stylistic feature found in 17,076 texts of the community under study over the course of eleven years. Then, I establish the correlation between audience reception of bloggers' texts and bloggers' subsequent narrative choices. I proceed with comparative close reading of bloggers' biographical stories representing the same episodes but told in different narrative contexts, such as interviews and journals with different privacy settings. I show how particular human actors influence the selection of certain semiotic scripts, resulting in the production of alternative Selves by bloggers. Next, I suggest that the characters in bloggers' stories should also be regarded as human actors. Drawing on the ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss,⁹³ I approach the storyworlds of the informants as the paradigms of inter-related meanings and register the changes in bloggers' self-conceptualizations resulting from the transformations in the systems of characters. Finally, I apply positioning theory by Michael Bamberg, and Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré⁹⁴ to a group of narratives used by two bloggers to communicate with each other. I illustrate how bloggers' reciprocal gazes influence the shaping of their Selves and how their narrative collaboration allows them to produce particular Selves favoured by their social circle.

In the third chapter of this thesis, I explore the agency of material actors in the production of identity in LiveJournal. I describe the effects of the availability of multimedia elements and hyperlinks to supplement texts; of the syntax of the webpage; and of access to an easily navigable archive of records upon bloggers' narrated Selves. First, I apply the concept of mosaic-schizophrenic syntax suggested

⁹³ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic books, 1963), pp. 42-46.

⁹⁴ Bamberg, pp. 335-42; Davies and Harré, pp. 43-63.

by Almira Ousmanova and Andrei Gornykh⁹⁵ to a group of narratives characterized by the presence of audio elements and hyperlinks, as well as to the cases of multi-thematic entries on one page. I explain how such complex architectures condition the polyphonic nature of writers' self-conceptualizations and enable simultaneous articulation of their different Selves. I also explore the link between LiveJournal's archival potential and bloggers' memory. I illustrate how the website's design enables its users to renegotiate their relationships with their past Selves. The comparative analysis of one blogger's journals from different years allows me to provide empirical evidence for the theory of mediated memory by José van Dijck⁹⁶ and to question the relevance of Ori Schwarz' ideas about 'memory's neighbourly relations with blogs'.⁹⁷ Finally, I present the results of a quantitative analysis that suggest a correlation between a decrease in melancholic narration in LiveJournal stories and increasing numbers of published photographs. Close reading of narratives representing similar Selves of the writer, some with photographs and some without, allows me to provide further evidence that LiveJournal's gradual shift from the inherently melancholic tone of traditional diaries to a more optimistic mode is accompanied by the migration of the orders of photographic representation to ego-text. I conclude by summarizing the findings and providing directions for future research.

The thesis is supplemented by four appendices. Appendix 1 provides the overview of the study's dataset including sources of qualitative data, biographical details of the four informants, and demographic characteristics of the twenty-three

⁹⁵ Andrei Gornykh and Almira Ousmanova, 'Aesthetics of Internet and Visual Consumption', in *Control+Shift: Public and Private Usages of Russian Internet*, p. 203.

⁹⁶ José Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 29.

⁹⁷ Ori Schwarz, 'The Past Next Door: Neighbourly Relations with Digital Memory-Artifacts', *Memory Studies*, 7.1 (2013), 7-21 (p. 12).

bloggers whose open journals are considered. Full interviews with the informants as well as the contents of their journals were not included in the appendices due to their large size and with the aim to protect potentially sensitive content that remained outside the scope of this study. The transcripts of the interviews and the links to the journals can be provided to bona fide researchers upon request. Appendix 2 contains the transcript of the interview with Roman Leibov. This interview presents a source of valuable historical data for scholars interested in the history of LiveJournal and RuNet in general, and therefore the full text of the interview was included in the thesis. Appendices 3 and 4 provide examples for each stage of the quantitative analysis. The results of the analysis not reflected in the appendices can be provided upon request.

CHAPTER ONE. SEMIOTIC ACTORS AND THE PRODUCTION OF SELF IN LIVEJOURNAL

According to Actor-Network Theory, each phenomenon of perceptible reality can be interpreted as a network of relationships between ideas, individuals and objects – in other words, between semiotic, human and material actors. Semiotic actors of any studied network are represented by those cultural meanings, mythologies and discursive templates that determine the existence of the studied phenomenon in a particular form.⁹⁸ When the Selves produced in LiveJournal's biographical narratives are interpreted as networks, the semiotic actors operating in them are represented by ideas that steer bloggers' narrative choices. These include the systems of values that determine what should or should not be represented, the non-articulated conventions of the social group to which bloggers belong, and the cultural scenarios according to which bloggers narrate their biographical experiences.

Naturally, the list of semiotic actors that influence the production of identities in LiveJournal's texts is endless. The presence of each particular semiotic actor in each particular case of self-production is determined by the unique background of the author and the specifics of the context of narration. Yet these separate acts of self-production have many common traits due to their appearance in comparable discursive settings. In this chapter of the thesis I describe the array of core semiotic actors that are habitually involved in the production of identity in LiveJournal community.

Many semiotic actors influencing the production of Selves in LiveJournal come from the traditions of diary writing. Much like personal diaries, online journals are intended by their authors as platforms for introspection and as means of recording

⁹⁸ Latour, pp. 208-209.

memories about life events and states of mind. Just as do personal diaries, online journals function as a practical way of preserving their authors' spiritual capital. This function of online journals determines the adoption of narrative patterns characteristic of personal diaries by bloggers.

At the same time, LiveJournal texts belong to the grey area between literature and biography. The practice of sharing stories in LiveJournal is used by bloggers to refine and demonstrate their literary skills. In this process, bloggers – consciously or not – draw on the traditions of literature familiar to them. The use of artistic narration and the adoption of literary models define the specifics of bloggers' narrated identities. This is why another group of semiotic actors influencing the production of Selves in LiveJournal derives from literary works belonging to bloggers' cultural capital. Finally, blogs' transitional status between personal diary and social media conditions their gradual shift away both from intimate soul-searching narratives and from literary aestheticization of biography. Instead of creating well-written introspective texts, bloggers increasingly self-identify through hyperlinking, sharing, reposting, participating in flashmobs and marking their membership of various communities and discussion groups. These practices allow bloggers to produce their Selves indirectly, by referring to external phenomena. The cultural scenario of indirect, referential narration presents another semiotic actor that plays an important role in the processes of identity production in LiveJournal.

To account for the influence of these different semiotic actors, I use a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis of LiveJournal narratives. The first section of this chapter is devoted to the analysis of a large corpus of LiveJournal texts produced between the years 2003 and 2013. I reconstruct the evolution of blogs' thematic-stylistic profile over the course of eleven years and in this way

identify the scope of semiotic actors involved in the production of Selves in LiveJournal.

In the second section of this chapter, I explore the interlacement of diary narrative with literary semiotic scripts. For this purpose I perform micro-analysis of four groups of stories found in the journals of my informants. The first two groups of stories present examples of the conversion of biographical material into literary texts. I illustrate how in one case, such a technique contributes to successful simultaneous production of contrasting identities, and in another case leads to a conflict of semiotic scripts preventing the narrator from producing a consistent Self. The analysis of the third and fourth groups of stories shows how literature is employed by bloggers as a source of emotional templates. I suggest that these templates can be used to aestheticize mundane experiences in order to make them worth including in LiveJournal, and to give meaning to complex biographical experiences.

The third section of this chapter is devoted to the formation of indirect ego-narrative in LiveJournal. I maintain that indirect narration becomes the dominant form of self-production in social media and that the first signs of this shift in the mode of self-inscription can be detected in LiveJournal's texts. To support this idea, I first analyse cases where bloggers draw on the symbolic resources of popular psychoanalysis in order to metaphorically narrate their attitudes and emotions. I proceed by considering the phenomenon of flashmobs and suggest that by creating the illusion of a dialogue on external matters, flashmobs enable referential production of identity.

Section One. The Evolution of LiveJournal's Thematic-Stylistic Profile

In this section of my thesis, I analyse a sample of twenty-three blogs with the aim of reconstructing the evolution of their thematic core. I maintain that bloggers' self-conceptualizations are inseparably intertwined with the thematic focuses of their blogs and that the spectrum of these focuses – especially in the early years of LiveJournal's existence – largely reproduces the patterns of traditional diary writing and follows self-presentational conventions of the Russian intelligentsia, a socio-cultural precursor of bloggers of the creative class.

So far, the narrative canon of the texts produced by LiveJournal's users has not been comprehensively described in academic literature. Researchers working with LiveJournal narratives emphasize that the blogs' thematic spectrum is wide and diverse and that the selection of topics depends on various factors, which range from internet vogue to bloggers' places of residence.⁹⁹ At the same time, researchers agree that particular features, such as the display of one's intellectuality¹⁰⁰ and oppositional political views,¹⁰¹ can be considered largely characteristic of LiveJournal's texts. Valuable insights into the thematic composition of Russian LiveJournal have been made by a research team from the Laboratory of Internet Studies of Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Using TopicMiner, their own qualitative analysis software suitable for working with Russian-language data,¹⁰² the researchers were able to analyse thousands of Russian blogs and register the shifts in their thematic structures. Among their most important discoveries were the impact of LiveJournal's political entries upon the election processes in Russia and the equal involvement of popular

⁹⁹ Il'ia Nebykov and Evgenii Efimov, 'Blogi kak vid sotsial'nykh internet-setei (sotsial'nye aspekty)', *Vestnik Volgogradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, 7 (2012), 119-24.

¹⁰⁰ Gorny, p. 80.

¹⁰¹ Koltsova and Shcherbak, p. 1720.

¹⁰² The TopicMiner software can be found at <<https://linis.hse.ru/topicminer>> [accessed 18 February 2017].

and ‘ordinary’ bloggers in discussions on socio-political issues.¹⁰³ Yet although this method has the potential to allow researchers to reconstruct the evolution of the most frequent topics articulated in LiveJournal’s discourse, only the list of topics characteristic of LiveJournal in February 2012 has so far been published.¹⁰⁴

The machine analysis of big data can reveal unexpected patterns and suggest promising directions for more detailed analysis. However, due to two significant limitations machine analysis alone is insufficient to reconstruct the blogs’ narrative canon. First, LiveJournal is not a homogenous social environment: it encompasses texts produced by multiple social groups with various narrative goals, and hence the results obtained from the analysis of thousands of randomly sampled blogs are only partly relevant to the writings of any real community in the blogosphere. Second, machine analysis is based on registering the clusters of lexemes. However, LiveJournal texts are highly artistic and can often be considered as literary works. Blogs’ narrative profiles should ultimately include the registrations of stylistic and contextual parameters, as they often play a role more important than the topic of an entry in LiveJournal’s language game. This can only be achieved by hand-coding which allows us to register such stylistic and paratextual parameters as ‘literary narration’, ‘humour’, ‘complaint’, ‘citation from other text’, ‘repost’ and so on. Moreover, hand-coding allows us to allocate seemingly thematically diverse entries to semantic groups, such as ‘stories about unusual situations in everyday life’,

¹⁰³ Koltsova and Shcherbak, pp. 1715-32; Svetlana Alekseeva, Olessia Koltsova, and Sergei Koltcov, ‘Obshchestvennoe mnenie onlain: sravnenie struktury i tematiki postov “obychnykh” i “populiarnykh” blogerov Zhivogo Zhurnala’, *Supplementary Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Analysis of Images, Social Networks and Texts (AIST, 2014)* <<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/2923/939e424a88d2132667f363d4002c407fe6be.pdf>> [accessed 7 April 2018].

¹⁰⁴ Olessia Koltsova and Sergei Koltcov, ‘Statisticheskii i tematicheskii profil’ “Zhivogo Zhurnala”, *Proceedings of the Conference on Internet and society (Internet i sovremennoe obshchestvo, 2013)* <<http://ojs.ifmo.ru/index.php/IMS/article/view/17>> [accessed 7 April 2018].

‘recollections of childhood’, ‘stories about living abroad’, and in this way to create a more accurate thematic profile of a journal.

To fill the outlined gaps in the academic discussion of Russian blogs, I chose to hand-code the journals and to reconstruct the yearly evolution of their thematic and stylistic compositions. In this section, I first outline the procedures of building a representative sample of cases, data collection and coding. Next, I describe the process of reconstructing the thematic-stylistic profile of the sample, which includes measuring the frequency rates for each feature, comparing yearly results, defining those themes and styles steadily that occur with highest and lowest frequency over the course of the studied period, identifying significant trends in the frequency of themes and styles, and filtering the results. Finally, I summarize and discuss the findings.

Building the Sample

As described in the introduction to this thesis, my goal at the stage of data collection was to build a sample that would be representative of the new intelligentsia online community. Four large corpora of texts, produced by bloggers whose biographical characteristics testified to their membership of this circle, were selected for close reading. To build a sample of cases that would reflect my informants’ social environment, I traced their connections with other bloggers. I compared my informants’ lists of friends in LiveJournal and selected those bloggers who were followed by at least two of the informants. This allowed me to separate those friends who allegedly belonged to the targeted virtual group from those whose connections with the informants derived from other discursive contexts. The initial sample consisted of twenty-four journals, but while I was collecting the data, one

blogger deleted her journal. Therefore, the number of journals under consideration was reduced to twenty-three. While reading these journals, I learned that eighteen of them belonged to individuals related to intellectual and artistic circles, including writers, musicians, photographers, artists, journalists, fiction translators, literary and art agents. As only two journals of the sample contained entries prior to 2003 and more than half of the journals had no entries after 2013, I decided that an analysis of the content of the entries produced between 2003 and 2013 offered the most representative sample of my population. Thus, the final data sample consisted of all the entries with open access found in twenty-three interlinked blogs between the years 2003 and 2013.

Data Collection and Coding

To describe the thematic and stylistic composition of the texts of my sample, I read and hand-coded all the entries made by the twenty-three bloggers in the period from 2003 to 2013 (an example of a data sheet with coding results can be found in Appendix 4.1). The resulting corpus contained 21,097 entries. For each text, the topic was identified and recorded. When an entry articulated two or more topics, it was allocated a relevant number of topic tags. Next, those narratives which, by contrast with stylistically neutral texts, demonstrated obvious biases towards particular modes of expression, were allocated relevant style tags (such as ‘literary work’, ‘humour’, ‘criticism’). In addition, paratextual and intertextual features (such as ‘photographs’ and ‘video-files’, and ‘hyperlinks’ and ‘citations’), and techniques of communication (such as ‘reposting’, ‘asking direct questions’, or ‘mentioning other bloggers in one’s text’) were coded as well. The recurrence of each thematic, stylistic, para/intertextual and communicative characteristic was calculated per year per blogger. Those features

identified at least once in at least two different blogs were included in the database. The number of comments on posts containing each feature was calculated per year per blogger and included in the database (the analysis of commenting practices follows in Chapter 2 of this thesis).

It is important to note that the quantitative aspect of this study is not without its limitations. Due to the narrow sample utilized, these findings have to be interpreted with caution. For instance, the generalizability may be limited which warrants future research to validate some of the conclusions. This analysis is also strongly focused on thematic-stylistic characteristics of the texts. The correlations between commenting rates and such entries' characteristics as length, time of publication (morning/evening, weekday/weekend), and the degree of authors' involvement in discussions were not measured and provide additional avenues for future research. Finally, an additional limitation of the analysis of the resulting corpus is related to the transient nature of digital archives. The highest degree of accuracy in the description of thematic evolution of blogs would be achieved by a longitude study based on data collected as they appeared over the course of the analysed period. Yet, to my knowledge, such academic work has not been undertaken. The data for this research were collected in November 2016 – May 2017, resulting in a corpus consisting of the entries which their authors kept publicly accessible at that time. Entries that were initially public but later moved to a limited-access regime or deleted could not be included in the sample. Despite the possibility that the absence of these entries would affect the composition of the database, it was expected that the regularities discovered across the sample would point at trends of particular strength, able to resist occasional modifications.

The list of features generated during the process of hand-coding contained forty-one topics, twenty-four sub-topics, twelve stylistic modes, six types of paratextual elements and five communicative techniques. The following table represents the lists of tags that were allocated to coded entries:

Topics and sub-topics		Styles	Paratext Intertext	Communication
Animals	Cats	Announcements	Audio-files	Direct addresses to readers, questions to readers
	Other animals	Aphorisms	Hyperlinks (references to external content represented by text and image: other blogs, news, entertainment web-sites)	Flashmobs and tests
Advertisement		Criticism and derision	Hyperlinks to video-files (mostly, from YouTube)	Mentioning other bloggers
Aromas and scents		Complaints	Images	Reposts of entries authored by other bloggers
Awkward situations		Humour	Photographs	Self-reposts (reposts of bloggers' posts made on other websites)
Bureaucracy		Intellectual superiority	Quotations	
Culture	Film	Literary works		
	Literature	Obscene language		
	Music	Parapraxes (mishearing, misreading)		
	Theatre	Sentimentality		
	Television	Tragedy		
	Visual arts (painting,	Untold stories (short resume		

	photography, design)	of the story that the blogger intended to write)		
	Other			
Celebrities				
Computers and software				
Depression				
Dreams				
Esotericism				
Family	Children			
	Other family members			
Fatigue and stress				
Finances				
Food&drinks	Alcohol			
	Food & Other drinks			
Friends				
Historical persons				
Illnesses				
Image: clothes, haircuts, make-up				
Language (literacy and translation)				
Leisure	Crafts			
	Cultural events			
	Games			
	Gardening			
	Parties			
	Procrastination			
	Sport			
	Walks			
Other				
LiveJournal				
Living abroad				
Living conditions	Flats/houses			
	Household			
Observations (descriptions of peculiar situations,				

practices and individuals)				
Overview of multiple events				
Personal psychological characteristics				
Philosophy, reflections				
Politics				
Recollections of childhood				
Religion				
Romance				
Sex				
Shopping				
Social activism				
Studies				
Subcultures				
Travelling				
Unusual events				
Weather				
Work				

Composing the Thematic-Stylistic Profile of the Sample. Measuring Average Frequencies of Topics and Narrative Features

To create the thematic-stylistic profile of the analysed sample of blogs in the studied period, first, the average frequency of each feature in each year was calculated as follows:

$$Ff(\text{year}) = (Nf_1/Ne_1 + Nf_2/Ne_2 + Nf_3/Ne_3 + Nf_n/Ne_n)/Nbl,$$

where Ff is the frequency of the feature,

Nf_{1-23} is the number of entries containing the feature in each journal in the analysed year,

Ne_{1-23} is the total number of entries contained in each journal in the analysed year, and

Nbl is the number of bloggers who have entries in the analysed year.

To identify the themes most prominently articulated in the sample over the course of the studied period, ten most frequent themes for each year were selected (the list of most frequent topics can be found in the Appendix 3.1).

Next, the least frequent topics were identified. This stage of the analysis revealed that several topics did not appear at all in particular years, although they were included in the initial dataset (because they were mentioned at least once by at least two bloggers). These cases were registered and the list of absent topics for each year was created. Five of these topics were absent from more than half of the analysed years: unusual events, awkward situations, subcultures, advertisement, and esotericism were absent from eight, seven, ten, six and nine years respectively. This signalled that their occasional occurrence in the blogs was not representative and they were disregarded in further analysis. Following this update, the list of ten least frequent topics for each year was generated (the list of absent topics and the list of least frequent topics can be found in Appendix 3.2 and Appendix 3.3).

The data from the lists of most and least frequent topics were analysed and the themes that demonstrated regular presence/absence in the blogs over the course of eleven years were defined. Next, to track atypical or unexpected fluctuations in topics' popularity, the data from the two lists were compared and the cases of one topic's appearance on both lists were registered.

Analysing the Evolution of Topics and Defining Significant Trends

Once stable frequent and infrequent topics were identified and peculiar deviations were registered, the dynamics of each topic over the course of eleven years were reconstructed separately in search of meaningful trends (for an example

of such reconstruction, see Appendix 3.4). Next, the dynamics of stylistic, paratextual, and communicative features across the sample during the studied period were reconstructed (for visualizations, see Appendix 3.5).

The analysis of these data revealed twenty-two cases of steady trends among most and least frequent topics, and twenty-six cases of significant shifts in the dynamics of the topics and narrative features in the overall sample.

Filtering the Results

Due to the statistically moderate size of the sample, significant fluctuations in the average frequency rates could result not from the shifts in overall trends but from particularly high input from one or two subjects. To filter out such cases, the eleven-year evolution of each of the topics and features that demonstrated allegedly meaningful fluctuations was reconstructed for each blogger.

The frequency of each feature in each year for each blogger was calculated as follows:

$$Ff_{1-23}(\text{year}) = Nf_{1-23}/Ne_{1-23},$$

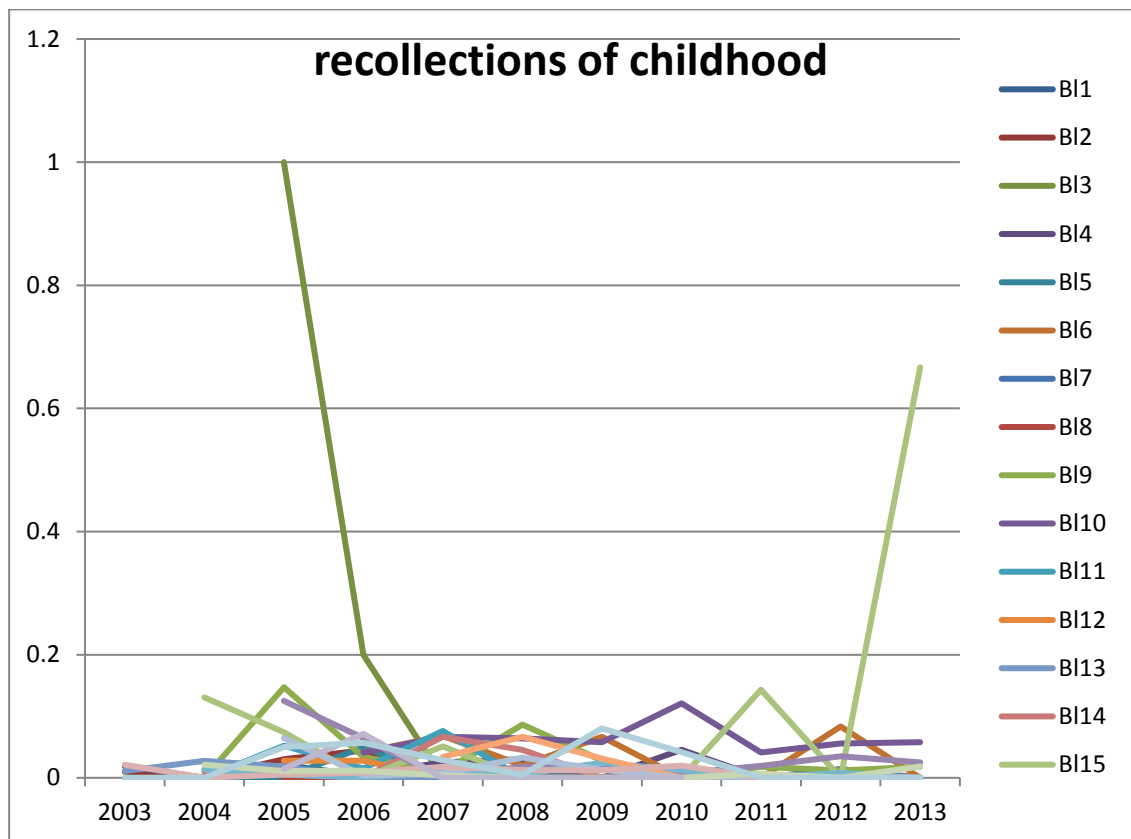
where Ff_{1-23} is the frequency of the feature in journals 1-23,

Nf_{1-23} is the number of entries containing the feature in each journal in the analysed year, and

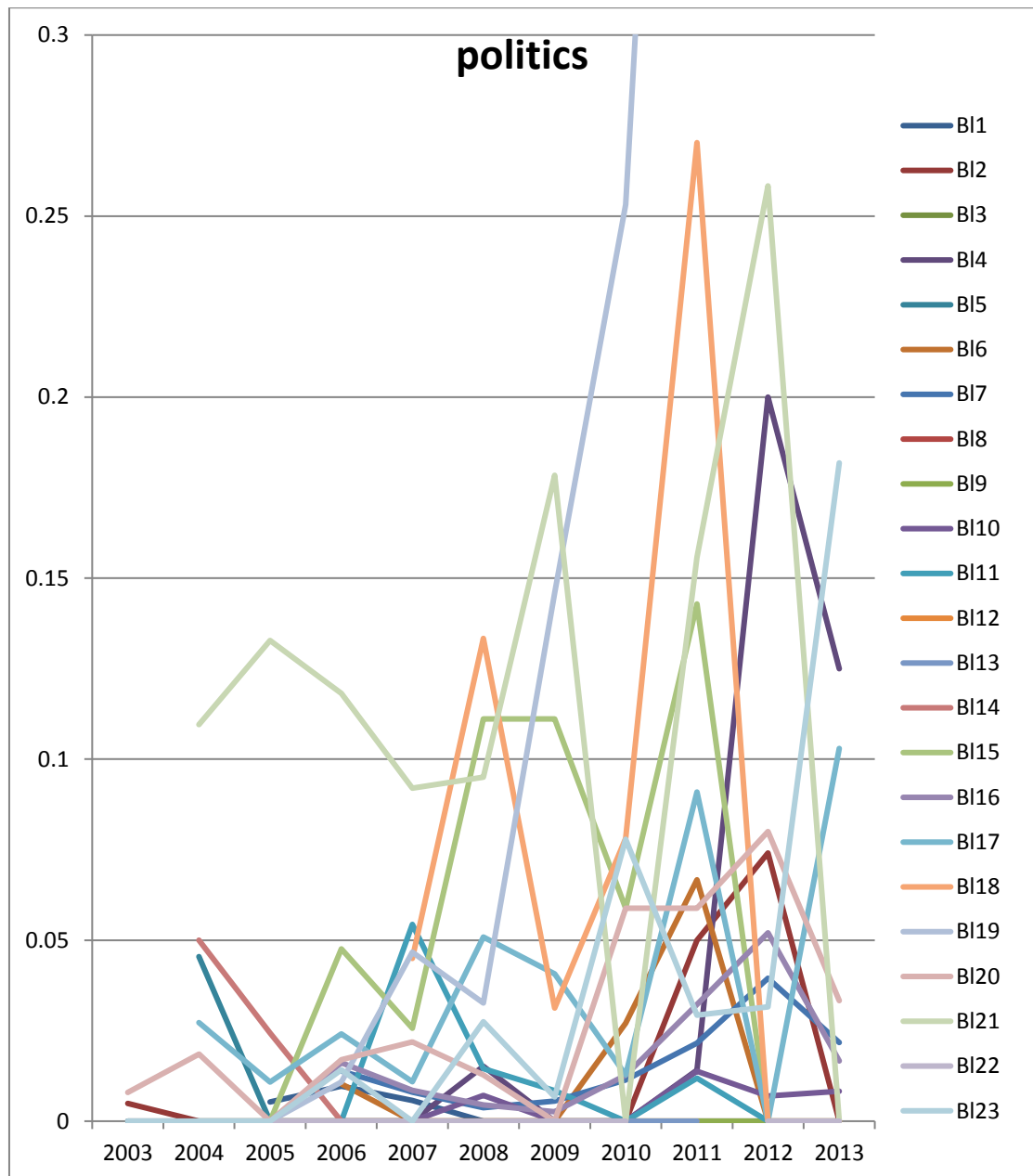
Ne_{1-23} is the total number of entries contained in each journal in the analysed year.

This analysis revealed that the peaks and shifts in average frequency rates of eleven topics and features were indeed heavily impacted by particular subjects. For instance, as the following graph demonstrates, the 2005 and 2013 increases in the

average frequencies of the ‘recollections of childhood’ were caused by the particularly high input of Blogger 3 and Blogger 9:



In other cases, such as the increase in the frequency of entries about ‘politics’ with the peak in 2011-2012 demonstrated below, the shifts identified were shown to be trends inherent in the majority of subjects of the sample:



Those findings that proved to be influenced by high input by fewer than five bloggers were discarded, and the list of significant regularities that occurred in the texts of the majority of the subjects was composed. All the stages of coding and analysis were preserved for future reference.

Summarising the Findings

Comparison of yearly results for the most frequently addressed topics demonstrated that during the period from 2003 to 2013, the most popular topic was

‘culture’. This topic consisted of seven sub-topics. The comparison of the dynamics of their frequency rates revealed that the cultural areas predominantly discussed in the analysed blogs were ‘literature’, ‘film’ and ‘music’. ‘Literature’ and ‘film’ demonstrated consistently high frequencies during the analysed period, while ‘music’ experienced a considerable gradual increase (for the visualization of these data, see Appendix 3.6). The 2011 peak in ‘literature’ was disregarded as it resulted from high impact of Blogger 14 (see Appendix 3.7).

Other topics that composed the thematic core of the group of blogs under analysis included ‘travelling’, ‘observations’, ‘family’, ‘leisure’, ‘politics’, ‘work’, ‘reflections’, ‘LiveJournal’, and ‘recollections’. With slightly lower frequency rates, but still maintaining a steady presence among the most popular topics, were ‘language’, ‘food & drinks’, ‘celebrities’, ‘animals’ and ‘weather’.

The least discussed topics over the course of eleven years were revealed to be ‘stress and fatigue’, ‘psychological characteristics’, ‘shopping’, ‘aromas’, ‘finances’, ‘bureaucracy’, ‘sex’, ‘romance’, ‘religion’, ‘depression’, ‘historical persons’, ‘social activism’, ‘studies’, and – in the second half of the studied period – ‘dreams’.

The analysis of the evolution of each topic and narrative feature, with the findings tested on all the blogs in the sample, revealed twenty-three trends:

- An increase in the frequency of entries about politics with the peak in 2011-2012 followed by a drop.
- A moderate increase in largely unpopular ‘social activism’ in 2010-2012.
- A gradual decrease in ‘studies’ over the course of eleven years (presumably associated with the bloggers’ finishing their studies).
- An increasing trend for ‘computers and software’ over the course of eleven years.

- A significant decrease in frequency rates for 'dreams', from one of the most frequent topics in 2003 and 2004 to one of least frequent ones in 2008-2011. This was combined with a sharp decrease in the number of bloggers writing on the subject in 2007-2008.
- A considerable decrease in the number of bloggers writing about 'weather' after 2008-2009.
- The trend for 'animals' increasing from 2003 to 2010 and then experiencing decreases and fluctuations.
- A decreasing trend for 'friends'.
- The low presence of 'depression' between 2003 and 2009, with only two bloggers raising the topic after 2009.
- 'Literary works' (prose and poetry written by bloggers) as one of two most popular stylistic modes from 2003 to 2009, despite a decreasing trend; experiencing fluctuating frequencies after 2009; and becoming the second least frequent style by 2011, mainly due to sharp increase in the popularity of other styles.
- 'Humour' as one of two most popular stylistic modes, with a peak in 2005-2006 and a slight decrease in 2007; demonstrating steady high frequency after 2007, and (due to the fluctuations in the trend for 'literary works') becoming the most frequent style in 2007-2009 and 2011-2012.
- Moderate frequency and little dynamics in 'aphorisms' and 'criticism'.
- A moderate but steady decrease in 'complaints' from 2003 to 2013.
- Low frequencies and insignificant fluctuations for 'parapraxes', 'obscene language', 'tragic narratives' and 'audio-files'.

- 'Photographs' as the most popular element in the 'Paratext/Intertext' group, with a dramatic increase in the frequency rates over the course of the studied period.
- High popularity and a rising trend for 'hyperlinks'.
- A slight increase in 'quotations' over eleven years.
- A sharp rise in 'video-files' between 2006 and 2009, followed by a steady but considerable decrease.
- 'Direct addresses' and 'mentioning other bloggers' as dominant features in 'communication' group and having slightly rising trends.
- A temporary increase in the frequency of 'reposts' in 2011.

Discussion

The reconstruction of the eleven-year evolution of the thematic-stylistic profile of the blog sample revealed that many strategies of self-inscription found in analysed texts were similar to the scripts conventional for personal diaries and intelligentsia rhetoric. However, as the analysis of the transformations of the thematic trends illustrated, some of the cultural scripts identified gradually disappeared from bloggers' narrative repertoire as digital ego-writing evolved. The following discussion explores the evolution of particular semiotic scripts found in LiveJournal.

LiveJournal and the Personal Diary

The personal diary is a heterogeneous genre, which historically grew out of a wide array of written forms. Introspective tendencies and the striving for self-

improvement were inherited from Puritan journals kept as preparation for confessions; the orientation towards the (imaginary) reader, from correspondence; and the meticulous registration of daily events, from account books and sea journals.¹⁰⁵ As a rule, diaries have a bias towards melancholic and sentimental narration.¹⁰⁶

In terms of their thematic and stylistic specifics, the online journals analysed in this study demonstrated a high degree of congruence with traditional personal diaries. The wide array of topics and the equalization of events of different scales consistently appearing in these journals reproduced the thematic diversity of diaries, where, according to Béatrice Didier, the shifting perspective of daily writing enabled the bracketing of wars or revolutions with a headache or the purchase of a pair of shoes.¹⁰⁷

The consistently high frequency of such topics as ‘family’, ‘work’, ‘leisure’, and ‘reflections’, resonated with the traditional simultaneous functioning of the diary as a family archive, account book, and space for private confession and self-analysis.¹⁰⁸ The recording of ‘recollections of childhood’, alongside notes of big dates and anniversaries, was also highly characteristic of both traditional diaries and blogs. In their material covering ‘travelling’ and ‘observations’, blogs echoed the traditions of the travel diary, one of the founding genres of the personal diary. The popular blogging practice of publishing ‘literary works’ and writing on the subject of ‘language’ was in line with diarists’ passion for writing.¹⁰⁹ Moreover, the frequent inclusion of quotes and hyperlinks functioning as points of departure for writers’

¹⁰⁵ On Puritan journals and see journals, see Martens, p. 66; on writing for a reader, see Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, p. 417; on account books, see Didier, pp. 55-57.

¹⁰⁶ Didier, pp. 79.

¹⁰⁷ Didier, p.66.

¹⁰⁸ Didier, pp. 55-57.

¹⁰⁹ Didier, p. 84.

thoughts continued the traditions of citations inherent in diaries and their historical precursors, notebooks.¹¹⁰

Interesting similarities were also apparent in the treatment of ‘sex’ by bloggers and diarists. In his book *Le Moi des demoiselles*, Philippe Lejeune suggests that a lack of emancipation caused sexuality to be largely excluded from women’s diaries.¹¹¹ Yet narratives about sex were hardly present in the twenty-first century journals either, regardless of writers’ gender or the privacy settings of the entries. In his interview, Roman Leibov suggests that the exclusion of stories about sex from LiveJournal is related to the awkwardness of obtaining a sexual partner’s consent to the publication of such stories. At the same time, Leibov believes that the concealment of sex is typical not only for online journals, but harks back to older conventions of diary writing.¹¹²

Another similarity between the narrative canons of personal diaries and blogs concerned the representations of bloggers’ bodies. In personal diaries, narratives about diarists’ bodies and appearances were rare.¹¹³ The body in these occasional stories was detached from the soul and mainly presented as a summation of organs often affected by various diseases; suffering caused by the disease allowed the body to reveal itself in the diary.¹¹⁴ In the blogs, the topic of ‘image’ (which included stories about physical appearance, clothes and make-up) had consistently low

¹¹⁰ Didier, pp. 55-57, 94, 80, 94, 110, 111, 180.

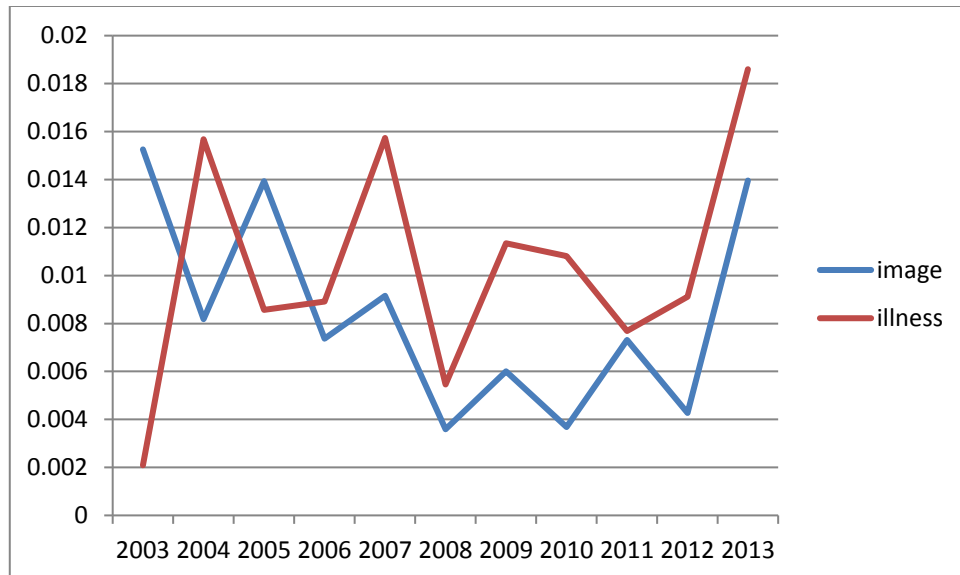
¹¹¹ Lejeune, *Le Moi des demoiselles*, p. 158.

¹¹² ‘У меня дома лежит дневник молодого человека начала 20 века, случайно попавший ко мне, где специальным образом кодировано [...] что это имеет отношение к сексу [...] То есть, это, вообще, видимо, вне традиции русской в дневнике [...] кто-то его тоже научил, что нельзя про это писать в дневнике [...] откуда-то он взял идею, что нельзя про это писать. То есть я не думаю, короче говоря, что это сетевая такая штука. [кроме того] тебе нужно согласие твоего партнера, чтобы написать. Если этого согласия нет, то это нарушение всех конвенций, а представить себе, что кто-нибудь к кому-нибудь приходит и говорит: ‘Давай, я вот сегодня напишу у себя в ЖЖ’. Слишком много социальных неудобств, короче говоря. Я уже не говорю про личные, там, возможности, адюльтер и так далее’. (Leibov, pp. 311-12).

¹¹³ Lejeune, *Le moi des demoiselles*, p. 158.

¹¹⁴ Didier, p. 111.

frequencies and was among the least discussed topics in two of the eleven years analysed. The topic of ‘illness’, though also not very frequent, was nonetheless discussed more often than ‘image’:



This testifies that, as in traditional diaries, texts about writers’ bodies kept the emphasis on their dysfunctions. However, these results only concern the conventions of *textual* representation. With the sharp increase in the amount of photographs over the course of eleven years, textual descriptions of bodies were overtaken by visual representations largely conditioned by optimism and intolerant of the representation of suffering (detailed discussion of this phenomenon follows in Chapter 3).

Other similarities between traditional diaries and blogs related to the topics ‘LiveJournal’ and ‘overview of multiple events’. ‘LiveJournal’, the topic encompassing entries about the technical aspects of writing a blog and bloggers’ reflections on this practice, correlates to diarists’ frequent narratives about the discipline of writing.¹¹⁵ Similarly, ‘overview of multiple events’ was comparable

¹¹⁵ Didier, pp. 55-57.

with ‘reportages’, which appeared in diaries as a result of the necessity of recording events quickly.¹¹⁶

At the same time, a number of topics highly characteristic of traditional diaries were not frequent in online journals. Among these were ‘psychological features’, referring to detailed descriptions of bloggers’ character and emotional states. This topic, although consistently present in blogs, was among the least discussed in seven of the eleven years analyzed. In the blogs under study, the function of self-analysis characteristic of personal diaries was realized not through explorations of the soul, but through intellectual and critical narratives joined under umbrella term ‘reflections’ – one of the most frequent topics in eight of the eleven years.

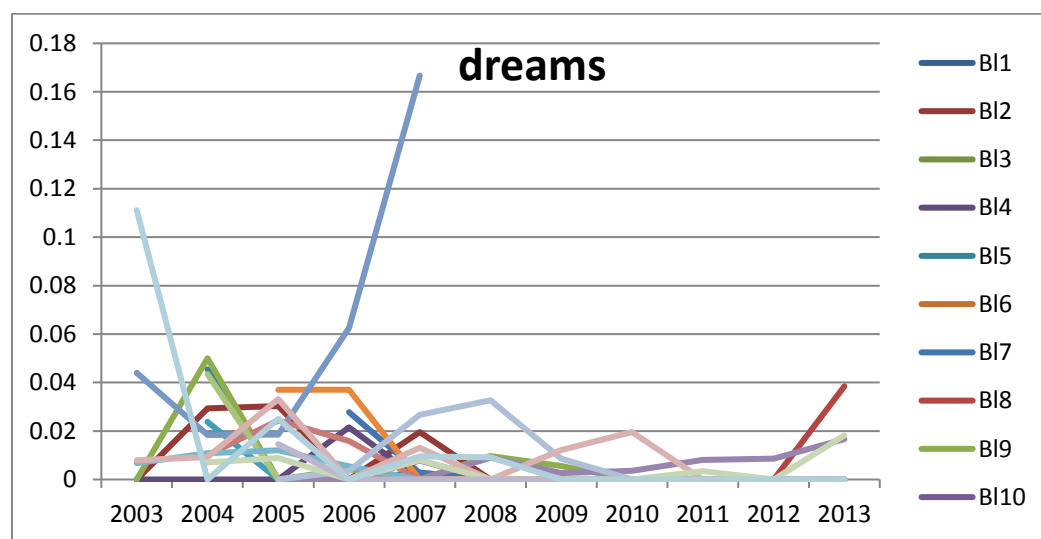
Other topics that demonstrated low frequency in blogs compared to traditional diaries included ‘stress and fatigue’ and ‘religion and faith’. In all eleven years, these topics were among the least frequent, or were absent altogether. Reflections on faith and the related problem of spiritual searching and self-improvement constitute one of the core themes both in the Western ego-writing tradition, going back to Puritan diaries, and Russian cultural models of self-inscription. In her interview, one of my informants emphasizes the crucial part that the faith plays in her personal development.¹¹⁷ However, these feelings are not reflected in any of her online journals. The presence of this theme in the interview allows me to suggest that Inna’s exclusion of ‘religion and faith’ from her journal is due not to lack of interest, but to her subjection to the conventions of self-presentation in her LiveJournal community. It is likely that some of the other

¹¹⁶ Didier, p.188.

¹¹⁷ ‘У меня есть вещи, в которые я верю. У меня есть какой-то бог, в которого я верю. У меня есть какие-то трансцендентальные штуки, в которые я верю. Несомненно, я верующий человек [...] для меня это база, платформа какая-то психическая’ (Inna. Interview 2, p. 14).

bloggers of the sample also self-identify as believers, but like Inna, avoid touching on this subject in their journals.

Finally, several topics typical of personal diaries were initially present in the sample of blogs, but their frequencies gradually decreased until they ceased to be discussed. Among these topics were ‘dreams’, ‘romance’, and ‘depression’. ‘Dreams’ is a topic highly characteristic of traditional diaries.¹¹⁸ But in the blog sample, the frequency of stories about dreams had a decreasing trend (for a visualization of the overall trend, see Appendix 3.8). As the ranking of frequencies (Appendices 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3.) reveals, in 2003 and 2004 ‘dreams’ were one of most frequent topics across the sample, and between 2008 and 2011 they became one of the least frequent ones. The number of bloggers who touched on the subject dropped as well. As the following graph demonstrates, before 2008, twelve bloggers frequently wrote about their dreams, but by 2013 their numbers had dropped to three:



In personal narratives, dreams are often used to metaphorically tell ‘the truth’ about one’s Self.¹¹⁹ This narrative function resulted from the combination of historical beliefs in dreams as prophecies, and the popular adoption of the Freudian

¹¹⁸ Paperno, pp. 161-202.

¹¹⁹ Paperno, p. xiii.

interpretation of dreams. Unlike other forms of indirect self-inscription which I discuss in the third section of this chapter, the records about dreams point at narrators' inner states in a very obvious manner. Moreover, as the analysis of the trend for 'psychological characteristics' illustrated, direct explorations of the soul gradually became unconventional in the online community under study, being largely replaced by 'reflections'. Given this shift in the narrative canon, stories about dreams (which would be difficult to present as anything but metaphors for the impulses of the psyche) became less and less suitable for the evolving model of online ego-writing.

Similar dynamics were discovered in the trend for 'romance'. Conceptualizing one's romantic experiences through sentimental cultural scripts is a fundamental technique of Self. As a locus of self-production, traditional diaries – particularly women's diaries, which were often kept as a preparation for marriage¹²⁰ – rarely disregarded the topic of 'romance'. The analysis of the blogs revealed that from the first years of LiveJournal's presence on the Russian ego-writing scene, 'romance' was among the less popular topics of the analysed journals, with only ten bloggers sporadically writing about it between 2003 and 2007. From 2007 to 2013, the number of bloggers touching on the subject gradually decreased from ten to three (see Appendix 3.9). Interestingly, in later social media (Facebook and VKontakte), 'romance' again became one of the central components of self-inscription, delivered through romantic photographs and status updates as well as being reflected in profiles' inbuilt 'family and relationship' fields. By contrast, in LiveJournal (despite its importance as a facility for building relationships, including romantic ones), romantic self-presentation was either realized through indirect forms, such as

¹²⁰ Lejeune, *Le moi des demoiselles*, pp. 158, 217, 244, 331, 426.

publishing bloggers' own poems and quoting literary works, or entirely excluded from the scope of narrated Selves. These findings are in line with academic observations on Russian LiveJournal's unlikeness to other blogging platforms regarding biographical – and particularly sentimental – narration.¹²¹

'Depression' was one of the least discussed topics of the sample. This comes as no surprise since the group of narratives that were allocated the tag 'depression' did not include stories about low mood or sadness. This tag was only allocated to stories discussing actual or suspected cases of a genuine psychological disorder confirmed by medical specialists. Even so, the number of bloggers writing about 'depression' before 2009 still seems relatively high, with such narratives occurring in seven journals. At the same time, in all but one of these journals the frequency of the topic was characterized by a decreasing trend. After 2009 there were only two bloggers mentioning depression, and after 2010, only one (see Appendix 3.10). These findings are in line with this thesis' hypothesis about gradual shift of online journals away from the representations of suffering characteristic of traditional diaries, and towards the display of success and happiness (this question is explored in the following section of this chapter as well as in Chapter 3).

LiveJournal and Intelligentsia Identity

Alongside the articulation of cultural scripts inherent in personal diaries, identity production in the sample of blogs was influenced by self-presentational conventions of bloggers' socio-cultural environment. In the introduction to this thesis, I described this community as largely formed by young people from Russia's big cities, characterized by good education and intellectual ambition, oppositional

¹²¹ Gorny, p. 80.

political views, connoisseurship of innovative trends in literature and art trends, and mastery in navigating cyberspace and using digital tools. I also suggested that narrated Selves of the representatives of the members of this community were to some extent inspired by narrative scripts characteristic of intelligentsia identity. The analysis of the thematic-stylistic profile of the sample of blogs largely belonging to the representatives of cultural and intellectual elites provides evidence of the integration of the rhetorical scripts of intelligentsia identity into LiveJournal's narratives.

Although the intelligentsia was commonly recognized as a specific 'class',¹²² academic studies have largely pointed to its heterogeneity and avoided trying to define its specific social characteristics. To avoid associating the intelligentsia with a particular social group, in this study I follow the approach of the sociologist Inna Kochetkova. In her book *The Myth of the Russian Intelligentsia: Old Intellectuals in the New Russia*, Kochetkova interprets the intelligentsia as a mythical mental construct, an element in individuals' interpretive repertoire, which enables them to make sense of and to present their life stories.¹²³ Kochetkova sees the intelligentsia as a kind of identity which can be claimed through certain discursive practices.

By analysing biographical narratives of the *shestidesyatniki*, Kochetkova identifies the negotiations and reinterpretations of cultural scripts about the intelligentsia and summarizes the most typical features of their collectively designed narrative canon. Among these features she mentions the following:

¹²² Kochetkova, *The Myth of the Russian Intelligentsia: Old Intellectuals in the New Russia*.

¹²³ Kochetkova, *The Myth of the Russian Intelligentsia: Old Intellectuals in the New Russia*.

- Building the image of a thinker by putting a strong emphasis on one's knowledge, doubts, and beliefs, while displaying disinterest in material gratification and careerism.
- A feeling of being on an active mission to transform reality and change things for the better, considering even small projects to be valuable contributions.
- Self-inclusion in a long tradition of Russian intelligentsia.
- The persistence of a conversion narrative (radical transformation from a faulty 'before' Self to an enlightened 'after' Self). Kochetkova emphasizes that this narrative is particularly characteristic of the *shestidesyatniki* and not of Russian intelligentsia in broader historical perspective.
- Reflection upon the fear of power (including stories about conscious conformist positions and stories about opposition to Kafkaesque power and the overcoming of fear).
- A focus on education of society (labelled 'enlightenment mission' by Kochetkova).
- Displaying literary connoisseurship.

In the blogs analysed in this thesis, a number of topics consistently present over the course of eleven years had rhetorical similarity with the narrative strategies identified by Kochetkova. The most pronounced affinity consisted in the interest to literature and linguistic purity in the texts analysed. Although some scholars claimed that the internet put an end to the literary centrality of Russian culture,¹²⁴ the data collected for this research revealed the universal insistence on a high standard of

¹²⁴ Aleksandr Sokolov, *Obshchaia teoriia sotsial'noi kommunikatsii* (Saint Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Mikhailova, 2002), <<http://www.evartist.narod.ru/text16/083.htm>> [accessed 1 February 2017].

writing among the users of Russian LiveJournal. The conviction that the social type to which they aspired must not allow the revelations of the mind to vanish, and must therefore write – preferably every day, and well – were repeatedly articulated in the collected texts. The fear of making grammar and punctuation mistakes in these texts was sometimes absurdly overinflated. A dialogue with literary texts was the norm. According to Roman Leibov, Russian grammar has always been one of the hottest topics in LiveJournal discussions – something inconceivable in other non-specialist blogging platforms, both in Russia and abroad. Literary exercises, joined with literary and language connoisseurship, were employed to build an image of intellectual superiority and good taste.¹²⁵

The analysis of the sample of blogs revealed that the topic ‘literature’, alongside ‘film’ and ‘music’, was one of the most frequent sub-topics of ‘culture’, itself the most frequent topic of the sample. Entries about books were found in twenty journals in the sample. The trend for ‘literature’ was characterized by consistently high frequency over the course of eleven years, even without the unusually high impact of Blogger 14 in 2011 (see Appendix 3.7). As with ‘literature’, ‘language’ – comprising entries about grammar, style and questions of translation – had consistently high frequencies during the eleven years, with eighteen bloggers writing on the subject (see Appendix 3.11).

The trend for ‘literary works’ demonstrated a gradual decrease. ‘Literary works’ (prose and poetry authored by bloggers and published in their journals) were one of the two most popular stylistic modes from 2003 to 2009, in spite of their decreasing trend. In this period, ‘literary works’ were found in eighteen of twenty-three blogs. After 2009 the trend was characterized by fluctuations, where some

¹²⁵ Leibov, pp. 313-14.

bloggers increased the amount of literary works in their journals, some contributed to the decreasing trend, and some stopped publishing literary texts at all. By 2011, against the background of other styles becoming more popular, 'literary works' was the second least frequent style, and by 2013 only five bloggers kept publishing 'literary works' (see Appendix 3.12).

Thus, the analysis of trends for 'literature', 'language' and 'literary works' demonstrated the high interest of bloggers in language and literature. However, the practice of publishing one's own literary works was slowly becoming less widespread over the course of the eleven years. Allegedly, this was related to the increase in the degree of visual self-presentation and consequent replacement of literary exercises by photographs as an image-building instrument.

In addition, the data revealed that texts about 'literature' were not more popular than discussions of 'film' and 'music'; indeed, the latter had an increasing trend. High frequency rates for 'film' and 'music' can be explained by the technical capabilities of LiveJournal and the overall development of the digital sphere. The visual turn, followed by the growing accessibility of digital film archives, contributed to film's dethroning of literature as a leading provider of cultural mythologies. With the development of digital technologies, music, which had always played an important role on the cultural scene, could enter the space of the text. The possibility of including hyperlinks to audio- and video-files (mainly links to YouTube clips) allowed bloggers to make their discussion of music concrete by referring readers to the works themselves instead of devising ways to describe them by means of language. As a result of these cultural and technological shifts, the production of Self as a culturally aware individual became a territory contested by literature, film and music. Finally, the consistently high frequency of material relating to 'language'

indicated that while literature – long a privileged subject of bloggers’ attention – was increasingly having to share the sphere of cultural self-expression with other artistic forms, expertise in the Russian language remained a key means of constructing and exhibiting intellectual superiority.

Certain features of the intelligentsia’s interpretative repertoire, such as ‘building an image of a thinker’ and ‘displaying disinterestedness in material gratification and careerism’, identified by Inna Kochetkova, resonated with the findings of this thesis on the topics of ‘reflections’, ‘finances’, ‘shopping’ and ‘work’. As outlined above, ‘reflections’ formed one of the most frequent topics over the course of the eleven years, while ‘finances’ and ‘shopping’ were among the least discussed topics in the studied period. ‘Work’ was characterized by high frequency rates, but, as explained in the description of the sample, most of the subjects were employed in the cultural and intellectual sphere, as a result of which their representations of themselves as employees mostly articulated scripts of devotion and contribution, rather than the rhetoric of careerism. Taken together, these findings indicate that the model of a thinker disinterested in material gratification and being on enlightenment mission was actively employed by bloggers of the studied sample in their ego-narratives.

Another rhetorical feature that Kochetkova identifies as being traditionally used to lay claim to an intelligentsia identity consists in opposition to power – or, in the case of conformism, in mounting an elaborate defence of this choice. In the blogs analyzed here, the topic of ‘politics’ was one of the most discussed in six of the eleven years. Narratives on this topic overwhelmingly consisted of critiques of the government, its individual representatives, and their decisions. The trend for ‘politics’ was characterized by an intense increase from 2007 and a sharp peak in

2011-2012. In 2011-2012 an increase in the number of bloggers touching on the generally unpopular topic of ‘social activism’ was also registered, as well as in the frequency of ‘reposts’ often used to quickly spread information among the audiences and to collect signatures for letters and petitions (see Appendix 3.13). The peaks corresponded to the State Duma and presidential elections of 2011 and 2012, the results of which caused numerous political protests by opposition movements. For bloggers in this sample, the discussion of political controversies, alongside active participation in protests, was a way to contribute to the opposition movement. My findings here are in line with the results obtained by Olessia Koltsova and Andrei Sherbak in their research on LiveJournal’s political discourse of the same period.¹²⁶ Thus, data from this sample testified to bloggers’ narratively constructed membership of the political opposition, and their active political involvement during periods of crisis. In terms of identity production, individuals’ self-presentation as liberal and politically active resonated with the vector of political self-inscription characteristic of intelligentsia discourse.

It is worth noting that the consolidation of the political opposition in 2011 and 2012 took place not only in LiveJournal, but also on Facebook, which was even better set up for networking and the quick circulation of information. As, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, increasing numbers of bloggers abandoned their journals while maintaining their Facebook and Twitter accounts, these new social media gradually assumed the role of public discussion boards on political issues.

Overall, the results of the analysis of blogs’ thematic-stylistic profiles corroborated this study’s hypothesis about LiveJournal texts of the first decade of the

¹²⁶ Koltsova and Shcherbak, pp. 1715-32.

twenty-first century as an intermediate form between traditional diary and contemporary social media. The blogs analyzed here still preserved many features of personal diaries, such as reflectivity and self-discipline, the focus on a wide array of themes of different scales, the organization of observations and memories, and minimal textual representations of bodies and sexual experiences. At the same time, the lack of soul-searching narratives – possibly related to the public nature of entries – and the absence of reflections on spiritual matters constituted a crucial distinction between diaries and blogs. The decreasing trends for ‘dreams’, ‘romance’ and ‘depression’ illustrate how significant features of the diary genre were gradually disappearing from digital ego-writing in light of the new socio-cultural orders of self-presentation being formed. Another important source of the scripts of self-inscription in the community under study, the rhetoric of intelligentsia identity, also underwent transformations in the transition to online self-writing. In terms of intellectual self-positioning and the display of political awareness, the blogs still closely mimicked intelligentsia strategies of self-production. But the ratio of narratives about different cultural areas testified that the changing cultural context conditioned the partial shift of rhetoric, with inherent literature-centrism being contested by equal attention to other art forms.

Section Two. Literary Narration as LiveJournal's Semiotic Script

As described above, devotion to literature and reading was highly characteristic of the socio-cultural group that coalesced in LiveJournal. People who joined LiveJournal had often been raised in a discursive environment where books had sacral status and literary connoisseurship was a social marker of intellectuality and good education. As the reconstruction of LiveJournal's thematic profile illustrated, 'literature' was one of the most frequently occurring sub-topics of the topic 'culture', which in its turn was the most frequent topic in LiveJournal's texts between 2003 and 2013. The vast majority of the blogs analyzed repeatedly addressed the topic of literature. Such records were used both for expressing opinions and initiating discussions, and for constructing self-presentations by sharing one's literary preferences. The majority of bloggers in the sample had entries where they reconstructed the development of their reading preferences. For instance, my informant Pavel informed his readers that:

Я читал запоем все свои школьные годы, упиваясь мирами О'Генри, Дюма, Джека Лондона, Фенимора Купера, Марка Твена, Вальтера Скотта, Стивенсона, Филдинга и Жюль Верна, а к концу седьмого класса, более или менее исчерпав запасы приключенческой литературы в домашней библиотеке, резко перешёл к Достоевскому, Ницше и Камю (всех троих я читал насквозь – всё, что попадалось о них и вокруг – биографии, мемуары, критику) [...] с этого момента книги стали частью моей самоидентификации, способом самоутверждения. [...] Я набросился на Набокова, Розанова, Бердяева, Шестова, Сэлинджера, Фитцджеральда, Дюрренматта, Льва Гумилёва, Хлебникова, Хармса, Булгакова, Пильняка, Платонова, Маркеса, Кастанеду, Борхеса, Картасара, Грэма Грина, Фаулза, Гессе, Кундера, Павич, а в конце школы я закопался с головой в Бродском.¹²⁷

¹²⁷ Pavel. Open, 28/02/14.

Along with being experienced readers, LiveJournal users were expected to be (and generally were) skilful writers. The majority of the journals analysed contained bloggers' 'literary works', most often poems. The interviews with the informants as well as the content of their semi-closed and closed journals revealed that alongside publishing their 'literary works' online they were involved in offline literary life. Inna worked as a translator of fiction for several years. Alina published two books about her life in Finland. Tatiana authored three plays two of which were staged at Moscow Meyerhold Centre. In addition, 4 out of 23 bloggers whose open journals were analysed mentioned book publications at some points. In LiveJournal, 'literary works' were often used by their authors to indirectly narrate their biographical experiences, as well as to communicate with other bloggers on sensitive issues.¹²⁸

Whether written in poetic form or not, entries about biographical experiences often employ highly artistic language – hence the tendency of academic studies to approach them as artistic texts imitating the intimate writing of personal diaries. For instance, Kurt Lindemann, drawing on ideas by Richard Bauman, has described how figurative language, parallelism and special codes were used in LiveJournal as performative tools, while Ellen Rutten has discussed the production of the rhetoric of *new sincerity* (the rejection of postmodernist irony and return to *sincere* self-exposure) in blogs. Rutten repeatedly emphasizes that her research does not aim to answer the question of whether bloggers who display sincerity in their texts engage in self-revelation or performance. However, some of the examples that she provides, as well as her commentaries, point to cases of the rhetoric of sincerity

¹²⁸ The example of such an application of poems is described in the second chapter of this thesis, where I discuss the role of audiences in the production of Selves in LiveJournal.

functioning as a tool of bloggers' artistic repertoire.¹²⁹ In such cases, journal-writing becomes a technology of Self – a practice of changing oneself and turning one's life into artistic work with particular aesthetic features.¹³⁰ Thus, the fusion of diary-like intimacy and artistic form positioned blogs at the crossroad of biography and fiction.

Another way in which literature was involved in the production of LiveJournal ego-narratives consisted in providing cultural models of feelings and behaviour. Literature has always functioned in society as the supplier of mythologies. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, the visual turn in arts conditioned the appearance of numerous alternative sources of cultural templates. At the same time, for the LiveJournal community, where the status of reading and writing was particularly high, the conceptualization of biographical experiences still often followed the models provided by literary texts.

Thus, in LiveJournal literature was involved in the process of self-inscription on three different levels: as a topic of bloggers' narratives, as a mode of writing resulting in highly artistic texts, and as a source of cultural models of feelings and behaviour. This contributed to the formation of a specific type of ego-text. Writing down one's poems, as well as adopting patterns of feeling from literary texts, was widely practised in pre-digital diaries. But the systematic conversion of biographical records into artistic works was not characteristic of traditional personal journals. By contrast, the models of self-inscription employed by users of LiveJournal belonged to the discourses of both diary writing and literature. Later,

¹²⁹ For instance, 'I found Vodennikov's discursive comments on (a new) sincerity somewhat elusive, and detected in his body language a similarly ambivalent preoccupation with sincere expression. Making flirtatious comments and talking rapidly and exaltedly, during our conversation he often spoke with half-closed eyes and trembling hands ("When I like someone, I start quivering," he explained), posing as a vulnerable *Einzelgänger* who was opening up his most secret thoughts to me' (Rutten, p. 178).

¹³⁰ Michel Foucault, 'Technologies of the Self', in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. by Huck Gutman, Patrick Huton, and Luther Martin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), pp. 16-49.

when LiveJournal gave way to other social media, this type of self-inscription became less popular. Artistic narration again became associated with the discourse of literature, while self-inscription developed new strategies, such as the revelation of one's relationships to external phenomena and other individuals, and the replacement of the text by visual representation.

In this section of my thesis, I investigate how bloggers follow LiveJournal's semiotic scripts of self-production associated with the influence of literature. First, I analyse the stories which illustrate how the transformation of biographical material into literary texts impacts the production of bloggers' Selves. For this purpose I consider two cases, the first of which is presented by stories from my informant Pavel's open journal. In these stories Pavel uses literary narration when describing his professional life. I show how this technique allows him to disclose one of his focal Selves, which otherwise would not be welcomed in LiveJournal discourse. The second case is presented by the same informant's travel notes. I compare handwritten notes made during Pavel's trip to China in 2014 with the edited version of these notes that Pavel uploaded in his open LiveJournal in 2016. I illustrate how the blogger simultaneously subjects his edited text to semiotic scripts of diary and literature and how the conflict of these two scripts prevents him from producing a consistent image of the narrator.

Next, I explore how bloggers introduce the emotional scripts from fiction into their biographical narratives. I consider the stories by my informants Inna and Tatiana and illustrate how their experience of reading particular books defines their adoption of these books' emotional patterns.

Literaturization and the Production of Different Selves

Case One. Literaturization as Conventionalization

In his interviews and LiveJournal posts, Pavel repeatedly states that for him writing a blog is not as much a form of biographical registration as it is a means of creative self-expression. Indeed, Pavel's blog is full of poems, reflections, and artistic sketches. Biographical records not characterized by artistic form are very rare. In the years 2003, 2010, 2012, and 2013, Pavel's blog does not contain any purely biographical texts. In the years 2004, 2005, and 2007, Pavel made one biographical record per year. In each of the years 2006 and 2008 he made two, and in 2009 and 2011, three entirely biographical entries per year. Other posts by Pavel either contain literary exercises – including poems and poems in prose (92 of 342 entries) – or present a fusion of life and literature where biographical episodes function as triggers for the blogger's reflections on and artistic reinterpretation of the human condition. Along with producing his own artistic texts, Pavel often chooses literature and writing as a topic for his posts. 34 of 342 records contain the blogger's thoughts on the nature of fine writing, while 39 reflect Pavel's attitude to various literary texts. 148 writers and poets – from Fyodor Dostoyevsky to Jack Kerouac to Jia Pingwa – are mentioned in Pavel's journal between 2003 and 2016.

At the same time, in both his blog and his interviews, Pavel mentions that he keeps his journal in order to preserve memories about his life experiences and attitudes and to capture his inner essence in texts that his children will read some day.¹³¹ Although Pavel does not say it directly, his texts testify that he considers his ability and desire to reveal deeper meanings of everyday existence through literary

¹³¹ For instance, 'Единственное, зачем я пишу дневник – чтобы у моих детей была возможность перечитать эти короткие пассажи и представить что я был за человек, что думал и чувствовал в свои 33' (Pavel. Open, 04/09/08).

vision to be a fundamental feature of his personality. In the discourse of Pavel's journal, literary vision is narrated as a very natural, almost physiological function. In his very first blog entry Pavel introduces bodily metaphors to describe the process of creative writing:

Значит так. Слова (мужские и женские) будут исходить из обеих почек, затем плавно перетекать в мочевой пузырь, смешиваться, в произвольном порядке образуя несвязные словосочетания и предложения. Не успев сформировать чёткой текстовой структуры, последние будут проходить по мочевыводящим путям и затем с напором извергаться из соответствующего органа, образуя в воздухе безупречную дугу, переливающуюся и сверкающую в ленивых солнечных лучах.¹³²

Pavel occasionally uses similar imagery in further entries. In his narratives, literature –as both practice and cultural product – is the medium of life. Reading is not only interpreted as a pleasurable activity or a means to increase one's knowledge. It is also conceptualized in terms of addiction and the need to comply with the basic demands of the body:

Большинство людей с университетским образованием серьёзно 'подсаживаются' на этот наркотик тихого тщеславия, спеша заполнять образующийся в голове буфер новыми компендиумами функционально бесполезных знаний. Это в наших краях называют ментальным голодом и жаждой чтения. Мне это больше напоминает рукоблудие. Если одного такого экземпляра (вроде меня самого) полностью лишит чтения хотя бы на месяц, у него начнётся натуральная ломка и спермотоксикоз, потому что пустота больно жжёт мозги.¹³³

Similarly, writing is not only a form of reflective inquiry, but a fundamental human need:

Не писать – опасно и саморазрушительно. Спрессованное в черепной коробке невербализованное сознание

¹³² Pavel. Open, 3/12/03.

¹³³ Pavel. Open, 31/12/07.

начинает жестоко чудить. Слова видоизменяются, свирепеют и начинают прорываться на поверхность чудными обрывками текста, которые затем кучкуются в форме стихов, но уже как бы по другую сторону меня. И я бессмысленно таращусь на них, как на осколки какого-то там магического зеркала, пытаюсь разглядеть там собственное лицо.¹³⁴

Pavel obviously perceives and narrates himself as a thinker and a writer, and many accounts of his lifestyle contained in his blog support this narrated Self. Among these are the descriptions of him participating in late night kitchen talks on ancient Chinese poetry,¹³⁵ attending art lectures and film festivals,¹³⁶ reading old books¹³⁷ or making literary sketches in the cafes of the old town,¹³⁸ and undertaking photographic¹³⁹ and literary projects.¹⁴⁰ At the same time, other practices repeatedly reflected in Pavel's blog suggest a drastically different lifestyle. These are the stories where Pavel successfully climbs up the corporate ladder,¹⁴¹ dines in expensive restaurants,¹⁴² flies in business class,¹⁴³ stays in five star hotels¹⁴⁴ and carries on

¹³⁴ Pavel. Open, 15/04/04.

¹³⁵ For instance, 'На балконе одной небольшой московской квартиры после распития водки с одним моим очень специальным знакомым под аккомпанемент Моррисона и чтения стихов Хань Шаня - монаха-отшельника династии Тан [...] (Pavel. Open, 1/07/04).

¹³⁶ For instance, 'Я сидел во втором ряду от сцены, когда он со своим другом-режиссёром представлял во всех отношениях галлюциногенный фильм' (Pavel. Open, 17/09/10).

¹³⁷ For instance, 'Уединяясь ненадолго в какой-нибудь кофейне, читать пожелтевшие книги из пропитанного бумажной пылью букинистического магазинчика' (Pavel. Open, 7/02/05).

¹³⁸ For instance, 'Забрел в одно полупустое кафе [...] и уселся в самом углу с чашкой ройбоса и тетрадкой' (Pavel. Open, 5/10/06).

¹³⁹ For instance, 'Сегодня я неожиданно для самого себя утвердился в решении стать фотографом (не просто серьезно заняться фотографией, а стать профессионалом)' (Pavel. Open, 1/07/04).

¹⁴⁰ For instance, Pavel's travel notes, reworked in a literary fashion, which I discuss later in this chapter.

¹⁴¹ For instance, 'Теперь я самый обычный житель поднебесной [Pavel writes about his promotion and related move to China] можно немного поиграть в белого сахиба' (Pavel. Open, 9/07/11), 'Теперь у меня появилась своя собственная конура с двумя столами, телефоном и интернетом, где я могу в полном одиночестве заниматься, чем мне заблагорассудится [...] на 26-м этаже офисного здания на юго-западе Шанхая' (Pavel. Open, 25/08/11).

¹⁴² For instance, 'Заказать там рыбы с белым вином за нереальную уйму дорогих австралийских денег' (Pavel. Open, 12/10/11).

¹⁴³ For instance, 'То же самое происходит со мной в бизнес-лаунчах, набитых аккуратными дядями и тетями' (Pavel. Open, 10/09/08).

¹⁴⁴ For instance, 'Вы никогда не встречали цвет китайской богемы [...] в лоджиях пятизвездочных отелей' (Pavel. Open, 30/03/08).

negotiations with his business partners in bars and massage parlours.¹⁴⁵ Often, Pavel juxtaposes these dissimilar self-images in his texts:

босая
цыганская душа
туго завёрнутая в тряпку от Армани
10 штук в месяц
бонусы и щедрые суточные
пятизвёздочные стоянки
и сложные переговоры ¹⁴⁶

The presence of these two contrasting Selves in Pavel's journal is conditioned by his simultaneous subjection to two cultural scripts. On one hand, at the time when Pavel was writing his journal, the conventions of online self-presentation were increasingly shifting towards the display of success and happiness.¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, Pavel's narratives were still largely affected by the model characteristic of the first generation of LiveJournal's users. This model emphasized artistic and intellectual giftedness and was often characterized by the romanticization of poverty and avoiding well-paid but not rewarding professions. Naturally, Pavel's stories of success were seemingly unconventional for the narrative canon of his LiveJournal community. They also required narrative skills from the blogger in order to be brought into line with his self-conceptualizations as philosopher and writer.

¹⁴⁵ For instance, 'Затяжных переговоров в сомнительном уюте сумрачных массажных салонов и задымленных китайских ресторанов' (Pavel. Open, 13/11/12).

¹⁴⁶ Pavel. Open, 06/02/10.

¹⁴⁷ A discussion of this phenomenon can be found in Roselyn Lee-Won et al., 'Who Puts the Best "Face" Forward on Facebook? Positive Self-Presentation in Online Social Networking and the Role of Self-Consciousness, Actual-to-Total Friends Ratio, and Culture', *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 39 (2014), 413-23; Mark Newman et al., 'It's not that I don't Have Problems, I'm Just not Putting Them on Facebook: Challenges and Opportunities in Using Online Social Networks for Health', *Proceedings of the ACM 2011 Conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (ACM, 2011), 341-50; Lin Qiu et al., 'Putting Their Best Foot Forward: Emotional Disclosure on Facebook', *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 15.10 (2012), 569-72.

To legitimize the appearance of his self-presentations as successful manager in his LiveJournal narratives and to eliminate the contradiction between his two narrated Selves Pavel developed a specific narrative technique, that of employing a range of literary devices when telling his stories of success. In *Rich Russians: From Oligarchs to Bourgeoisie*, Elisabeth Schimpfössl explores how Russia's wealthiest individuals solve similar conflicts of desired self-identifications. While taking pride in their unprecedented wealth, they actively engage in the construction of intellectual and artistic Selves. For instance, by emphasizing their descent from Soviet intelligentsia, taking on intellectual side jobs, and championing philanthropic projects, the twenty-first century's richest Russians acquire symbolic capital and legitimize their privileged positions.¹⁴⁸ In Pavel's case, the transformation of his stories of success and well-being into literary texts which are highly appropriate to LiveJournal similarly allows him to artistically reinterpret his self-image and to narrate himself not as a self-admiring rich yuppie on business trips but as an introspective vagabond, a detached observer prone to self-irony.

Pavel's story about his business trip to Sydney and subsequent weekend on the Gold Coast presents an example of such literaturization, displaying the full range of devices that Pavel uses to renegotiate his successful corporate Self. The entry opens with a long reflection on the discrepancy between reality and its representation in human experience and memory:

Вся моя жизнь, все события, диалоги и лица, всё - это раскрашенный цветными карандашами виртуальный мир внутри моей горемычной головы. Эдакий до смешного недостоверный отпечаток прошлого, если хотите - комикс с графически утрированными жестами и задним числом отредактированными репликами. Всё в этой книжице

¹⁴⁸ Elisabeth Schimpfössl, *Rich Russians: From Oligarchs to Bourgeoisie* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 16, 96, 99.

искажается, преломляется перенаполняется новыми смыслами и иногда даже никогда не присутствовавшими там эмоциями [...] Пишу всё это, просто чтобы зарегистрировать очевидное несовпадение одного с другим.¹⁴⁹

To illustrate his thought, Pavel narrates a story about his trip to Sydney. As its reflective introduction suggests, the story contrasts Pavel's fantasies about this trip with its reality. Pavel first outlines the form that such experiences take when imagined or saved as memories ('Я нарисовал себе эти два заключительных дня как апофеоз бесконечного пляжного блаженства, что-то вроде 'Купания красного коня'. И почти уверен, что так и буду их помнить'). Next, he complains about unbearable heat, the coldness and saltiness of sea water, boredom, lack of amenities, and sunburn:

Невозможно целый день сидеть на пляже. Поплескаться в океанской волне можно раза три-четыре, пока в конец не замёрзнешь или устанешь от разъедающей глаза соли. В промежутках можно почитать книгу, развалившись на мягком песке, но солнце в этих краях насквозь пробивает облака жжёт шкуру, как в микроволновке. Смотрю на себя в зеркало - всё как заказывал: красный конь. Привет Петру-Водкину¹⁵⁰ [...] А ещё иногда набегают тучи и сильно пахнет тропическим ливнем. А ещё очень хочется есть, а у пляжа ресторанов нет [...] А после обеда (спагетти-маринара с бокалом белого) хочется прикорнуть, и я оказываюсь у себя в номере с видом на океан, и минут через десять утомлённое тело хочет отключиться до получения новых приказов из недееспособного командного центра. Но перед падением в послеобеденное небытие [...]вылезаю в кальсонах на свой балкон с видом на шумный Тихий океан...¹⁵¹

These statements undoubtedly channel Pavel's Self as a rich and exacting man who can afford to be critical of what others would categorize as the attributes of

¹⁴⁹ Pavel. Open, 19/02/13.

¹⁵⁰ Kuzma Petrov-Vodkin (1878 - 1939) – Russian painter. His painting *Kupanie krasnogo konia* (*Bathing of a Red Horse*) presents a nude adolescent entering the water of a lake on a bright red horse.

¹⁵¹ Pavel. Open, 19/02/13.

a luxurious lifestyle. Yet Pavel is wary of being perceived as trying to make an impression. On the one hand, he follows social etiquette which does not allow him to openly brag about his success to his less fortunate friends. On the other, he tries to avoid the contradiction between his two contrasting Selves. This is why he does not fully switch to his ‘successful’ Self. In order to preserve the link with his artistic and reflective Self, Pavel employs a number of literary tools.

First, he structurally organizes his narrative in such a way that the details of his pastime are presented as supporting arguments for his reflection on the contradictions between reality and thought. This creates a hierarchy within the text, where Pavel’s reflection is prioritized and his biographical details function as auxiliary elements. Second, the fragment containing Pavel’s complaints employs diverse literary imagery, including epithets (‘разъедающая глаза соль’, ‘солнце насквозь пробивает облака’, ‘сильно пахнет ливнем’), synecdoche (‘поплескаться в волне’), jokey comparison (‘жжёт шкуру, как в микроволновке’) and metaphors (‘недееспособный командный центр’, ‘падение в послеобеденное небытие’). Third, Pavel includes references to famous works of music and art (‘Под небом голубым есть берег золотой...’,¹⁵² ‘Всё как заказывал: красный конь. Привет Петру-Водкину’). Finally, Pavel inserts humorous hyperboles into his text (‘красный конь’, ‘вылезаю в кальсонах на свой балкон’). Since it is unlikely that Pavel is actually wearing long johns, especially in the Australian heat, this detail together with the overall self-irony characteristic of this part of the text are used by Pavel to satirize the protagonist and hence to undermine his statements. As a result, Pavel creates a twofold picture. The biographical content

¹⁵² Pavel rephrases the first line of a famous bard song ‘Gorod zolotoi’ (author of the lyrics - Anri Volokhonskii, author of the music unknown). The song was first performed by Aleksei Khvostenko. It was later performed under different titles and with slightly different lyrics by various singers. It became particularly famous after it was performed by Boris Grebenshchikov in 1986.

of the fragment is used by Pavel to narrate himself as demanding man used to luxury. At the same time, the usage of structure, imagery, intertext and style allows him to convert this story into literary text and to create a safe degree of detachment from the image of himself as successful careerist.

In total, Pavel's journal contains 52 stories in which his successful corporate Self is narrated. In all these stories, Pavel presents his biographical details with the use of literary devices and achieves similar effects to those found in his story about Gold Coast. In ten cases Pavel's professional and successful Self is narrated in poems.¹⁵³ The very usage of poetic form allows Pavel to simultaneously present himself as manager and poet. In his prose texts, Pavel employs a variety of tropes to literaturize his stories. Among these are metaphors,¹⁵⁴ comparisons,¹⁵⁵ epithets,¹⁵⁶ oxymorons,¹⁵⁷ personifications,¹⁵⁸ synecdoches,¹⁵⁹ metonymies,¹⁶⁰ and hyperbolas.¹⁶¹ He also uses literary references¹⁶² and at times experiments with

¹⁵³ For instance, 'Дни сыплются с календаря | как дармовые банкноты | из кошелька. | Сутки - муторная суета: | звонки, ужины, иногда - цейтноты' (Pavel. Open, 12/06/10).

¹⁵⁴ For instance, 'одна единственная необязательная ночь, которую будет легко забыть, сбросить с анонимного жизненного счета' (Pavel. Open, 28/02/12), 'разжать скупой кулак времени, раздвинуть тиски пространства' (Pavel. Open, 13/11/12), 'омываешь лицо новыми впечатлениями' (Pavel. Open, 30/03/10), 'голоса в башке вдруг взрываются большим ядерным грибом' (Pavel. Open, 05/04/08).

¹⁵⁵ For instance, 'соскальзываю в секундную дрему, из которой меня тут же выстреливает, как пистон из детского пистолета' (Pavel. Open, 28/08/06), 'смотреть на пустое как дешевое китайское блюдо небо' (Pavel. Open, 06/04/07).

¹⁵⁶ For instance, 'молчаливые фотографические зарисовки' (Pavel. Open, 23/07/08), 'все тело сладко ноет' (Pavel. Open, 16/12/12), 'нервные гребешки плещущихся волн' (Pavel. Open, 25/05/14), 'шумный кофеин, гоняющий кровь по артериям' (Pavel. Open, 09/01/15).

¹⁵⁷ For instance, 'блядская суета с сельскими джентльменами' (Pavel. Open, 30/03/08), 'предаюсь минималистической оргии' (Pavel. Open, 12/11/13), 'запыхался совсем от молчания' (Pavel. Open, 09/10/14).

¹⁵⁸ For instance, 'змеятся и шипят многоярусные развязки' (Pavel. Open, 19/02/14).

¹⁵⁹ For instance, 'погрузившись с головой в нудную цифирь' (Pavel. Open, 25/05/14), 'пальмы на крыше, тут же вода и шикарный вид с 58-го этажа' (Pavel. Open, 24/02/13), 'уткнувшись носом в какой-нибудь экономист' (Pavel. Open, 01/11/13).

¹⁶⁰ For instance, 'Их кошельки-кавалеры дружно поморщились' (Pavel. Open, 28/11/08), 'Жду не дождусь своих азиатских будней, которые я теперь наполню свежим Айги, БГ и Фёдоровым' (Pavel. Open, 09/08/12).

¹⁶¹ For instance, 'целая вечность в виде получаса неучетного времени' (Pavel. Open, 27/11/07); 'нереальную уйму дорогих австралийских денег' (Pavel. Open, 12/10/11).

excessively figurative language which fully converts biographical observations into exercises in fine writing.¹⁶³ But, as the story about the Gold Coast illustrates, Pavel uses a range of more subtle techniques of literaturization alongside these obvious literary devices. The following examples aim to describe those techniques that Pavel repeatedly applies in his texts. The examples illustrate Pavel's mastery of self-reinterpretation through the specific structural organization of the narratives, the construction of a conventional literary protagonist and establishment of hierarchical relationships between characters, the reproduction of mythologems, and the adoption of an ironic tone.

Structure

Structural organization is one of the tools that Pavel regularly employs to construct his Self as a representative of the corporate elite, and at the same time to preserve his Self as a writer. In some narratives, as in his account of his stay on the Gold Coast, he inserts elements relating to his corporate Self into an artistic and reflective text. In a further example, Pavel narrates his existential crisis in the form of a poem, expressing the sense of the futility of life through the image of a void gradually surrounding the narrator as well as filling him from the inside. The images of the narrator suffocating in the vacuum as he hopelessly tries to escape through philosophical reading and creative activities are accompanied by occasional mentions

¹⁶² For instance, 'Стрелка барометра в моей голове потянулась к отметке с надписью 'Штольц' (Pavel. Open, 12/11/07).

¹⁶³ For instance, 'Я вспоминаю ту ясность ума и необъяснимую лёгкость, с какой в голову приходили интересные мысли в форме филигранно отточенных афоризмов, образуя величественный симфонический по музыкальности каскад, пока я замороженный с лентой допивал лучший в моей жизни двойной эспрессо в ресторане на первом этаже роскошного викторианского отеля, дожидаясь пока приведут в порядок номер с умопомрачительным видом на отвесный склон горы, заносчиво расположившейся в самом центре этого сказочного города, словно материализовавшегося со страниц книги о путешествиях и пиратах, которыми я только грезил без малейшей надежды когда-либо здесь оказаться' (Pavel. Open, 17/07/09).

of his work mailbox, business cards, invoices, and the most frequently used symbol of Pavel's corporate Self – an intercontinental airliner:

Я дышу часто и с жадностью, но как-то не в полную силу
- такое ощущение, что лёгкие захлёбываются густой как
ядрёный шанхайский смог пустотой.

[...]

её стало намного больше:

**в набитом спамом почтовом ящике, в кипе безликих
визиток,**

**в комке чеков с дутыми представительскими
расходами.**

Её можно заполнять словами из новой книги Жижика
и ловить в движении **дорогим никоновским**

объективом,

её можно пить залпом, не закусывая, её уже столько, что
по ней можно **лететь на межконтинентальном лайнере,**
выводя иероглифы в блокноте и притворяясь, что не
видишь её в упор.¹⁶⁴

The insertion of these details does not change the philosophical vector of the poem. On the contrary, it makes narrator's reflective Self more pronounced through the creation of contrasts. But at the same time, casual references to the trappings of business life ensure the silent but noticeable presence of Pavel's alternative self-image in the narrative.

In other stories, Pavel applies a reverse technique. He assigns the attributes of his reflective Self, such as sophisticated reading and his work on a photography project, to the contexts in which his corporate Self should naturally belong:

Возможно это всего лишь минутное воздействие от
чтения Упанишад на рабочем месте в разгар рабочего
дня.¹⁶⁵

When you are thru with your tea, meeting and mailbox it's
about time you took a long walk out for a lunch (**don't forget
to fetch your nikon – you need to get your shot today**),
drop by the new antique bookstore, be slightly late back
from lunch (it always feels good), then meetings, more
meetings [...] take a tram (**don't forget to take Bukowski out**

¹⁶⁴ Pavel. Open, 19/11/13.

¹⁶⁵ Pavel. Open, 07/02/05 [emphasis added].

of your backpack – these 10 minutes is all time you’ve got for reading today).¹⁶⁶

Прямо сейчас, когда в своё вобщем вполне рабочее время сижу в гостиной с чашкой лунцина, дочитываю нового Пелевина и набираю этот текст на айпед.¹⁶⁷

The choice of literary works mentioned in these posts is no accident. The protagonists of the novels by Bukowski and Pelevin are strikingly similar to the protagonist that Pavel creates in his stories. In Bukowski’s autobiographical novel *Hollywood*, the main character is a hyper-bohemian author who becomes a successful Hollywood script writer,¹⁶⁸ while the protagonist of Pelevin’s *Generation P* – the poet Babylen Tatarsky – conquers the advertising industry while experimenting with esotericism and a bohemian lifestyle.¹⁶⁹ Both authors emphasize the void of bourgeois success. This combination of marginality and sophistication with professional and financial success is repeatedly reproduced by Pavel in his texts. In addition, Pavel’s mentioning of the fact that he is finishing new novel by Pelevin (*Liubov’ k trem Tsukerbrinam*) only one month after its release contributes to his

¹⁶⁶ Pavel. Open, 19/02/09 [emphasis added]. This text appears in English in the original source. In general, the appearance of non-Russian texts is not typical for Russian LiveJournal (see Gorny, p. 77). Among my informants, Inna and Pavel use foreign language on rare occasions. Inna inserts particular words and phrases in Swedish into her texts. And Pavel has several entries in Chinese and several entries in English which in most cases represent the translations of his earlier Russian texts. In his interview, Pavel explains that after trying to write in English he realized that he could not express himself fully in a foreign language and that LiveJournal was particularly important for him as a space for communication in Russian: ‘Чего-то не хватает, я себя не вижу в своих английских записях’, ‘У меня был момент такой ностальгии по родному языку. ЖЖ выполняет роль поддержания связи с родной речью’ (Pavel. Interview 2, p. 4). According to Eugene Gorny, such application of LiveJournal is highly typical of Russian speakers living abroad. Gorny writes that Russian-speaking immigrants often prefer participating in LiveJournal’s virtual discussions to ‘doing the hard job of learning another culture and establishing personal connections’ in their country of residence (See Gorny, pp. 88-89). In addition, the language of media content is naturally associated with its audiences. In the blogs under study, the friends’ lists had a high proportion of other Russian speakers (not least because of the lower popularity of LiveJournal among adult Western internet users). In contrast, the Facebook audiences of the same individuals are mixed. This leads to frequent use of English and other languages depending on the place of residence. For instance, unlike their LiveJournal entries, Facebook posts by Inna and Alina are often made in English, Swedish or Finnish.

¹⁶⁷ Pavel. Open, 09/10/ 14 [emphasis added].

¹⁶⁸ Charles Bukowski, *Hollywood* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Books, 1989).

¹⁶⁹ Viktor Pelevin, *Generation P* (Moscow: Vagrius, 1999).

self-image as a person who keeps up with the Russian up-to-date literary scene despite living abroad and having the demanding commitments of a high-profile job.

In the stories where Pavel structurally merges the narratives about his different Selves – whether the details of his business life are inserted into a reflective text or vice versa – Pavel creates hierarchies where his reflective Self is prioritized over his successful corporate Self. In his poem, the trappings of his business life are evidently associated with the areas of concentration of ‘the void’, while the stories in which the attributes of Pavel’s reflective Self feature in the surroundings of work share the motif of occasional escape from the oppression of daily working life. Thus Pavel uses the structural organization of his narratives not only as a tool for the simultaneous representation of his contrasting self-images, but also as a means of establishing their relationship to each other: a means of recognising his corporate identity and yet avoiding full commitment to it by prioritising his reflective Self.

Protagonist

As outlined earlier in this chapter, stories portraying the successful corporate Self of the narrator deviate from LiveJournal’s conventional narrative scenario. The inappropriateness of stories celebrating the narrator’s high quality of life is embedded in a larger literary convention: that of the suffering protagonist, who is customarily expected to face numerous challenges or to engage in tortuous soul-searching. Suffering is an inalienable part of creation, love and self-conceptualization; it is the driving force of a protagonist’s spiritual development. Suffering is what makes a protagonist interesting to the reader. Pavel’s stories present abundant evidence that his writing is affected by this literary norm.

Pavel's texts portray him as a poet and writer who, in accordance with tradition, experiences creative struggles and purificatory suffering.¹⁷⁰ Open to interpretation as either literary works or biographical narratives, the texts offer an image of Pavel that may be perceived as the image of a literary character or the image of a writer and autobiographer. In both cases, literary and cultural convention would require that the protagonist be seen to suffer. During the period in which Pavel was blogging, however, a new self-presentational principle began to penetrate the discourse of his cultural group. Suffering begins to lose its status as a natural experience of a reflective individual, the idea of its purifying purpose gradually being replaced by that of its destructive potential. Psychotherapy intended to eliminate suffering becomes perceived almost as a hygienic procedure, rather than as a resort for the mentally ill or an entertainment for the rich. The reflective and artistic person is no longer expected necessarily to be torn apart by the anguishes of the soul, but can be portrayed as an enlightened person, in control of his or her emotions through meditation or psychological work, achieving results not through sudden bursts of inspiration but through skilful time management and discipline.¹⁷¹ This trend became

¹⁷⁰ For a discussion of this stereotype, see Christopher Zara, *Tortured Artists: From Picasso and Monroe to Warhol and Winehouse, the Twisted Secrets of the World's Most Creative Minds* (Avon: Adams Media, 2012).

¹⁷¹ The gradual shift away from the stereotype of the suffering writer/artist in public discourse is reflected in increasing discussions on this subject on various media platforms. For examples, see David John Taylor, 'It Turns Out You Don't Have to Suffer for Your Art After All', *Independent*, 26 December 2015, <<https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/it-turns-out-you-don-t-have-to-suffer-for-your-art-after-all-a6786906.html>> [accessed 4 April 2018]; Alison Louise Kennedy, 'Why I Hate the Myth of the Suffering Artist', *Guardian blogs*, 2 April 2012, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2012/apr/02/myth-of-the-suffering-artist>> [accessed 4 April 2018]; Sara Amrhein, 'Does Being an Artist Mean We Must Suffer?', blog post, 1 August 2014, <<http://www.sara-amrhein.com/single-post/2014/08/01/Does-Being-an-Artist-Mean-We-Must-Suffer>> [accessed 4 April 2018]; Ann Rea, 'Myth #1 about Successful Artists – We must Suffer', *Artists who Thrive*, <<http://artistswhothrive.com/myth-1-about-successful-artists-we-must-suffer/>> [accessed 4 April 2018]; Hilal Isler, 'Must Artists/Writers/Musicians Suffer for Their Art?', *Medium*, 12 May 2016, <<https://medium.com/@HilalIsler/must-writers-artists-musicians-suffer-for-their-art-df7b16ad1954>> [accessed 4 April 2018].

particularly evident in LiveJournal by the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, and further prevails in texts circulating on Facebook.

Pavel's texts thus belong to a transitional period, capturing the meeting point of two contradictory techniques of Self. Pavel evidently enjoys displaying his successful Self in his stories, but at the same time he still fears that the exhibition of happiness and success could jeopardize the credibility of his vision of himself as a thinker. Pavel's solution to this conflict of self-images is to include his successful Self in his stories, but to provide it with an appropriate degree of suffering. In some stories, he achieves this by taking a passive position towards his work and interpreting himself as a slave of 'the great vampiristic corporate culture' ('великая вампирствующая корпоративная культура').¹⁷² He complains about the tyranny of his work, which is narrated not as his prime activity, but as an obstacle preventing him from fully revealing his artistic and reflective identity:

Мне бы хотелось засесть за перевод книги о китайских иероглифах и потратить на это ровно 3 месяца, так чтобы работать не торопясь, без истерики, а потом сесть за перевод китайских эссе (давно уже отобранных и составленных в сборник). Насколько более цельной и реальной стала бы моя жизнь, если бы я мог одолеть этот пазл. Но вместо этого я каждое утро добровольно отправляюсь на свою офисную каторгу...¹⁷³

In other stories, Pavel locates the source of suffering not in his work itself, but in the comfort and well-being resulting from it. The interplay of cultural scripts at work in Pavel's stories causes the very lack of suffering to become a source of it:

я проснулся сегодня днём
с гадким чувством что жизнь удалась
в духе хренового американского кино
с богатой сюжетной суетой
но совершенно без признаков ада.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Pavel. Open, 12/11/07.

¹⁷³ Pavel. Open, 07/02/05.

¹⁷⁴ Pavel. Open, 05/07/06.

In Pavel's stories, there is no integration or hybridization of the alternative Selves; rather, the Selves are contrasted to each other and involved in hierarchical relationships. These confrontational stances almost echo cases of psychiatric disturbance, such as the dissociative identity disorder described by Daniel Keyes in his book *The Minds of Billy Milligan*. Bill Milligan categorized some of his twenty-four identities as 'desirables' and others – as 'undesirables'. The undesirable identities were not allowed to 'control the consciousness', as Milligan described it himself. Yet, occasionally, they managed to express themselves against the will of the 'desirables'.¹⁷⁵ In his stories, Pavel establishes similar confrontational relationship between his Selves, interpreting his successful corporate Self as 'undesirable' and subordinating it to his reflective Self, which is narrated as the core identity. In other words, Pavel's reflective Self routinely functions as the protagonist in his stories, while his successful corporate Self appears as an antagonist. Thus, in his poems, Pavel interprets his daily work activities as episodes of his undesirable, antagonistic Self taking temporary control:

Пока гипнотизируешь себя устроенным бытом
и складной казуистикой экспатской философии,
забываешь, зачем когда-то на одной кухне в Марьиной Роще
слушал под водку кассету Моррисона и разбирал
по иероглифам стихи танского поэта-отшельника.

Вспоминаешь это пока балансируешь на самой кромке,
но шаг назад - и опять бухнешься в куриный бульон из
звонков в головной офис и затяжных переговоров
в сомнительном уюте сумрачных массажных салонов
и задымленных китайских ресторанов.¹⁷⁶

Narrating his successful corporate Self as an antagonist is not the only strategy that Pavel uses to prioritize his bohemian Self. In other stories, he narrates his corporate Self as derivative of his thinker-Self, thus establishing a hierarchal

¹⁷⁵ Daniel Keyes, *The Minds of Billy Milligan* (Toronto and New York: Bantam, 1982), pp. xi-xiv.

¹⁷⁶ Pavel. Open, 13/11/12.

relationship, where the latter has a higher status. He goes as far as claiming that his corporate Self is nothing but a mystification, a deliberately manufactured facade, behind which his true ‘quiet inner voice’ (‘негромкий внутренний голос’) is concealed:

Остаётся обучиться стратегии скрытого сопротивления матрице, [...] способом подрывного ‘мыслепреступления’ - переписывания внутреннего кода таким образом, чтобы ‘удовлетворять условиям’ исключительно на уровне внешней оболочки, полностью игнорируя или попросту отсекая всю системную дурь на входе. Осознанная мимикрия - мой личный ‘вызов’ [...] приходится всерьёз держать круговую оборону, чтобы разогнать проклятое облако и кое-как расслышать свой негромкий внутренний голос...¹⁷⁷

In the examples above, the appearance of Pavel’s corporate Self – whether the narrative concerns the confrontation of alternative identities, or ‘conscious mimicry’ – is presented as an unpleasant experience. Pavel’s narrated intolerance of this allegedly inevitable version of himself provides his stories with a sufficient degree of suffering. This allows Pavel to satisfy the emerging demand of new social media’s for stories of success and superiority, and at the same time to reproduce an iconic literary protagonist.

Mythologems

In Daniel Keyes’s book, shifts between Billy Milligan’s different identities often happen after periods of sleep. When interviewed about this by Keyes, Milligan says that while one identity is ‘holding the consciousness’, the others are asleep in their beds in the darkness. When they wake up they start holding the

¹⁷⁷ Pavel. Open, 09/10/14.

consciousness.¹⁷⁸ Milligan uses metaphorical language rooted in myths about the possibility of living other lives in other worlds during sleep. Such myths, rooted in the human ability to dream and the resulting desire to interpret the contents of dreams, occur in different cultures. For instance, a famous passage by the Taoist philosopher Zhuang Zhou (Zhuang Tzu) reflects on the incomprehensibility and elusiveness of the Self (*'Once upon a time, I dreamt I was a butterfly [...]. Now I do not know whether I was then a man dreaming I was a butterfly, or whether I am now a butterfly, dreaming I am a man'*).¹⁷⁹ In modern fiction, the scenario of a doppelganger waking up when a character falls asleep is often employed in order to reflect the complexity and heterogeneity of the inner world. Such images can be found in Julio Cortazar's novel *62: A Model Kit*, or Gabriel Garcia Marquez' short story *Eyes of a Blue Dog*.¹⁸⁰

In stories involving both of his contrasting Selves, Pavel also employs this literary trope, narrating his two Selves as doppelgangers replacing each other as he switches from sleep to wakefulness, or from fantasy to reality. In a poem describing an erotic dream, for example, the dream world of the poem's protagonist is presented not as an imaginary space but as a parallel reality, with the protagonist himself able to travel between the two worlds. While in the 'human world' the protagonist is busy

¹⁷⁸ According to Milligan, this does not apply to all of his identities. Some of them can be 'awake' but not in control of his consciousness. See Keyes, p. 130.

¹⁷⁹ Zhuang Tzu, 'Section Two – Discussion on Making All Things Equal', in *Complete Works of Zhuang Tzu*, trans. and ed. by Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968) <<http://users.compaqnet.be:80/cn111132/chuang-tzu/2.htm>> [accessed 14 November 2017].

¹⁸⁰ Julio Cortazar, *62: A Model Kit*, trans. by Gregory Rabassa (London: Boyars, 1994); Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 'Eyes of a Blue Dog', in *Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Collected Stories*, trans. by Gregory Rabassa and Jerome Bernstein, ed. by Nelly Gonzales (New York: Harper & Row, 1984), pp. 47-54.

with his work obligations,¹⁸¹ in the alternative reality he engages in sexual encounters with ephemeral creatures who take on the appearance of women:

Блондинка лежала на кушетке-тахте,
подпирая рукой голову,
совершенно голая,
похожая на
ожившую виолончель.

Бросив на девушку решительный взгляд,
я поманил её к себе всей ладонью
– по-китайски – пальцами вниз.

В следующей комнате с дивана
поднялась брюнетка – я поманил и её
[...]

Каждый раз
когда они объявляются
[...]
у них бывают новые лица
иногда знакомые, иногда
какие-то неопределённые,
но я уверен, что мы с ними
или точнее сказать - с ней
хорошо знаем друг друга.

Может быть – слишком хорошо,
так как ей кажется, что она
это и есть я, но она, дурочка,
понятия не имеет,
о чём болтает, потому что
её мир кончается как раз там,
где начинается мой,
населённый существами органическими -
назойливыми, раздражительными,
болтливými и, порой, крайне
недружелюбными.¹⁸²

It is worth noting that in all Pavel's stories, his self-positioning in romantic and sexual discourse varies considerably depending on the Self which is at play. In those stories where he presents himself as a successful manager, he tends to follow a more

¹⁸¹ One learns from the entry preceding the poem in Pavel's LiveJournal that the blogger is on a business trip to Asia. From the poem itself one learns that the protagonist attended a business meeting with his Korean partners the previous night.

¹⁸² Pavel. Open, 12/10/09.

socially acceptable pattern and repeatedly portrays himself as devoted husband and father. By contrast, when Pavel narrates his artistic Self (such as in the scene from his dream world), he often presents himself as adventurous, polygamous, and an irresistible charmer. In the episode reflected in the poem, the protagonist is suddenly forced to leave his alternative reality due to a phone call from his business partners. Following the switch between the two narrated worlds, the storyteller's Self is renegotiated, as the mystic charmer making love to non-terrestrial beings turns into a manager maintaining polite talk and making plans for upcoming business meetings:

Вообще суккубы способны на такой
напор, какой органическим женщинам
и не снился
[...]
Я начал заводиться
и даже набирать обороты, но тут
мне на трубу позвонили корейцы
поблагодарить за посещение
и ещё раз позвать в гости.
Поесть кимчи.¹⁸³

In this poem the two worlds are presented as drastically different but equally real for the narrator. In another poem, Pavel uses the image of sleep and awakening in a way similar to Zhuang Zhou's parable – he questions the reality of his everyday Self. In this text, he first pictures himself as a manager, and then as a hikikomori – an urban recluse – in whose mind the fantasy about corporate life is unfolding:

бывает откроешь почтовый ящик
отфильтруешь спам
ответишь на пару писем
и вдруг подумаешь что все твои
корпоративные адресаты -
чистой воды фикция
нелепая фантазия
выдумка

тебе просто показалось
что ты с кем-то знаком

¹⁸³ Pavel. Open, 12/10/09.

И КТО-ТО ждѐт от тебя
 ответ на очередной
очень-важный-вопрос

на самом деле ты - *хикикомори*

ты не любишь солнечный свет
 и никогда не выходишь наружу¹⁸⁴

Overall, the reproduction of the mythologem of the dream world allows Pavel to express and explain the co-existence of his contrasting Selves, with images of the transition from the dream world to wakefulness bridging the gap between the two contrasting Selves.

Detachment and Irony

As explained above, in some of his stories Pavel avoids being fully identified with his corporate Self, either by presenting it as antagonistic to his ‘true’ reflective Self, or by interpreting it as a mere derivative of the latter. Another literary device that Pavel employs to disclose his unconventional Self without committing to it, consists in the adoption of a detached and ironic tone. In many accounts of his work trips and duties, Pavel narrates himself as distant, as if unwillingly involved in the situation. Rather than interpreting these episodes in terms of slavery or mimicry, however, he emphasizes his alienation from the events being described. Unlike his entry about the Gold Coast, where Pavel employed self-irony to renegotiate his Self, in these stories he directs his ironic tone at other characters. The use of irony allows Pavel both to include himself in described discursive situations and to establish his superiority over his interlocutors:

**Вы никогда не встречали цвет китайской богемы, эти
 взбитые на тщеславии сливки, предающиеся**

¹⁸⁴ Pavel. Open, 24/08/10.

судорогам творчества в лоджиях пятизвёздочных отелей под одобрительные кивки генерального менеджера и **подобострастное хрюканье его помощников?** Они угостят вас дорогим улунским чаем, поговорят с вами об искусстве, похвалят ваш китайский и предложат сигарету с золотым фильтром.¹⁸⁵

Despite his concern to demonstrate his non-association with the environment, Pavel does not spare any details of his luxurious lifestyle. The abundance of attributes of well-being in these stories secures the production of Pavel's image as a member of the corporate elite, while the protagonist's narrated detachment from this circle allows him to keep a safe distance from this unconventional image:

В бизнес-лаунчах, набитых аккуратными дядями и тётями с [...] преисполненным чувством своего **логистического превосходства над экономклассом** и озабоченных исключительно ростом налоговых ставок на свою планомерно **растущую недвижимость** [...] я просто скромно устраиваюсь в **экслюзивном кресле** и утешаю себя горстью соли, ломтиком лимона и бутылкой текиллы, похищенной из их **халявного бара**.¹⁸⁶

Overall, as these examples demonstrate, Pavel's use of a variety of literary techniques allows him to satisfy two contradictory semiotic scripts and to justify the appearance of his two different Selves. In contrast to Pavel's stories about work, his travel notes present a case where the fusion of diary and literature disrupts the consistency of the narrative and results in the production of an ambiguous protagonist, switching between two similar but incompatible versions.

Case Two. Literaturization and Disintegration

In 2014, Pavel made a trip to two Western provinces of China. During this trip he kept a diary in which he registered daily details of his journey. In January-

¹⁸⁵ Pavel. Open, 30/03/08 [emphasis added].

¹⁸⁶ Pavel. Open, 10/09/08.

May 2016 Pavel digitized his notes and uploaded them to LiveJournal. However, the original hand-written source and the version published in LiveJournal had significant differences in terms of both form and content.¹⁸⁷ While the records from the original travel diary are naturally fragmented, full of abridgements, insertions and corrections, the published version is more than twice the size of the original text, presenting a skilfully written story full of historical and literary references, reflections and humour. In an interview, Pavel explained that the texts were reworked before publishing due to his desire to provide readers with accurate historical information about the regions described in the notes.¹⁸⁸

As with his need to renegotiate his stories of success, Pavel's intention to increase the informative value of his texts was produced by the influence of a semiotic script of his LiveJournal community. As described in the introduction to this work, one of the most characteristic features of self-presentation in this community was the display of intellectuality. The results of the analysis of the sample of twenty-three journals described in the first section of this chapter provided evidence that bloggers paid particular attention to the topics of culture (and especially, literature, music and film), politics, and language, and were very prone to reflection on various philosophical topics. To satisfy this high intellectual standard, Pavel had to convert his notes into an informative and insightful narrative.

At the same time, the accounts of the Chinese trip found in Pavel's LiveJournal were influenced by two other semiotic scripts. One of these consisted in mimicking the genre of personal diary, and the other in the 'literaturization' of the narrative. While Pavel points out that he only aimed to provide his readers with a

¹⁸⁷ Pavel provided 11 scanned pages of his diary, covering two of six days of the trip.

¹⁸⁸ 'Вот я сидел тут, читал, знакомился с исторической фактурой, потому что я все-таки китаист и мне неудобно было гнать. Есть определенные, как бы, к себе требования' (Pavel. Interview 2, pp. 2-3).

historical background (which, indeed, was inserted in every record), he made numerous other changes that seemed to be caused by the influence of the two outlined semiotic scripts.

Like Pavel's stories about his business trips, the blogger's published notes about his journey to Western China appear as artistic texts. The style of the LiveJournal post about the trip hardly resembles the style of its hand-written precursor at all. On one occasion, Pavel acknowledges these changes to his readers. Just as in his interview, he mentions the fact-checking that preceded the publication of the text.¹⁸⁹ However, numerous other changes made to the original remain unknown to his readers, since in fact almost every sentence from the original notes was artistically reformulated in the LiveJournal version. In his LiveJournal texts, Pavel employs a more sophisticated vocabulary, more complex sentence structure, and abstract ideas that help him to link his fragmented impressions to the central narrative. Compare, for instance, how Pavel describes his experience of reading a book by a Beijing writer in exile about the place that the blogger visits on his journey:

Интересно также что мы с ним пересекаемся если и не в одном и том же году, то по крайней мере в одном и том же времени года. Он оказался здесь в марте – мы в апреле (original).¹⁹⁰

Интересно, однако, то, что не совпадая по направлению, мы более или менее пересекаемся с Ма по времени года. Он оказался здесь в марте, мы – в середине апреля. А это уже какая-никакая референтная сетка (LiveJournal).¹⁹¹

Another example is Pavel's passage about his fellow travellers:

¹⁸⁹ 'Конечно же, все это я уже потом, задним числом накопал в интернете' (Pavel. Open, 29/05/16).

¹⁹⁰ Pavel. Hand-written, p. 1.

¹⁹¹ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

Я думаю, что компания подобралась – что надо, в дороге будет не скучно (original).¹⁹²

Компания, кажется, получилась отличная и у нас есть все шансы получить бездну удовольствия от избыточности дороги и текучести разговоров обо всём на свете (LiveJournal).¹⁹³

Occasionally, Pavel inserts whole passages that do not provide significant additional information about the places that he visits. Such passages appear to be mainly about improving the artistic quality of the text:

Мечеть в центре пыльного и шумного Сианя – это китайский храм классического образца посреди сказочно-красивого сада – тихого и умиротворённого – даром что затерянного в хаотичном переплетении тесных торговых улочек, по которым пробираешься правым плечом вперёд, уворачиваясь от снующих туда-сюда торговцев с тележками и тюками через плечо.¹⁹⁴

Other insertions occur when Pavel reconstructs the context of his records or provides his readers with certain clarifications regarding his thoughts and actions. Diary narrative does not usually include details facilitating the interpretation of the text. By contrast, in literary work each detail is expected to contribute in a certain way to the development of the story and its role should be evident to the reader. Pavel therefore adds numerous sentences providing contextual information to his original text, explaining why this trip is special ('Я первый раз, вот так – не по бизнесу, путешествую по Китаю с китайцами'¹⁹⁵) or why he is in charge of keeping travel notes rather than driving during the trip ('Имея пагубную

¹⁹² Pavel. Hand-written, p. 1.

¹⁹³ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

¹⁹⁴ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

¹⁹⁵ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

склонность засыпать в любом транспорте, я в своё время решил не рисковать своей и чужими жизнями'¹⁹⁶).

All these techniques help Pavel to convert his notes into literary text appropriate for uploading to his LiveJournal. At the same time, LiveJournal records containing biographical information are expected to reproduce the genre of the personal diary. Along with 'literaturizing' his notes, Pavel therefore adds some elements characteristic of diary narratives to his original text. Although his original text is itself a diary, in order to be perceived as such by the audience – especially after being thoroughly edited – it needs to contain some evident features of the genre.

First of all, though he recognizes the literary nature of his published notes, Pavel introduces them to his readers as a digital counterpart to his notebook:

Всё нижеследующее – дневниковые заметки, которые я вёл в период между 18-25 апреля 2014 года, во время поездки по северо-западу Китая: провинциям Цинхай и Ганьсу.¹⁹⁷

This record reproduces a phenomenon described by Philippe Lejeune: the autobiographical pact, a specific contract between the writer and the reader characteristic of autobiographies. According to this pact, the writer, narrator and protagonist should be the same person, and the text should present truthful biographical experiences.¹⁹⁸ Published personal diaries do not usually reproduce this pact, as they rarely address the reader. Usually presented as private, even in cases where they are eventually shared, they do not need to make the promise of authenticity. They are a priori perceived as truthful representations of biographical experiences. However, when a diarist deliberately shares his personal records, the

¹⁹⁶ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

¹⁹⁷ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

¹⁹⁸ Philippe Lejeune, *Le Pacte autobiographique* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1996), pp. 1-28.

autobiographical pact needs to be made in order to secure the credibility of the text. In the introduction to his LiveJournal posts about the trip to Western China, Pavel does just this. Yet in spite of this promise of the authenticity of the text, a comparison of the two versions of the text shows that more than half of what follows this preamble does not come from the notes taken during the trip. Pavel's LiveJournal text is far from being an accurate reproduction of his travel diary, but this false pact with readers allows him to claim that it is.

In terms of their content, Pavel's original notes do not resemble the iconic personal journal. They contain many historical references as well as corrections and insertions aimed at improving the style of the text. This suggests that at the time of taking his notes, Pavel was already considering turning them into a literary project. At the same time, the personal diary is expected to describe the minutiae of everyday life. Along with inserting additional historical information about the described places and thoroughly editing the language of the notes, therefore, Pavel adds sentences and paragraphs referring to practices and events that are not reflected in the original text (for instance, a 113-word description of a flight in an old plane, and smaller passages about his failed attempt to visit a mosque and about being helped with directions by a passerby).¹⁹⁹

Finally, the major technique that Pavel uses to make his text look like a diary is the adoption of diary-specific tenses and focalizations. Although most of the published text is written in the past tense, Pavel occasionally inserts sentences in the future tense to imitate the simultaneity of experiencing and writing ('Отправной точкой экспедиции будет столица провинции Цинхай', 'рывок по просторам

¹⁹⁹ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

Цинхая нам предстоит недетский'²⁰⁰). He also sporadically reproduces the focalization of the diarist from 2014, who does not yet know what is going to happen next. For instance, instead of providing the exact length of the route known to Pavel at the time of the publication, he provides his readers with an approximate figure that was known to him at the time of writing the notes ('По словам Феликса, составившего маршрут, забронировавшего отели и билеты, общая протяжённость нашего недельного автопробега составит около 2400 км, т.е. в среднем по 350 км в день'²⁰¹).

In autobiographies, life events and narration about them are usually separated by long periods of time. The narrator is aware of the continuation of the story while the reader is not. Conversely, with diaries, the temporal proximity of experiencing and writing means that neither the writer nor the reader knows what happens next. Liz Stanley and Helen Dampier explore this narrative feature of published diaries, claiming that all diaries in different ways and to different degrees disrupt definitional conventions concerning 'temporal proximity' to the described events. At the same time, Stanley and Dampier contend, published versions of diary texts recreate the temporal proximity in order to satisfy the convention of the genre and to claim the authenticity of the text.²⁰²

In the case of Pavel's diary, the creation of temporal proximity in the reworked text aims – like in the case analysed by Stanley and Dampier – to imitate the authenticity of the diary. However, due to irregularity of the use of tenses and focalizations Pavel's travel notes turn into a hybrid text, where the narrator remains

²⁰⁰ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

²⁰¹ Pavel. Open, 31/12/16.

²⁰² Liz Stanley and Helen Dampier, 'Simulacrum Diaries: Time, the "Moment of Writing," and the Diaries of Johanna Brandt-Van Warmelo', *Life Writing*, 3 (2006), 25-52 (p. 45).

undecided on the genre and in the space of a few sentences switches from the perspective of a diary entry to that of a recollection:

Сегодня нам предстоит осуществить тот самый эпического размаха рывок, через всю северную часть Цинхай [details about the specifics of the road] Перед таким вояжем необходимо как следует подкрепиться, так что с трудом впихнув защищённые тремя парами носок ноги в ботинки, мы отправились на завтрак [description of breakfast menu] Дорога оказалась бесконечной, точнее только показалась таковой, ибо до Дуньхуана мы добрались уже часам к шести вечера.²⁰³

Ultimately, Pavel's simultaneous subjection to the semiotic scripts of diary and literature in the online version of his journey results in the production of two images of the narrator. The diary-like narrator appears as present in the described situations and unaware of their contexts, while the literature-like narrator recollects the events and describes and reinterprets them in the light of knowledge acquired post-factum.

Literature as a Source of Narrative Models

Literature has long been one of the principal suppliers of models of feeling, behaviour and narration. In Russia, the active adoption of literary models for self-interpretation and the presentation of individual biographical experiences first took place among intellectual elites of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.²⁰⁴ By the end of the nineteenth century, literature had become an essential source of social norms and emotional templates for a wider circle of educated people. And by the middle of the twentieth century, thanks to the increase in the literacy of

²⁰³ Pavel. Open, 18/02/16.

²⁰⁴ Andrei Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia. Iz istorii russkoi emotsional'noi kul'tury kontsa XVIII – nachala XIX veka* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2016).

the population and the inclusion of Russian literary classics in the school program,²⁰⁵ sentimental and behavioural scripts supplied by literature had been adopted by general public.

The impact of literature upon the processes of self-conceptualization and self-presentation has been emphasized in studies of various academic fields, including psychology, history, literary studies, and, narratology.²⁰⁶ However, by the beginning of the twenty-first century, literature had lost its status as one of the main suppliers of behavioural and sentimental scripts. Alternative models of experiencing and expressing were increasingly provided by a variety of other sources: art forms and sub-cultures that developed in the second half of the twentieth century, the diversification of the products of the entertainment industry (such as TV shows and series, computer games, and magazines), the continuous stream of stories supplied by advertisement and marketing campaigns, and the arrival of the internet era with its unlimited potential for information consumption.

Yet, for certain social segments, reading remained one of the main paths for self-education, personal development and self-exploration. The LiveJournal community considered in this study presents a case of just such an environment. Although the analysis of this community's thematic profile revealed the increasing interest in audio-visual art forms, the frequency rates of records about literature

²⁰⁵ Olga Malinovskaya, 'Teaching Russian Classics in Secondary School under Stalin (1936 - 1941)' (unpublished DPhil thesis, University of Oxford, 2015), pp. 65-79.

²⁰⁶ On psychology, see Richard Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative Worlds: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993); Djikic Maja et al., 'On Being Moved by Art: How Reading Fiction Transforms the Self', *Creativity Research Journal*, 21.1 (2009), 24-29; on history, see Martin Puchner, *The Written World: The Power of Stories to Shape People, History, Civilization* (New York: Random House, 2017); Zorin, *Poiavlenie geroia*; Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1992); Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); on literary studies, see Timothy O'Leary, *Foucault and Fiction: The Experience Book* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2009); on narratology, see Murray, 173-87; Bruner, 11-32.

closely followed the rates for music and film and were considerably higher than the rates for television, theatre and other visual arts. Thus, for LiveJournal's audience, the semiotic scripts drawn from fiction still played a crucial role in the process of self-production.

In this section of the thesis I therefore explore how bloggers adopt particular literary scripts when narrating their Selves in LiveJournal. The Selves reflected in bloggers' narratives are not produced solely along the templates supplied by literary works, but appear as a result of the simultaneous influence of different factors. The array of sources of behavioural and sentimental models is almost unlimited and can include any cultural and material product, from merchandise to sports to art (as described in Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*).²⁰⁷ Each case of identity production is entrenched in the interplay of particular mythologies. Hence, the identification of literary scripts adopted by bloggers does not aim to account for all the idiosyncrasies of their narrated Selves, but to pinpoint those components of their identities that were shaped by the practice of reading.

The first group of stories presents the example of a literary model, drawn from a novel by Marcel Proust, adopted by the bloggers for the purpose of increasing the literary appeal of their journals. The analysis of the second group of narratives illustrates how models of feelings borrowed from novels by contemporary Scandinavian writers Kerstin Thorvall and Linn Ullmann are employed by the bloggers for narrativization of their complex emotional experiences.

²⁰⁷ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974).

Case One. The ‘Madeleine Moment’ and the Representation of Smells in LiveJournal

The ‘literaturization’ of the biographical stories of life found in the journals of my informants Inna and Tatiana is often achieved through detailed descriptions of bloggers’ sensory experiences, particularly olfactory ones. Bloggers emphasize the special role that their sense of smell plays in the ways they relate to the world, repeatedly stressing their particularly sharp – almost animal – sensory abilities. In one of her poems, Inna directly associates her olfactory sensitivity with an animal-like perception of reality (‘В моем носу тоже запах | Я просто на задних лапах!’²⁰⁸). In some narratives, bloggers simply mention the joy of smelling particular plants or foods.²⁰⁹ In other cases, the references to rather unusual odors – like the smell of zymosis, a keyboard, or frozen leaves – demonstrate a more unorthodox approach to appreciating scents.²¹⁰ But truly literary descriptions of sensory experiences appear when bloggers associatively interlace their registrations of olfactory impressions or synaesthetic metaphors with presentations of particular emotional states. In such stories, emotions are often connected to memories triggered by sensing familiar smells.

In literature, the descriptions of organoleptic experiences have often been employed for justifying the appearance of retro- and introspection. The textbook example of such a scene is the famous ‘Madeleine moment’ described by Marcel Proust in his novel *À la recherche du temps perdu*.²¹¹ However, similar imagery had already been introduced in the works of Charles Baudelaire, George Sand, and

²⁰⁸ Inna. Open, 01/09/07.

²⁰⁹ Tatiana. Open, 29/06/07; Tatiana. Open, 18/09/09; Inna. Semi-closed 04/07/12; Inna. Semi-closed, 02/12/12, and many others.

²¹⁰ Inna. Open, 08/04/06; Inna. Closed, 02/03/12; Inna. Open, 13/07/05.

²¹¹ Marcel Proust, *À la recherche du temps perdu*, 4 vols, (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), vol. I, pp. 44-47.

Gustave Flaubert that preceded Proust's novel.²¹² In Russian literature, reflections on the link between sensual experiences and recollections can be found in the writings of Vladimir Nabokov.²¹³

In the Proustian model of feeling, the experience commonly called flashback becomes possible through the reconstruction of the context of emotions. First, the physiological sensation provokes a feeling that belongs to a past – not present – context. The retrieval of a past feeling and the rediscovery of its original context causes a momentary shift in individual's spatio-temporal point of view,²¹⁴ allowing him or her to access an 'authentic past' which has not been transformed in the process of reinterpretation aimed at bringing the past in line with the current story of life. This momentary rupture with the dominant life-narrative causes the feeling of an inexplicably fresh and clear perception of oneself. In the scene from Proust's novel, this process includes two stages. First, the taste of the cake reconnects the protagonist with a certain episode from his past (being offered a cake in his aunt's room). This episode is then treated as a synecdoche of protagonist's whole experience of childhood. In this way, the taste becomes a signifier for an epoch in protagonist's life.

This literary model is reproduced in the LiveJournal narratives of my informants. They interpret certain scents as mediators allowing them to relive the past. They also establish links between the scents and different eras of life by

²¹² Cretien Van Campen, *The Proust Effect: the Senses as Doorways to Lost Memories*, trans. by Julian Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 19.

²¹³ For instance, 'Как известно, память воскрешает все, кроме запахов, и зато ничто так полно не воскрешает прошлого, как запах, когда-то связанный с ним'. Vladimir Nabokov, *Mashen'ka* (Moscow: Azbuka, 2009), p. 35 <<http://knijky.ru/books/mashenka>> [accessed 07 April 18].

²¹⁴ The concept of spatio-temporal point of view was developed by Boris Uspenskii. See Boris Uspenskii, *Poetika kompozitsii. Struktura khudozhestvennogo teksta i tipologiiia kompozitsionnoi formy* (Saint Petersburg: Azbuka, 2000), pp. 101-37.

zooming in on particular episodes or experiences that function as symbols of certain life periods. For instance, in one of Inna's entries, the scent of cut rhubarb triggers a mental reconstruction of the past. This reconstruction includes details that belong to a certain moment in the past, such as the direction of the light and the presence of particular objects. This moment is at the same time narrated as representative of Inna's general childhood experience of spending time at her grandmother's place. The momentary reclaiming of her past Self is further described by Inna as an emotionally intense experience of self-cognition:

Чистила в гостях ревень, сняла тоненькую полоску кожицы и понюхала. Впервые лет за двадцать. Ну и сразу все: бабушкин дом, липкая клеенка на столе, щербатая чашка с незабудками, свет из окна сбоку, Сортавала, скалы, лес. И каждый раз, когда такое происходит, кажется, что если вот еще чуть-чуть вдохнуть, еще миллиметр, то поймешь что-то очень важное про себя, про то как ты оказалась здесь, про почему ты и почему такая - совсем рядом, вот в последнем миллиметре. И всегда этой последней миллисекунды вдоха, миллиметра не хватает, и все снова исчезает.²¹⁵

Tatiana's story, in which the smell of old perfume triggers her involuntary memory, reproduces the same model of retrospection. The narrator's recollection simultaneously relates to a particular period of her biography ('Конец первого и начало второго курса') and a certain scene that is presented as emblematic of that time in life. This scene is reconstructed in detail, including the objects, the light and the weather, as well as attributes of the narrator's past Self, such as her clothes and feelings:

Искала перчатки, а нашла их [духи]. Это чудо, когда ты снова чувствуешь запах, который опрокидывает тебя в 2001 год. Конец первого и начало второго курса. Этот запах - осеннее холодное утро, солнце в окна Кивача, где ровно в 8 нужно уже подносить кофе командировочным клеркам или красноглазым клабберам. И еще у меня было

²¹⁵ Inna. Semi-closed, 21/05/12.

серое пальто до колена, такая же юбка и безумная
ЛЮБОВЬ.²¹⁶

The very experience of such involuntary memories does not necessarily illustrate the mediation of feelings by literary patterns, considering the well-documented ability of scent to activate memories.²¹⁷ At the same time, the inclusion of such episodes in biographical texts, their structural similarity to the Proustian model, and their interpretation as near-mystical experiences that are conducive to self-decryption signal that bloggers follow well-recognized patterns of biographical prose. Bloggers themselves are doubtless aware of the literary prototypes of their stories. Inna, for instance, unequivocally points at the similarity between the episode that she narrates and the scene from Proust's novel ('На днях со мной случились очередные прустовские мадлены'²¹⁸), while the structure of Tatiana's record – where the mentioning of her 'maddening love' ('безумная любовь') – is preserved until the end of the story and appears as a sudden final emphasis, which renegotiates the meaning of the whole reconstructed scene – visibly reproduces the model of artistic (rather than documentary) text. Thus, bloggers consciously engage in artistic narration and adopt a literary script where perceptual experience, memory and biography form the indivisible whole.

At the same time bloggers' literary projects use references to scent as much more than just triggers of cherished memories, with descriptions of olfactory experiences widely employed as artistic devices. Frequently, descriptions of smells serve to represent the arena of the story's action, evoking a certain atmosphere such as countryside filled with sweet-smelling grasses, metro stations with fresh pastries

²¹⁶ Tatiana. Open, 6/11/06.

²¹⁷ Rachel Herz and Jonathan Schooler, 'A Naturalistic Study of Autobiographical Memories Evoked by Olfactory and Visual Cues: Testing the Proustian Hypothesis', *American Journal of Psychology*, 115.1 (2002), 21-32.

²¹⁸ Inna. Semi-closed, 21/05/12.

for sale, nightclubs packed with patrons in slightly soiled clothing, or the scent of a flavoursome dinner coming from neighbours' apartment.²¹⁹ Many other odours have no synaesthetic base in the associations constructed by bloggers, but function purely as figurative devices, as in the statements that apples smell of sadness, the aroma of coffee represents God's love, a certain perfume causes perpetual ecstasy and plunges the universe into a crimson haze, while two other fragrances smell of positivity and irony.²²⁰

The formation of such individual poetic vocabulary becomes possible thanks to a literary tradition in which sensory perception is commonly described through metaphorical language. In her analysis of the discursive tools mediating the perceptual pleasure of wine tasting in LiveJournal records, Galina Orlova pinpoints the cultural conditions of expressing gustatory experiences. Orlova shows that the language game inherent in the practice of degustation is characterized by a rather vague relationship between the vocabulary and perceptual experience. This opens up some potential for multiple interpretations of organoleptic impressions; as a result, it is appropriate articulation in language that itself enables the process of savouring wine. Pertinent symbolic resources are mastered during interactions with 'competent Others', whose 'advanced' taste defining experience gradually feeds into the novice's mental platform of perception and presentation of the taste.²²¹

The perception of scents, though less aesthetically charged and economically predetermined than wine tasting, is nonetheless realized through the same mechanisms in bloggers' texts. Their experience of reading determines their

²¹⁹ Inna. Semi-closed, 07/03/09; Inna. Semi-closed, 16/04/10; Tatiana. Open, 21/02/10; Tatiana. Open, 03/07/07.

²²⁰ Inna. Open, 26/07/08; Inna. Open, 20/08/08; Inna. Open, 28/12/05; Inna. Open, 08/04/06.

²²¹ Galina Orlova, 'Distsiplina udovol'stviia: Pertseptivnyi risunok "vinnykh razgovorov" blogosfery', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 21 (2011), <<http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/2347>> [accessed 4 May 2018].

belief that stories about scents and odours present legitimate literary material and contribute to the production of sophisticated characters, hence the bloggers' tendency to replace the organoleptic characteristics with affective epithets and wrap subjective messages into narratives describing the smells. By picturing olfactory experiences at the crossroad of subjective memory and literary work, bloggers produce themselves as exceptionally sensitive, thus positioning themselves amongst thinkers, persons with an elevated artistic view of the world, and connoisseurs of literature and the finer things in life.

Case Two. Interpreting Life through Literature

Another way in which semiotic scripts drawn from literature are involved in the production of biographical narratives in LiveJournal consists in finding correlations between complex life experiences and literary plots. In his famous article *Life as Narrative*, Jerome Bruner writes that individuals see their lives as linear stories where separate episodes are involved in cause-effect relationships.²²² Usually, converting heterogeneous life experiences into stories comes naturally, but sometimes, especially where experiences and impressions are complex and controversial, finding a way to organize them in a coherent and culturally conventional narrative may be challenging. In such cases, literary plots where similar experiences are given convincing interpretations may be used as templates for making sense of one's own reality and for assembling one's own life-story. The following examples illustrate how my informants Tatiana and Inna use episodes from literary works to interpret their multifaceted personal experiences and to narrate them in their journals.

²²² Bruner, pp. 11-32.

Both Inna and Tatiana adopt plots from contemporary Scandinavian literature to describe their relationships with their fathers. Their interest in Scandinavian literature is likely to be related to the fact that Inna works as a translator of Swedish fiction and has a passion for the Scandinavian literary scene. Being a ‘competent Other’ in the area of literature for her friends, she is likely to have an impact on their literary tastes.²²³ More generally, the renaissance of Scandinavian literature, which became widely available in Russian translation around the beginning of the twenty-first century, prompted a noticeable increase in Russian readers’ interest in Scandinavian authors.²²⁴

Tatiana invokes the theme of father-daughter relationship by quoting a scene from a novel by Norwegian writer Linn Ullmann, where a wise father talks to his daughter about the purpose of marriage:

Отрывок из моей самой сейчас любимой книжки:

- По-моему, Александр ей изменяет, - говорю я.
- Изменяет Жюли?
- Да.
- С кем? – спрашивает папа.
- Не знаю.
- А я так надеялся, что с Александром она будет счастлива, - тихо говорит он.
- Выходит, зря надеялся.
- С другой стороны, он вовсе не обязан делать ее счастливой.
- А зачем тогда жениться? – я смотрю на папу. – Какой смысл?
- Не понимаю, с чего ты взяла, что смысл именно в том, чтобы достичь счастья?²²⁵

²²³ In the conversation with a friend in the comments to one of her posts Tatiana even refers to a book as to probably not worth reading because Inna never recommended it (Comment to Tatiana. Open, 24/07/06).

²²⁴ Mariia Shaburova, ‘Terpimost’ po-skandinavski’, *Online Vremia*, 224 (2010), <<http://www.vremya.ru/2010/224/10/265976.html>> [accessed 23 December 2017].

²²⁵ Linn Ullmann, *Prezhde chem ty usnesh’*, trans. by Oksana Anisimova (Moscow: Slovo, 2003), quoted in Tatiana. Open, 01/08/06.

The quote is followed by Tatiana's statement, 'Папы по-прежнему рулят, не так ли?',²²⁶ signalling Tatiana's subjectivation of the literary text and indirectly making a positive statement about her own father.²²⁷

From Tatiana's interview and LiveJournal posts we learn that her relationship with her father is psychologically challenging and rather variable, ranging from indifference to adoration to resentment at different periods of her life. I reconstruct the evolution of Tatiana's relationship with her father in more detail in the following chapters of this thesis, where I discuss the production of the systems of characters and the processes of rewriting of the past in LiveJournal. Here, however, it is sufficient to say that Tatiana's emotional experience of daughterhood is highly inconsistent, with sharp sentimental peaks and drops. Unlike her LiveJournal records from other years, Tatiana's posts from 2006 display a particularly loving attitude towards her father, portraying him as a close and supportive friend.

In her interview, Tatiana also disclosed a complicated romantic relationship that she experienced in her youth.²²⁸ According to Tatiana, her partner manipulated her into accepting an open relationship, which in reality consisted in tolerating his promiscuity. Although the young Tatiana suffered from this arrangement, she continued to accept her partner's narrative. The day before the entry including the quote from the novel, cited above, Tatiana posted about talking to her father about her romantic relationship. In this entry, titled 'А папа мой говорил вот что', Tatiana's father reflects on responsibilities in interpersonal relationships and blames her lover for misleading her. Tatiana pictures herself as balancing between the

²²⁶ Comment to Tatiana. Open, 01/08/06.

²²⁷ According to Michel Foucault, the subjectivation of discourse is the process of individual selection and reorganization of text in which 'the writer constitutes his own identity through this recollection of things said'. Foucault suggests an example of *hupomnemata* - individual notebooks created in Roman Empire in the first centuries AD that included citations, descriptions of events, and reflections, which served as memory aids. See Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, p. 417.

²²⁸ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 8.

opinions of her partner and her father and then acknowledges the competence of the latter ('Вот я папе верю и знаю, что он прав'²²⁹). Thus, the quote from Ulmann's novel made by Tatiana on the next day has certain correlations with the blogger's biography. Having experienced turbulent relationships with both her lover and her father, and feeling uncertain about how to relate to promiscuity and search for happiness,²³⁰ Tatiana subjectivizes a literary plot providing a clear-cut image of a father as a wise advisor on romantic relationships.

Inna's feelings to her father go through similarly varied stages of interpretation, ranging from hatred to acceptance, as reflected in her interviews and late LiveJournal texts. The stories about this relationship are also considered in more detail in the following chapter of this thesis. Here I want to illustrate how the adoption of a semiotic script from literature secures Inna's transition between contrasting presentations of her relationship with her father.

Unlike Tatiana, who often writes about her father in her LiveJournal (at least in the first few years), Inna never writes about hers. Her first post about him appears only in 2012 and is uploaded to her double-locked journal which has only ten readers. From Inna's interview we learn that her father was an alcoholic with whom she had to live until he died and who made her life at home unbearable. It comes as no surprise that the relationship with her father becomes a taboo topic for Inna and she never writes about it in her open and semi-closed journals. At the same time, she sporadically quotes and retells literary works that touch on the subject of father-daughter relationships.²³¹ One of these quotes presents a convincing case of the adoption of a literary pattern in the process of Inna's reinvention of the positive

²²⁹ Tatiana. Closed, 31/07/06; comment to Tatiana. Closed, 31/07/06.

²³⁰ This theme is discussed further in Tatiana's post (Tatiana. Open, 01/08/06).

²³¹ Inna. Open, 29/03/06; 30/07/06; 15/04/07.

version of her father. The paragraph from Swedish novelist Kersyyn Thorvall's *Forbidden Fruit*, quoted in Inna's record from 2006, recounts how a woman being treated in a psychiatric hospital mourns her long-dead father:

Я умолкаю. Сажусь. Пытаюсь с силой вдохнуть, но дыхание застревает, вдохнуть не получается, я слишком долго плакала. – ‘Если я скажу, ты подумаешь, что я сошла с ума. Я плачу, потому что мой папа умер.’ Я плачу, потому что мой папа умер, с опозданием в тридцать пять лет [...] Там [in the hospital] ты просто принимаешь лекарство и спишь, как хорошая послушная девочка [...] В шведских психиатрических лечебницах не плачут по мертвым папам. Особенно те, кому за сорок.²³²

The fact that this passage is quoted in the journal suggests that the blogger finds certain parallels between the fictional scene and her own complex emotions. She recognizes the potential of this literary model to be used for the legitimization of her feelings. However, at this period of her life she is not ready to express these emotions and does not acknowledge the association of the literary text with her own experience. Having been built into Inna's affective map, this sentimental model fully actualizes six years later, when Inna engages in the process of renegotiation of her feelings towards her father.

In the record from her double-locked journal from 2013, Inna attempts to rewrite the chronology of her attitude to her father (‘Много лет я боялась и ненавидела папу [...] Потом папа умер. Потом прошло еще много лет и я вспомнила, как любила папу’²³³). Inna writes that the feeling she had previously understood as hatred actually turns out to be suffering from the lack of the object of love. Acknowledging this version of her relationship with her father in her journal for close friends reproblematises Inna's own narrated identity. It is not the disturbing

²³² Kersyyn Thorvall, *Det mest förbjudna* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1976), translated by Inna and quoted in Inna. Open, 29/03/06.

²³³ Inna. Double-locked, 22/10/13.

presence of her father in her life, but rather his unbearable absence that Inna pinpoints as the cause of her transformed self-understanding:

Я не знаю, что мне с этим делать. Что делать с тоской. Что делать с утратой. Что делать с пустотой. Что делать со страхом. Я не знаю, что делать с тем фактом, что утрата определяет мою жизнь.²³⁴

This reclaimed love for her father, and the pain of his loss, are narrated as something that has been put on hold but was meant to be felt again:

Мой папа умер восемь лет назад [...] Когда он умер, я сказала знакомой, что не могу ничего почувствовать. Она ответила, что все придет 'через восемь лет'.²³⁵

The alleged repressed love for her father is interpreted by Inna as a source of her varied psychological issues, including depression and panic attacks, for which she gets treatment.²³⁶ Inna describes herself as being in a psychological state conforming to the literary model she registered six years earlier in her open journal. The combination depicted in the novel – of going through a nervous breakdown while belatedly mourning the father – is now appropriated by Inna for making sense of and legitimizing her own emotionally controversial experience.

Overall, the examples from the journals of both Tatiana and Inna show how semiotic scripts articulated in literary works affect the composition of biographical narratives by bloggers. The interweaving of literary episodes into LiveJournal records allows bloggers to indirectly narrate their own experiences and to make sense of the dynamics of their complex feelings.

Self-identification according to literary patterns presents a case of indirect ego-narrative. Over the period of LiveJournal's active presence on the Russian social media scene, indirect self-production (which was initially realized through literary

²³⁴ Inna. Double-locked, 22/10/13.

²³⁵ Inna. Double-locked, 09/04/14.

²³⁶ Inna. Double-locked, 06/07/13.

quotes or registrations of musical and film preferences) became increasingly common and contributed to the spread of new forms of narratives, such as flashmobs and reposts. In Facebook, direct ego-narratives were almost entirely replaced by indirect forms of self-writing. Self-production ceased to be associated with first-person narrative and became the art of relating to external texts through quoting, liking, joining groups, and hyperlinking. This new type of self-writing and the role of LiveJournal in its formation are discussed in the following section of this chapter.

Section Three. Indirect Self-Production

The personal diary has for centuries been the most common locus of self-inscription. The production of Self in the personal diary is characterized by several features: first-person narrative; the author's belief that through writing they express their true inner essence, or soul; a bias towards reflections and descriptions; and the assemblage of lived experiences into meaningful stories. The very specifics of the genre define a kind of identity that is produced through keeping a diary. At the same time, the practice of keeping a diary is technologically mediated. The technology of writing in general defines the formation of a different, more introspective and personalized self-perception, in contrast to identity templates inherent in oral traditions.²³⁷ Moreover, hand-writing (as opposed to typing) also conditions the formation of ego-narratives along specific vectors, such as increased intimacy²³⁸ and a higher degree of self-identification with the text produced.²³⁹ Increasingly, however, the practice of hand-writing is disappearing from everyday life, being replaced by the production of digital text in education, in personal communication (i.e. following each other's profile and exchanging messages instead of writing letters), in self-disciplining activities from keeping personal organizers to making shopping lists, and, importantly, in the area of self-inscription.

Recently, therefore, the evolution of the personal diary has undergone several stages. First, the hand-written diary was replaced by its digital counterpart. This was related not only to an overall shift away from hand-writing, but also to a higher level of trust in the digital form, seen as a more secure personal archive.

²³⁷ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London and New York: Routledge, 1982), pp. 77-114.

²³⁸ Van Dijck, *Composing the Self: Of Diaries and Lifelogs*, <<http://three.fibreculturejournal.org/fcj-012-composing-the-self-of-diaries-and-lifelogs/>>.

²³⁹ Philippe Lejeune, *Cher écran. Journal personnel, ordinateur, internet* (Paris: Seuil, 2000), p. 28.

However, the possibility of simultaneous writing and revision, as well as the potential for making untraceable changes to the text later on, has had a transformative effect on the format of the diary-narrative, which could be renegotiated and adjusted to reflect a changing story of life at any time. The transfer of the diary to the online space conditioned further mutations in the ego-text, such as the potential for a text to exist simultaneously in several different versions, each produced under the gaze of a different reference group. At the same time, the consolidation of socio-cultural conventions of online self-writing and the appearance of technological tools of indirect self-narration (such as hyperlinking and reposting) supported the decline of self-production through the traditional soul-searching first-person narrative.

With the arrival of social media, the practice of keeping an online journal was largely replaced by that of maintaining a profile on social networking websites. Naturally, this does not imply that everyone stopped keeping digital or even hand-written diaries, but rather that this practice ceased to function as a universal form of self-inscription. In the world of social networks, the production of Self quickly established itself as essentially referential, consisting in the declaration of one's relation to other individuals and to external cultural texts.²⁴⁰

The shift towards such referential self-production began long before the emergence of social media. In 1991, social psychologist Kenneth Gergen introduced the concept of the Saturated Self. Gergen outlined that historically formed implications of the existence of individual's 'inner world' underlie our self-understanding. But the development of technologies put this construct under threat by deconstructing big cultural narratives about ourselves. According to Gergen,

²⁴⁰ Asmolov and Asmolov, pp. 3-15.

dwelling in a 'socially saturated world' we know more, see more, communicate more, and relate more than ever before. Informational openness leads to individuals' exposure to a multiplicity of voices coming from diverse areas of social and cultural life. On a daily basis we face alternative paradigms of meaning, different modes of emotional expression; we observe the merging of various cultural vocabularies and discover the ideological and political bases of conventional psychological conditions. This relatedness is the process that enables the construction of new meanings. It defines 'the gradual shift from presuming a Self at the center of the social world towards seeing relationships as the enduring reality of which the Self is an integral part'. According to Gergen, this process could potentially lead to a complete 'loosing of Self'.²⁴¹

The reinforced saturation of the Self in social media is made possible by the specifics of the design of networking websites, which enable self-production through befriending, hyperlinking, sharing, liking (as well as disliking and expressing attitudes by means of emojis), self-positioning on online maps, commenting, following, joining groups, revealing one's daily activities (from attendance at events to running businesses), displaying lists of interests and preferences for certain cultural products, and so forth. All these practices are seemingly not directed at self-narration but exist for relating to the narratives of the others. According to Lidiya Ginzburg, however, the narrative is inevitably self-directed. Ginzburg's analysis of a corpus of transcribed conversations suggests that all dialogue is really the setting for self-expression, and the exchange of utterances is in fact the fusion of two self-enclosed monologues, interrupted for the sake of social convention.²⁴² If we admit

²⁴¹ Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Everyday Life*, pp. 6-7; Gergen, *Technology and the Self: From the Essential to the Sublime*, pp. 127-41.

²⁴² Lidiya Ginzburg, *Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka* (Saint Petersburg: Lenizdat, 1990), p. 635.

that in online communication the acts of posting or reacting to the posts of the others can be regarded as utterances of a complex polylogue, and then apply Ginzburg's logic to this communication, we can suggest that the act of relating to content produced by others is only possible when it also provides the possibility for self-expression. In other words, displaying one's relation to external content is a type of ego-inscription, although radically different to introspective narratives of personal diaries.

It is worth noting that some functions of the personal diary, such as archiving memories and self-disciplining, are preserved in this new form of self-production. At the same time, the meticulous exploration of what used to be interpreted as the soul became almost extinct. It was in the era of LiveJournal that self-exploratory narrative started to mutate into an indirect, relational form of self-writing.

Evidently, along with the saturation of Self, the transfer of biographical narrative from personal diary to social media was associated with a large-scale replacement of the textual with the visual. This shift is discussed in the third chapter of my thesis where I explore in more detail the material actors involved in the network of identity production in LiveJournal. Here, I track back the first practices of self-production affected by the semiotic script of indirect narration, a script which within a decade became one of the most widespread techniques of Self in the online world.

As the reconstruction of LiveJournal's thematic profile illustrated, the exploration of the soul (reflected in the group of narratives labeled 'psychological characteristics') became increasingly unpopular in LiveJournal, despite the fact that blogs had evolved from the personal diary. Although consistently present, this topic

was among the least discussed in seven of the eleven years analysed. At the same time, features associated with indirect narration, such as hyperlinks, video-files and reposts, were characterized by increasing frequencies. The number of hyperlinks in the sample of analysed blogs quadrupled over the course of eleven years and the amount of video-files increased six times. Reposts were characterized by a less sharp yet firmly increasing trend. Such paratextual elements could be used by bloggers as additional means of self-production. At the same time, there were more subtle forms of indirect narration, formed within ego-texts themselves, that defined the shift towards a Saturated Self.

In this section of my thesis, I describe two techniques of indirect self-production in LiveJournal. I focus on cases with minimal influence of material actors, that is, the cases where the production of indirect Selves is associated with the influence of a semiotic script rather than with responding to changes in the website's technological capabilities. First, I consider a group of narratives where bloggers adopt the symbolic resources of popular psychoanalysis in order to produce their Selves while avoiding direct ego-narratives. Next, I explore the phenomenon of flashmobs that developed in LiveJournal. I maintain that flashmobs present a first form of text where self-production through relation to external content successfully competes with autobiographical writing.

The Discourse of Psychoanalysis as a Means of Indirect Self-Writing

In *A History of Psychology: from Antiquity to Modernity*, Thomas Hardy Leahey suggests that individuals' understanding of themselves is predetermined by

the theoretical framework of popular psychology.²⁴³ Kenneth Gergen, in his article ‘Social Psychology as History’, also outlines that when it comes to interpretations of mental phenomena, individuals often demonstrate a very high level of competence in associating their experiences with cases described in psychological literature.²⁴⁴ Among various psychological theories, psychoanalysis – in its popular version – is particularly well-known and is often looked to as a source of models that can be used to make sense of one’s life. Psychoanalysis suggests that actions and feelings – including slips of the tongue, mishearings and misreadings – function as either symbols of or reactions to deeper, subconscious, phenomena. The primary subconscious matter can be revealed through the production and decryption of free associations. This idea creates limitless potential for conceptualizing life material as metaphor.

The psychoanalytical interpretation of these phenomena is described by Sigmund Freud in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. Freud suggests that everyday ‘faulty actions’ (sometimes called ‘parapraxes’) result from the failure of conscious control and therefore unveil the repressed subconscious desires of an individual. The reconstruction of the chain of associations allows the analyst to explain the origin of the mistake and to ascribe meaning to absurd utterances by detecting the subconscious impulses emerging in them.²⁴⁵ In popular discourse, the ‘Freudian slip’ is often interpreted as unintentional revealing of hidden truth.

In LiveJournal, cases of the slips of the tongue, mishearings and misreadings are occasionally registered by bloggers. It would be naïve to presume

²⁴³ Thomas Hardy Leahey, *Istoriia sovremennoi psikhologii*, trans. by Piter Publishing House (Saint Petersburg: Piter, 2003), p. 393.

²⁴⁴ Kenneth Gergen, ‘Social Psychology as History’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 26.2 (1973), 309-20.

²⁴⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1914), pp. 71-131.

ерфе ршпрдн-увгсфеув идщппуку фку тще фцфку ща еру сшььщт гтвукыефтвштп ща Freudian slips. Conversely, bearing in mind the psychoanalytical interpretation of faulty actions, they select particular parapraxes in order to narrate their states and attitudes metaphorically. In such a way, they manage to avoid direct ego-narrative and still produce certain Selves.

My informants Tatiana and Inna repeatedly register their parapraxes in their journals. Inna refers to her misprints, slips of the pen, mishearings and, most often, misreadings eighteen times in total. Tatiana mentions them less often, with five such cases identified in her texts. The bloggers present these utterances as simply amusing. Yet, they cannot be treated as real accidental slips, as once they had occurred, they were selected and deliberately recorded. Their recurrent inclusion in biographical texts signals that they have particular informative or structural functions.

The real slips of the tongue recorded during the interviews with the bloggers, do not demonstrate much potential for intriguing interpretations. They simply point at interviewees' search for the most accurate word (девочка/дочка, я надеюсь/я думаю, психиатрический/психологический, регулярно/иногда).²⁴⁶ By contrast, the parapraxes reflected in their journals allow associations to be created. For instance, Inna's misreadings repeatedly allege a certain attitude to women in general and to herself as a woman. By replacing 'homeless animals' with 'homeless women' ('запрещается кормить бродячих женщин'²⁴⁷), she hints at women's being deserving of sympathy and at her own restlessness. By mentioning 'ashtrays' instead of 'women writers' ('прочитала "поздравляю всех пепельниц", а не

²⁴⁶ Inna. Interview 2, p. 5; Tatiana. Interview 3, p. 16; Inna. Interview 1, p. 9; Inna. Interview 2, p. 7.

²⁴⁷ Inna. Open, 07/03/07.

“писательниц”²⁴⁸), she channels a message about her assuming someone’s dismissive attitude towards women writers. Mishearing ‘amazing women’ instead of (presumably) pregnant ones (‘уступайте места инвалидам, пассажирам с детьми, удивительным женщинам’) again channels the idea of women needing care and attention, and the recurrent misreading ‘unrealizable bouquets’ instead of ‘unusual/extraordinary bouquets’ (‘Всякий раз, проходя мимо “мастерской необычных букетов”, читаю “мастерская несбыточных букетов”²⁴⁹) suggest her frustration with a lack of signs of attention.

Another recurrent theme evident in Inna’s parapraxes is her cultural and intellectual status. Calling a dog ‘Pinochet’ instead of ‘Pekinese’²⁵⁰ points at her thinking about political issues. Similarly, reading first ‘Holocaust’ and then ‘hospice’ instead of ‘sex’ (‘Читаю “вся правда о Холокосте”. Перечитываю: “вся правда о хосписе”. Оказалось: “вся правда о первом сексе”²⁵¹) suggests her prioritising socio-cultural matters over sexual ones and, presumably, the fear of sexuality. Her mention of reading ‘university humiliation’ instead of ‘university publishing’ (‘прочитала на табличке “Издательство университета” (вместо “издательство”, разумеется)²⁵²) and ‘terrorist department’ instead of ‘theoretical department’²⁵³ expresses her critical attitude to her academic environment. Finally, reading ‘blessed East’ instead of the correct ‘Middle East’ (‘прочитала вместо “Институт Ближнего Востока” – “Институт Блаженства Востока”²⁵⁴) points to her passion for oriental cultures.

²⁴⁸ Inna. Open, 07/03/07.

²⁴⁹ Inna. Open, 19/01/09.

²⁵⁰ Inna. Open, 29/05/06.

²⁵¹ Inna. Semi-closed, 16/10/12.

²⁵² Inna. Open, 22/11/06.

²⁵³ Inna. Open, 22/11/06.

²⁵⁴ Inna. Open, 25/03/11.

Tatiana's misreadings also suggest a critical or mocking attitude towards certain matters. For instance, her reading that LiveJournal comments are 'false' ('LJ Comment читаю как "ЛЖЕКОММЕНТ"'²⁵⁵) implies her questioning the sincerity of her readers. And reading that a 'bourgeois service' instead of 'brokerage service' in an advertisement ('прочитала "буржуйское обслуживание" вместо "брокерское"'²⁵⁶) suggests a disparaging attitude to commercial discourse.

The perception of Freudian slips as revealing a repressed truth is inseparable from their natural context – they are supposed to occur against the will of the speaker. However, the act of recording such slips in a journal entry is clearly not accidental. Hence, bloggers' narrated parapraxes should not be treated as the keys to their hidden emotions, but as tools for creating meaning. The inclusion of bloggers' mishearings and misreadings in their biographical texts is what really converts these 'faulty actions' into Freudian slips, into the utterances requiring interpretations. As a result, the artistic interlacement of an intimate writing style with discursive resources taken from psychoanalysis contributes to a careful management of readers' impressions. By giving her readers material that invites obvious interpretations, Inna manages to narrate herself as feminist, intellectually superior, and a politically and culturally aware woman. Tatiana also employs the construction of parapraxes to present herself as critical of certain phenomena. However, Tatiana's application of the psychoanalytical scenario is not limited to the construction of parapraxes. She also uses it in more elaborate fashion by adopting the model of transference, defined in psychoanalysis as the redirection of feelings from one person (particularly, one of

²⁵⁵ Tatiana. Open, 27/06/06.

²⁵⁶ Tatiana. Open, 15/01/07.

the parents) to another.²⁵⁷ This idea opens great potential for creating complex imagery in biographical texts, where the relationship to one subject may be used as a signifier for the relationship to another.

One such case is presented by Tatiana's stories from 2008 about the death of her cat. I analyse the content of these stories in detail in the second chapter of this thesis, where I discuss the impact of the audiences associated with different privacy regimes upon the production of Self. In this section, I consider the same stories from a different angle, analyzing how the symbolic resources of psychoanalytical discourse allow the blogger to express a repressed painful experience of a type that cannot be directly described in her LiveJournal.

From Tatiana's open journal, her readers learn that her cat Martyn fell out of the window. After the accident, Tatiana uses her network of friends to get in touch with a good vet and to find help with looking after the cat. She gives detailed reports on the cat's condition, such as the temperature of his nose and ears, the traces of blood in his urine, and her actions, describing the difficulties with giving him injections and pills.²⁵⁸ Tatiana's emotional experience of her cat's illness and, later death are expressed in her semi-closed journal, where along with general distress she mentions a feeling of guilt.²⁵⁹ In this journal the tragedy with the cat is also intensified by numerous other problems – financial, bureaucratic and health related.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 vols, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: Hogarth press, 1953–1974), vol. 7, p. 115, <<http://icpla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Fragment-of-an-Analysis-of-a-Case-of-Hysteria.pdf>> [accessed 6 April 2018].

²⁵⁸ Tatiana. Open, 03/04/08; comment to 03/04/08; comment to 03/04/08.

²⁵⁹ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 07/04/08.

²⁶⁰ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 07/04/08.

Even those entries from the same period that do not address the topic of her cat's death still contain numerous indirect signs of distress. From 11 February 2008 to 7 March 2008, Tatiana made no entries in any of her journals, while her average rate for the rest of 2008 (excluding February and March) was 12.7 posts per month. She made 5 entries in her open journal in March, with none of them being biographical; her semi-closed journal contains no entries for March. In April, Tatiana made 11 records in her open journal. 5 of them are emotionally neutral, while other 6 (including one quotation of a song's lyrics) depict the narrator's depression. There are four records in Tatiana's semi-open journal (including one with Tatiana's poem) in April and one in May, all depicting a state of loneliness and depression:

Неужели есть люди, у которых не бывает невыносимой и непонятной хандры, вплоть до того, чтобы засыпать и просыпаться с головной болью, с болью в животе, с нежеланием жить, есть, работать, видеть кого бы то ни было, разговаривать и улыбаться.²⁶¹

Солнечный день, и эти девочки красивые, молодые, танцуют на площадке у озера. И так все это своевременно и соразмерно. А я в каменной тени сквера, где каждая лавочка будто вдавлена в плиты, и поэтому тебя не видно ниоткуда. Я никогда не буду там, у них, под солнцем, танцевать.²⁶²

The open journal entry from 29 April 2008 also contains a message to Tatiana's friends, stating that this year she is not going to celebrate her birthday. Tatiana's closed journal remains empty from 11 February 2008 to 23 April 2008. Overall, in this period of time Tatiana portrays herself as helpless and devastated. On the surface of the journals, it is only the death of the cat and Tatiana's health issues

²⁶¹ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 16/04/08.

²⁶² Tatiana. Open, 03/05/08.

that can be associated with her depression. But in light of Tatiana's interview, another interpretation of the mourning over the cat can be suggested.

In Tatiana's interview, the story about the death of the cat is, in fact, inserted into the story of the death of Tatiana's father. When holidaying in Moscow, Tatiana receives a message that her father has committed suicide:

Я была в гостях у Ирки и позвонила моя тетя и сказала, что мой отец вышел из окна. И погиб, вот.²⁶³

Tatiana goes to the funeral and then comes back to her place to face another loss:

Короче, это случилось, я поехала обратно, вернулась в Приозерск. Почти очень там скоро через какое-то время у нас выпал из окна с Марией кот.²⁶⁴

As one might infer from the interview, Tatiana's father did in fact jump from the roof of the building. But when introducing this story, she chooses to use the expression 'to go out of the window' ('выйти из окна'). This lexical choice creates a parallel between the two deaths ('мой отец вышел из окна'²⁶⁵ and 'кот вышел в открытое окно на подоконник [...] и спрыгнул вниз'²⁶⁶).

Further on, the stories about the loss of the father and the loss of the cat share a resolution:

Мы тяжело это [смерть кота] переживали, много плакали. У меня начался приступ гастритов каких-то, проблемы с желудком, началась какая-то депрессивная весна. Мне было как-то совсем очень тоскливо. Даже как-то не тоскливо, потому что у меня не получалось горевать нормально по отцу. Потому что я тоже как бы была на него обижена за многое. И за этот поступок тоже. Я на него не злилась. То есть у меня как бы ни гнев не проявлялся, ни горе, - ничего из этих стадий переживания горя у меня толком не проявилось.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 14.

²⁶⁴ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 14.

²⁶⁵ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 14.

²⁶⁶ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 15.

²⁶⁷ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 16.

While in the interview Tatiana juxtaposed and intertwined the two stories, in the journals only the story about the cat is narrated. The first mention of the fact of Tatiana's father's death can be found in her journal in May 2012, four years after the loss. In the period of the loss itself (supposedly between February and April 2008) no direct mention of his death or funeral was made in any of the journals, and neither is her grief explicitly registered. Tatiana's readers are provided with direct and indirect symptoms of distress, but not with the context to interpret them fully.

But given the parallelism of the two deaths that Tatiana evokes in the interview, it is legitimate to reinterpret the grief that the death of the cat occasions in the journals as a metaphor for the grief the real Tatiana felt at the loss of her father. Although such symbolism would be uncontroversial if detected in a literary work, narratives in online journals alternate between literary and non-literary forms. Therefore, interpreting the presentation of one event and the exclusion of another as a symbolic manoeuvre requires us to discover the underlying conventions responsible for this narrative choice.

One of these conventions can be found in the tendency of online journals to exclude particularly traumatic episodes, especially if no interpretation for them can be provided. In the corpus of twenty-three journals analysed in this study, only a few mentioned deaths of family members and close friends. Moreover, even these rare texts contained little emotional vocabulary, at least in the open journals that were considered. In his interview, Roman Leibov agreed that the representation of particularly distressing feelings is not habitual for LiveJournal narratives and that this convention is rooted in universal social rules of emotional expression.²⁶⁸ Similarly, the results of the analysis of two and a half million online posts conducted by

²⁶⁸ 'Про сильные эмоции [писать] нельзя, про сильные эмоции там тоже есть запрет. Потому что, ну, по той же причине, по которой на выражение сильных эмоций общество вообще накладывает запрет [...] про положительные можно' (Leibov, p. 312).

Antonios Garas et al. illustrate that when interacting online, individuals tend to follow the emotional codes of the socio-cultural groups they belong to in 'real life'.²⁶⁹ This explains the silencing of such strong emotions as grief and mourning in LiveJournal. Just as in offline communication, their expression online requires specific narrative contexts such as specialized websites and communities. Tatiana is aware of the inadmissibility of public lamentation and touches on the topic of this taboo in a comment following her entry about depression, as well as in her poem:

Горе сюда не пытаюсь поместить, так только горести-
печали, мелкое брюзжание, но и с этим надо
завязывать.²⁷⁰

Потому что слезы на людях
Превращают все в фарс,
В бесконечную комедию, трагедию, в драму
С немymi сценами,
С ролями заднего плана,
С обязательным мертвым смехом,
С музыкальным сопровождением.²⁷¹

Such statements obviously present examples of the public complaints that they are designed to criticize. However, the form of a poem allows the narrator to depersonalize the message, to detach herself from her emotions and to articulate them in an indirect way.

The substitution of the subject is another way of justifying the narrativization of emotions. Consciously or unconsciously, Tatiana inhibits herself from recording emotional distress caused by the death of her father, replacing it with mourning over her cat. Tatiana is certainly aware of the psychoanalytical paradigm. From her interview, we learn that she regularly attends a psychotherapist in order to sort out her repressed feelings. When talking about the death of her father, Tatiana

²⁶⁹ Antonios Garas et al., 'Emotional Persistence in Online Chatting Communities', *Scientific Reports*, 2 (2012), pp. 402-10.

²⁷⁰ Comment to Tatiana. Semi-closed, 16/04/08.

²⁷¹ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 14/04/08.

categorizes her emotional state as divergent from traditional stages of grief.²⁷² In line with the mechanism of interiorization of the ideas of popular psychology described by Kenneth Gergen and Thomas Leahey (discussed above), Tatiana conceptualizes her experiences through the prism of the psychological paradigm. Consequently, she would be unlikely not to notice the similarity of her reactions to the phenomenon of transference. Entries from her journal can thus be read as an example of a sophisticated auto-Freudianism.

As will be discussed in the following chapter of this thesis, the blogger is without doubt deeply affected by the loss of her pet. At the same time, the texts in which her grief is expressed are more complex than they seem when taken out of context. Comparison of Tatiana's different biographical sources reveals that many of the manifestations of her depression are likely to also be linked to the death of her only parent.²⁷³ By transferring these emotions from one subject to another, in a manner exhaustively described in psychological literature, Tatiana manages to narrate her feelings of distress without sharing the kind of biographical material that might be seen as inappropriate for LiveJournal.

LiveJournal Flashmobs and the Referential Self

The practice of diary writing is deeply rooted in humans' desire to resist the transience of life. Capturing the momentary details of the existence and flow of passing psychological states allows diarists to ascribe meaning to their life experiences. The production of any type of ego-monologue, including diary records, is associated with a specific kind of pleasure, the pleasure of validating one's life.

²⁷² 'То есть у меня как бы ни гнев не проявлялся, ни горе, - ничто из этих стадий переживания горя у меня толком не проявилось' (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 16).

²⁷³ As we learn from Tatiana's interview, her mother has passed when Tatiana was very young.

Yet this validation is not possible unless the story of Self is witnessed by the Other.²⁷⁴ Personal diaries therefore have addressees – real, imaginary or transcendental. As the personal diary transforms into a blog with the possibility of managing different real audiences, its potential for validating one's being under the gaze of the Other increases dramatically.

A situation of limitless potential for ego-narration is satirized in Woody Allen's 2012 film *To Rome with Love*, where one of the characters, the Roman clerk Leopoldo Pisanello, becomes the subject of a sudden and inexplicable fame. He is hounded by paparazzi, invited to exclusive social events and interviewed on TV shows. Pisanello's interviews cover miniscule details of his uninteresting everyday life:

'What did you have for breakfast?'
 'Latte and two slices of bread with butter and jam.'
 'What kind of bread?'
 'Two toasts.'
 'Is this correct that you prefer toasted bread?'
 'Yes, I do.'
 'May I ask you why?'
 'I just like them, I prefer toasts.'
 'White or wholegrain?'
 'White.'²⁷⁵

Pisanello's fans learn from his interviews that he likes to sleep on his back, prefers shaving gel to shaving foam and boxers to briefs, and that he has gastritis. Pisanello muses over his spilled coffee, makes weather predictions, and describes which way of scratching his head he finds the most convenient. Every statement made by Pissanello is received with applause and expressions of admiration. Although Pisanello complains about the burden of his fame, when it passes, as suddenly as it had begun, he becomes neurotic and keeps trying to attract the

²⁷⁴ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. by Hazel Barnes (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 252-302.

²⁷⁵ *To Rome with Love*, dir. by Woody Allen (Medusa Film, 2012).

attention of uninterested passersby. Allen's satire of celebrity culture draws a picture of an ideal context for ego-narration. In real life, however, the production of the ego-monologue is subject to strict social conventions.

As outlined above, these conventions have been described by Lidiya Ginzburg in *Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka*. In her analysis of a corpus of transcribed dialogues, Ginzburg shows how individuals follow particular rules of interaction with the sole goal of self-narrating. According to Ginzburg, in order to maximize the opportunities for talking about oneself, it is necessary to provide interlocutors with similar opportunities.²⁷⁶ Analogous conventions apply to any type of self-presentation. In the blogosphere, creating interesting stories about oneself is insufficient to get recognition. Getting a share in self-production requires maintaining the balance between writing and paying attention to the writing of others.

In this section of the thesis, I aim to illustrate how the practice of participating in flashmobs in LiveJournal is used by bloggers for facilitating the negotiation of their shares in self-production and for achieving their self-presentational goals at lower costs.

The term 'flashmob' usually refers to a public performance organized by a group of people for entertainment and socializing. These performances are occasionally used in political and social campaigns, as well as in advertisements. In general though, flashmobs are characterized by the absence of a clearly identifiable purpose, with individuals usually participating in them for pleasure. In Russian LiveJournal, the term flashmob acquired additional meaning. As well as referring to offline performances and online purposeless group actions (i.e. excessive satirical

²⁷⁶ Ginzburg, *Zapiski blokadnogo cheloveka*, p. 635.

commenting on a randomly-chosen post), it started to signify bloggers' participation in a game consisting in circulating and filling out questionnaires.

These questionnaires come in various types. Some ask users to build chains of associations, some encourage them to reflect on certain phenomena, and still others invite them to express certain features of their personalities and to share details of their biographies through references to musical, literary and film works. At the same time, the majority of flashmobs consist in questions that hardly differ from those put to Leopoldo Pisanello. For instance, one of the most popular flashmobs in LiveJournal contains such questions as 'How do you usually brush your hair?', 'What is the last thing that you ate?', 'What was your last purchase?', 'Which objects you can see when sitting at your desk?', and so forth.

As an entertaining shared activity which breaks with the conventional course of actions, LiveJournal flashmobs resemble traditional (performance-based) flashmobs to a certain extent, but they have more in common with the practice of filling confession albums. The confession album is a type of autograph book which contains a list of questions and provides empty spaces for answering them. Confession albums were particularly popular in late nineteenth-century Britain where they were used as instruments for facilitating courtship and networking.²⁷⁷ Although in the early twentieth century the popularity of autograph books decreased, they were still sporadically employed for entertainment and bonding. In Russia, the confession book was known under the name *anketa*. A descendent of the *devichii al'bom*, the *anketa* crystallized as an independent genre after the 1930s.²⁷⁸ Similarly to LiveJournal flashmobs, *ankety* contained lists of questions, the answers to which

²⁷⁷ Samantha Matthews, 'Psychological Crystal Palace?: Late Victorian Confession Albums', *Book History*, 3.1 (2000), 125-54.

²⁷⁸ Sergei Borisov, *Rukopisnyi devichii rasskaz* (Moscow: OGI, 2002), p. 18.

individuals (usually children and adolescents) were supposed to write down in turn. This game simultaneously allowed its participants to gather information about their peers and provided them with the space for self-expression. Naturally, participants' replies were expected to reflect their personalities.

The belief that personality can be assessed by looking at answers to the questionnaires (which often ask respondents to provide associations, rather than inquiring directly about tastes and attitudes) originated from the spread of psychological testing. In *Questionnaire*, Evan Kindley explains that personality tests were initially designed with the purpose of selecting the most suitable candidates for army service and certain jobs.²⁷⁹ Kindley is sceptical about the accuracy of personality testing but emphasizes the unprecedented popular belief in them, noting that in the second half of the twentieth century questionnaires and quizzes claiming to explain to individuals 'who they were' became a widespread form of self-conceptualization and entertainment. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, taking quizzes compulsively with a peculiar mixture of pleasure and anxiety became one of the most popular leisure activities online. Kindley associates the popularization of online questionnaires with the transformation of the labour culture and the appearance of what he calls a generation of 'bored office workers' who need quick entertaining activities for procrastinating. Although Kindley's main interest concerns questionnaires' function as sources of pleasure, he does not delve into the question of the nature of this pleasure. He suggests that individuals' love of answering questions about themselves results from the carefully engineered virtual environments of entertainment websites. However, the general existential thirst for

²⁷⁹ Evan Kindley, *Questionnaire* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2016). Kobo ebook.

ego-narration, which online quizzes are tailored to satisfy, is not mentioned in Kindley's book.

In Russia, online quizzes first appeared in the form of LiveJournal flashmobs, which quickly became recognized as an entertaining activity contributing to bloggers' socialization and bonding. During the same time period, market researchers discovered that quizzes could be used as unprecedentedly effective tools for gathering information about target demographics, getting potential customers' contact details, and advertising products.²⁸⁰ During the first decade of the twenty-first century, this method became increasingly popular among commercial researchers, as well as political and advertisement campaigners, which resulted in an increasing proportion of tests and quizzes being authored and spread on social networking websites by paid-content users. LiveJournal flashmobs, in contrast, did not require any demographic information or contact details to be shared. They were mostly authored by bloggers themselves for the sake of entertainment and pleasure.

At the same time, for those bloggers who positioned themselves among the cultural and intellectual elite, participating in them was associated with a peculiar embarrassment. When taking part in flashmobs, the majority of bloggers considered in this study apologized for this 'foolish' activity. Yet only a few resisted the temptation. In the corpus of twenty-three open journals, twenty contained flashmobs. Presumably, this number would be even higher if the semi-closed journals were considered.

Just like psychological tests, flashmobs owed their popularity to the belief in the possibility of an instant inspection of individuals' personalities through scanning their replies to the questionnaires. Bloggers made seemingly unimportant choices

²⁸⁰ Anne Holland (publisher), *Proven Tactics in Viral Marketing: Online Games, Quizzes, ECards, Contests & 'Buzz' Building* (Portsmouth: MarketingSherpa, 2003), p. 73.

(such as dog or cat, tea or coffee, laptop or desktop, sunset or sunrise), described the peculiarities of their everyday actions (i.e. swift brushing of the hair, unhurried eating or the pleasure of touching a velvet bag), and registered their preferences for various cultural products. Regardless of the type of questionnaire that bloggers filled in, their answers were supposed to be read as symbols of their inner worlds. In this way, flashmobs allowed bloggers to talk about themselves indirectly, without creating habitual autobiographical narratives.

While some flashmobs presupposed interpreting certain biographical details as proxies for bloggers' personalities, others were spared of any biographical information. Self-narration in these flashmobs was fully referential. They appealed to bloggers' shared cultural backgrounds by asking participants to self-identify through existing models of Self supplied by songs, literary works, films, or computer games. For instance, one of the journals in the sample contained a flashmob where participants were asked to self-identify with literary characters. This flashmob attracted 10 participants, who referred to 18 characters in total. It comes as no surprise that bloggers only referred to positive characters. They also demonstrated a bias towards certain characters, with Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*, Athos from *The Three Musketeers* and Princess Marya from *War in Peace* claimed by two different bloggers each despite almost limitless literary options. 7 of 10 participants associated different characters with different aspects of their personalities and with different periods of their lives. Participants' replies suggested that they expected their audiences to have a good knowledge of literary heritage across genres and epochs. Some replies provided complex references that invited readers to build the image of the narrator by merging various models:

Доблестный рыцарь Айвенго и Снусмумрик из книжек
Туве Янссон в одном лице;

Этакий гибрид королевского убийцы Фитца Чивэла из книг Робин Хобб [...] и Амели/Ассоль [...] и иногда Лито II из цикла про 'Дюну' Фрэнка Херберта.²⁸¹

Self-conceptualization through establishing one's relation to various phenomena (including identification with literary characters) is a common strategy of identity production. In flashmobs, however, this practice was significantly intensified by the design of questionnaires, which not only stimulated the replacement of direct self-presentation with their referential versions, but also made ego-texts technically easier to compose. While creating biographical stories worthy of publication is time-consuming and requires certain literary skills, participation in flashmobs enables the same amount of biographical information to be channelled in a quick and easy way. By providing bloggers with pre-made templates, flashmobs offered a more efficient means of self-narration.

Some flashmobs simplified self-narration to the extent that no effort was required at all, not even the minimal reflection involved in answering the questions. For instance, a flashmob circulating in the community under study in 2011 invited participants to read through a list of thirty statements about various biographical experiences and to cross out those that they had personally encountered. This flashmob had something in common with purity tests²⁸² as some of the statements from the list invited participants to confess their misdeeds (betraying someone, lying about loving someone, stealing something, practising prostitution). Other statements referred to certain non-trivial life experiences (riding a horse without assistance,

²⁸¹ Quotes from Comments to Blogger 10. Open, 05/08/07.

²⁸² Purity tests invite participants to answer questions about their experiences of involvement in various illegitimate or socially condemned practices. The results of these tests represent participants' supposed degrees of innocence on a percentage scale. See Joselin Linder, *The Purity Test: Your Filth and Depravity Cheerfully Exposed by 2,000 Nosy Questions* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2009).

walking in the forest at night, being arrested, saving another person's life) and situations of emotional peaks (crying with happiness, wanting to die, loving another person more than anything in the world). Resulting posts therefore contained various combinations of lived experiences reflecting individual life stories. Despite a very modest number of statements offered for evaluation (in comparison with the scope of all possible life experiences), this flashmob opened an enormous potential for composing individual stories.

To find out how many different stories could be created through this flashmob, I measured its number of *combinations* (C_n^k), where C refers to combination, n is the number of statements offered to bloggers for evaluation, and k is the number of statements crossed out by a blogger. The number of *combinations* includes the cases when a blogger does not cross out any of the thirty statements, as well as all possible combinations when a blogger crosses out any one, any two, any three (and so on, up to thirty) out of thirty statements.

That is,

$$\binom{30}{k} = C_{30}^0 + C_{30}^1 + C_{30}^2 + C_{30}^3 + \dots + C_{30}^{30}$$

The sum of combinations is calculated according to the following formula:

$$C_n^0 + C_n^1 + C_n^2 + C_n^3 + \dots + C_n^n = 2^n$$

Thus, the sum of all possible combinations for a flashmob with thirty statements,

$\sum_{k=0}^{30} \binom{30}{k}$, is calculated as:

$$\sum_{k=0}^{30} \binom{30}{k} = C_{30}^0 + C_{30}^1 + C_{30}^2 + C_{30}^3 + \dots + C_{30}^{30} = 2^{30} =$$

1,073,741,824

The possibility of creating more than a billion different stories, as offered by this flashmob, allowed its participants to assemble their individual biographies without making any storytelling effort. The posts resulting from this flashmob do not constitute biographical stories in the ordinary sense. They lack most of the fundamental components of storytelling, such as time, hierarchies, imagery, systems of characters, positions, and evaluation. At the same time, they contain factual biographical information concentrated to the maximum. Moreover, due to the nature of the statements offered for evaluation, the resulting posts contain numerous biographical details that otherwise would be unlikely to be shared. In these posts, every statement crossed out by a blogger functions as an intriguing reference to a thrilling story. Spared of all possible literary attributes, this form of self-writing represents the apotheosis of efficiency.

Along with promoting referential self-production and providing templates for biographical stories, flashmobs facilitated ego-narration by removing the need to justify it. The rules of the game ‘obliged’ the participants to provide minuscule details about their lives. In the language game of flashmobs, narrators were routinely constructed as passive and disinterested. A typical framing of a flashmob post in LiveJournal includes statements about its author’s subjection to the will of the others. These statements are often made in an ironic tone:

Сдаюсь! Не могу я уже отбиваццо - нате - ответы на флешмоб;
Спротивляться было бесполезно;
По просьбам трудящихся – мои ответы;
Так и быть, сдаюсь.²⁸³

The very form of the questionnaire contributed to the formation of this discursive model. Forwarding a list of questions to another blogger suggested that one was interested in his or her replies. In fact, asking questions was a matter of

²⁸³ All quotes are taken from journals of the sample.

courtesy, not interest. Those who composed flashmobs selected the questions that they wanted to answer themselves, while forwarding questionnaires to other bloggers was the price that had to be paid for publishing one's own replies. Bloggers' comments on their friends' flashmob posts testify to almost universal lack of interest in the replies of the others. A recurrent type of comment was a request to forward the questionnaire. Actual comments on the replies of another blogger were rare and tended to come from those who invited the blogger to participate in the flashmob in the first place, as in the reaction of Tatiana's readers to her flashmob post containing her replies to five random questions. In this post, Tatiana tells her readers about her experience of a night-time talk with a fellow train traveller, her favourite painters, Raphael, Bryullov, and Van Gogh, and her childhood dream of becoming a cartoonist. She also reveals that her shyness is the weakest side of her character and that she finds the shoulders to be the most beautiful part of the human body. While this post represents a concentration of biographical information, the reaction of Tatiana's friends mostly consists in their initiative to create their own stories:

Friend 1. Плечи, это да. Очень люблю красивые плечи.

Friend 2. Я бы попросила, да ты постесняешься)))

Tatiana. Не постесняюсь [forwards the flashmob].

Friend 3. хочу!

Tatiana. [forwards the flashmob].

Friend 4. И мне.

Tatiana. [forwards the flashmob].

Friend 5. Давай мне тоже)

Tatiana. [forwards the flashmob].

Friend 6. Ну и мне, а чо :) ²⁸⁴

Only the first comment is a reaction to Tatiana's own statement. This comment comes from the blogger who had forwarded Tatiana the five questions and who presumably feels obliged to pay attention to her answers. And even in this case,

²⁸⁴ Comments to Tatiana. Open, 09/03/09.

the space designated for reaction to the statements of her ‘interlocutor’ is used by Tatiana’s friend for channelling information about herself (‘Очень люблю красивые плечи’). Other five friends simply state that they want to be asked questions. The context of a flashmob allows them to be straightforward in displaying this desire. Their direct requests are only smoothed with slight touches of self-irony expressed through smiley symbols.

The rules of the game, consisting in forwarding questionnaires to other bloggers after filling them in secured the transparent and equal distribution of opportunities for ego-narration among the participants. Everyone received the same number of questions or the same task as other participants and was expected to make equal effort to ensure the continuation of the game. Rule-breaking was monitored and criticized. For instance, one of Tatiana’s friends attempted to deviate from the flashmob ‘rule’ that bloggers must create lists of associations for other bloggers in return for the lists that others created about them. He admitted that he was more interested in reading about himself and learning Tatiana’s attitudes to him than in thinking and writing about others. He was denied permission to do so:

- Я продолжать мобчек вряд ли буду, а вот ассоциации было бы интересно узнать.
- Нет, я напишу только если будешь участвовать.²⁸⁵

The same flashmob found in Inna’s journal also testifies to her attempts to police the game, with those who break the rules being publicly shamed:

Ну бывают же халявщики! Я тут в поте лица каждый вечер отвечаю на запросы после своего флэшмобного поста, а некоторые не только не продолжают флэшмоб у себя в журнале, но еще и мусор не выносят на мой вопрос не отвечают!²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Comments to Tatiana. Semi-closed, 23/09/08.

²⁸⁶ Inna. Open, 13/11/08.

In both cases, the violators have attempted to have narratives about themselves produced without providing others with the same opportunity. But the existence of strict rules determining the distribution of the shares of self-production gave other bloggers the power to identify, criticize and prevent this kind of behaviour.

On the whole, flashmobs formalized and simplified the process of self-production. They created a discursive model where one could get a substantial quota for ego-narration by making a minimal effort and paying minimal attention to the stories of others. This was made possible by the replacement of obvious self-narration with a disguised referential version, inviting bloggers to share biographical material that would otherwise be left outside of their stories, providing ready-made models for assembling the stories, and establishing clear and strict rules of information circulation. This type of online self-production became increasingly popular during the first decade of the twenty-first century, becoming a standard model for other online services in addition to LiveJournal. Social networking and dating websites invite their users to display biographical information on their profiles by answering inbuilt questions; entertainment websites, such as BuzzFeed.com, contribute to epidemic participation in online quizzes that make users' results public; question apps, such as Question Diary or FriendO, and internet memes such as '25 Questions About Me' and the like, invite individuals to assemble their Selves according to the guidelines provided. The evolution of online ego-narration has therefore been driven largely by users' striving for efficiency and their desire to produce biographical stories without actually having to tell them.

In *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology*, Jill Rettberg discusses the reinforcement of this type of self-production in the second decade of the twenty-first century. She explains how automated diaries and lifelogging cameras enable the

creation of authorless stories about individuals' lives. Computer products and apps, such as HeyDay, Saga, Chronos, Step, Narrato, Storica, Evertale, Capture All, and Narrative Clip can track users' location, their sleeping, eating, working, exercising and even love-making patterns. They record users' heartbeats and glucose levels. They take photographs every thirty seconds with a small camera clipped to users' clothes, and with the help of the face recognition algorithm, use these photographs to identify users' social circles. Most importantly, these products can analyse the lavish amount of recorded data and supply their users with ready-made stories about their daily lives which can be shared with others or kept private.²⁸⁷ In other words, in the era of these devices, the work of self-interpretation can be outsourced to the machines. Interestingly, most of these products are advertised as tools for facilitating introspection and self-discipline and improving users' life by helping them to correct their life choices. By guiding consumers on their way to a better diet, better sleep, better meditation, better relationships, more efficient work, or more effective control of emotions, these products function as mediators in the creation of what users perceive as their better Selves. Thus, despite the personal diary's dramatic transformation conditioned by the meeting of the discursive model of indirect ego-narration and new technological capabilities, the drive for archiving and self-improvement remain its main vehicles.

²⁸⁷ Jill Walker Rettberg, *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology: How We Use Selfies, Blogs and Wearable Devices to See and Shape Ourselves* (New York: Springer, 2016), pp. 45-79.

Conclusion

In this chapter of the thesis I explored the agency of the semiotic actors in the processes of identity production in LiveJournal. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analysis and the comparison of the data from different years allowed me to define an array of semiotic scripts that had a noticeable influence upon bloggers' practices of self-inscription. Among these were the conventions of the genre of the personal diary, the rhetoric of the intelligentsia identity, various scripts supplied by literature and the model of indirect narration.

In the first section of this chapter, I discussed the narrative composition of a corpus of twenty-three interlinked blogs. The results of the analysis of the corpus revealed that despite the public nature of the texts and LiveJournal discussions' general focus on external matters, blogs had adopted many conventions and functions of the personal diary, such as the striving for self-improvement, reflectiveness, self-discipline, the silencing of themes related to body and sexuality, the merging of topics of different scales, and the preservation of memories. At the same time, the comparison of the frequency of particular topics and styles in texts from different years has testified to LiveJournal's gradual shift away from the semiotic scripts of the personal diary. Some topics highly characteristic of personal diaries were either absent from LiveJournal's narrative canon or demonstrated decreasing trends in the evolution of the website's thematic profile. Among these were soul-searching, reflections on spiritual matters, registrations of romantic experiences and feelings, and records of dreams. My findings also corroborated the idea that the practices of self-inscription characteristic of the community of bloggers were inspired by the rhetoric of the intelligentsia identity. This was reflected in

bloggers' intellectual, moral and political self-positioning, as well as in frequent displays of their linguistic and literary connoisseurship.

The second section of this chapter was devoted to bloggers' adoption of semiotic scripts drawn from literature. Close reading of my informant Pavel's numerous stories about his business trips has illustrated how the 'literaturization' of biographical texts allowed this blogger to narrate two contrasting Selves relating to two ideals that were different but equally important to him. With the use of a range of literary techniques, Pavel managed to establish a clear hierarchical relationship between his two opposite Selves. By contrast, when the same blogger attempted to merge the semiotic scripts of literature and the personal diary in his travel notes, he succeeded neither in establishing a relationship between his two narrated Selves, nor in creating a coherent self-presentation. Another group of stories analysed in this section showed how a famous literary template (the Madeleine moment) was repeatedly used by two of my informants to depict their olfactory experiences at the crossroad of subjective memory and literary work and in this way to narrate themselves as sensitive, reflective, and creative. And the same bloggers' stories about their fathers have been analysed to show how the narrators adopted certain emotional matrices from works of literature in order to interpret complex biographical experiences in their LiveJournal stories.

The third section of this chapter explored the formation of a new type of ego-narrative in LiveJournal. First, I considered the stories by two of my informants, in which they used the interpretative potential of popular psychoanalysis in order to indirectly narrate about themselves. Next, I described the phenomenon of the flashmobs which had become popular in LiveJournal. I suggested that by replacing obvious self-narration with a disguised referential version, providing ready-made

models for assembling stories and establishing clear rules of information circulation, flashmobs contributed to the popularization of indirect self-production which has become one of the main ego-strategies in recent forms of self-writing.

CHAPTER TWO. HUMAN ACTORS AND THE PRODUCTION OF IDENTITY IN LIVEJOURNAL

In the previous chapter of this thesis, I have described the array of the semiotic actors involved in the processes of identity production in LiveJournal. This chapter aims to describe the role of interpersonal connections in the construction of bloggers' multiple Selves. In Actor-Network Theory, the impact of social ties is interpreted as the agency of human actors.²⁸⁸ Human actors produce and channel semiotic scripts and organize material objects included in the networks. The inclusion of particular human actors in a network is, in its turn, subjected to the action of ideas and objects in play.

Actor-Network Theory distinguishes two types of agency that the actors can exert. Intermediaries can deliver the force of other actors, but do not make any alteration to it. Despite their inclusion in the networks, they constitute auxiliary actors. In LiveJournal, this group of actors consists of those individuals who ensure the internet connection or support the functioning of the website. By contrast, mediators exert transformative actions resulting in a relationship of mutual impact between the actors. In LiveJournal, mediators include those individuals who form the readership of the blogs, who respond to new entries in the comments and who are involved in the co-production of the narratives. However, the nature of the actors' agency is never fixed. Intermediaries can become mediators at any moment, while mediators can turn into intermediaries.²⁸⁹

In order to apply Actor-Network Theory to the study of self-writing, one clarification to the concept of human actors needs to be made. In biographical texts,

²⁸⁸ It is worth noting that Bruno Latour criticises the use of the word 'social' in its habitual and generalized sense and sets the renegotiation of the term as the goal of his approach. See Latour, p. 4.

²⁸⁹ Latour, pp. 37-42.

human actors influencing the production of the narrator's identity can be divided into those who act 'from the outside' and those who act 'from the inside' of the stories. The first group consists of the individuals who form the audience and whose expectations regulate writers' narrative choices. The second group is specific to biographical narratives and includes the characters of writers' stories. By interpreting the actions of other individuals and by according these individuals particular functions in their storyworlds, writers define their own positions and create the backdrop against which their particular Selves are narrated. The agency of these human actors is partly controlled by the narrators. However, as this chapter aims to illustrate, this partial control does not compromise the actors' transformative power. Once included in the stories, they reorganize the systems of characters and spur alternative interpretations of narrators' life experiences. These two groups of human actors may, of course, intersect, as in cases when bloggers discuss the members of their audiences in their texts.

Another specific feature of the human actors considered in this study is associated with the digital nature of the texts analysed. In the case of the traditional diary, human actors are responsible for delivering the cultural scripts of Self to writers' narratives and for forming the imaginary (or, sometimes, real) audiences whose expectations shape the process of self-inscription. In online journals, human actors can split into different groups (different audiences), requiring the writer to produce different versions of Self. They can also take an active part in the very production of the narrative, as the examples in this chapter will illustrate.

In this chapter, I describe the human actors functioning as mediators in the network of identity production in LiveJournal. I consider different types of human actors characteristic of LiveJournal discourse and account for different effects of

their agency. I start by linking the thematic and stylistic choices of the bloggers with the preferences of their community. As described in the introduction to this thesis, the community analysed in this research largely consists of representatives of intellectual and artistic elites residing in St. Petersburg and Moscow, or living abroad. They introduce and renegotiate the cultural scripts of self-inscription adopted by the informants. In order to reveal the mechanics of this influence, I analyse the commenting practices in the sample of twenty-three blogs, reconstructing the dynamics of commenting rates for each thematic and stylistic feature over the course of the eleven years. I identify those features that have been particularly favoured by the LiveJournal community either over the whole studied period or in certain years and describe how the narratives of the sample changed in response to the expectations of their audiences.

Next, I perform close readings of the texts from the biographical corpora of two of my informants. I have selected these corpora because they contained numerous stories about informants' relationships with their family members and with each other. Drawing on William James's idea that family constitutes a part of the individual's material Self,²⁹⁰ I compare bloggers' stories about their relationships with their family members told in different narrative settings and for different audiences. The results of the comparative micro-analysis of these stories show that particular semiotic scripts are present in LiveJournal reader-oriented stories, while being less evident in the stories told in other narrative contexts. This allows me to suggest that the employment of these scripts by the narrators is associated with LiveJournal's specific audiences. Next, I explore how the production of the narrative can be influenced not only by the expectations of the community, but also by the

²⁹⁰ James, p. 294.

gaze of particular readers. By reconstructing the contexts of narration, I show how one of my informants uses her LiveJournal entries to communicate indirectly with particular friends.

I then proceed by considering human actors that shape the stories ‘from the inside’. Drawing on the ideas of Claude Lévi-Strauss, I approach the storyworlds of the informants as paradigms of inter-related meanings.²⁹¹ I compare stories about particular events and individuals narrated with and without the inclusion of certain characters, and describe the influence of these interior human actors upon the development of the stories and upon narrators’ related self-conceptualizations. Next, I explore how bloggers can enter a dialogue through their posts. I maintain that in these cases the ‘interlocutors’ become human actors for each other’s texts. By applying the positioning theory of Michael Bamberg, and Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré,²⁹² I show how these stories are employed by their authors for negotiating their positions in a complicated social situation. Finally, I describe how identity can be co-produced in LiveJournal narratives. I analyse a case where two bloggers are mutually involved in the production of bisexual identities. I maintain that this strategy is applied by the bloggers in order to position themselves in socio-political discourse.

²⁹¹ Lévi-Strauss, pp. 42-46.

²⁹² Bamberg, pp. 335-42; Davies and Harré, pp. 43-63.

Section One. Human Actors and LiveJournal's Semiotic Spectrum

Scholarly works devoted to the motivation for blogging recognize communication, as well as building and maintaining relationships, as one of the main drives for keeping a journal.²⁹³ This is reflected in bloggers' recurrent appeals to their readers to comment on the entries found in the journals analysed in this study. Bloggers themselves tend to self-identify as members of a specific social group. Users of other social networking websites (such as VKontakte and Odnoklassniki in Russia) do not interpret their affiliations with a social network as attributes of their identities. In contrast, bloggers (regardless of their age, gender, profession, level of income, country of residence, and political views) perceive their membership of the blogging community as a distinguishing social characteristic.²⁹⁴ In this 'social group' the text is the main instrument of building and maintaining relationships. At the same time, when associating themselves with a specific social group, bloggers generally refer to their networks of friends rather than to the whole blogosphere, which largely remains out of the scope of their communicative practices. Eric Gilbert, Tony Bergstrom and Karrie Karahalios compare blogosphere communities to echo chambers, maintaining that the overwhelming majority of those commentators who express an opinion tend to agree with the authors on whose posts they comment. The results of their analysis of more than one thousand hand-coded comments on the posts of top bloggers has revealed that this trend was particularly prominent in lifestyle blogs (which roughly correspond to the journals considered in this study),

²⁹³ Heather Marie McKenzie, 'Why Bother Blogging? Motivations for Adults in the United States to Maintain a Personal Journal Blog' (unpublished master's thesis, North Carolina State University, 2008), p. 133; Nardi et al., *Why We Blog*, pp. 41-46.

²⁹⁴ Nebykov and Efimov, pp. 119-24.

where the ratio of agreement to disagreement was nine to one.²⁹⁵ The results obtained by Gilbert, Bergstrom and Karahalios show that the blogosphere consists of rather enclosed communities of like-minded individuals. A closer look at the practices of commenting in blogs has high potential for investigating how bloggers consolidate into these communities and how the communities develop their narrative norms of self-presentation.

The only detailed study of commenting practices in Russian LiveJournal was conducted by Olessia Koltsova, Sergei Koltcov and Sergei Nikolenko. The results of the machine analyses have revealed that high commenting rates in Russian LiveJournal usually resulted from the popularity of the blogger rather than from the content of the entry.²⁹⁶ However, this analysis did not target any particular speech community and was applied to data relating to a short period of time (first week of April 2013). Moreover, the limitations of machine analysis did not allow for the observation of possible causalities between the reception of the texts by the audiences and the stylistic and paratextual features of the narratives.

In this section of the thesis, I aim to refine existing findings on commenting practices in Russian LiveJournal by considering them in relation not only to the thematic vectors of the posts but also to posts' stylistic, paratextual and communicative specifics. In addition, by comparing the data from the eleven-year period, I aim to describe the impact of feedback received by bloggers upon their subsequent narrative choices. For this purpose, I first calculate yearly commenting rates for each feature identified in the sample of blogs. Then, I generate the lists of

²⁹⁵ Eric Gilbert, Tony Bergstrom, and Karrie Karahalios, 'Blogs are Echo Chambers: Blogs are Echo Chambers', *Proceedings of the 42nd Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (HICSS, 2009), pp. 1-10.

²⁹⁶ Olessia Koltsova, Sergey Koltcov, and Sergey Nikolenko, 'Comment-based Discussion Communities in the Russian LiveJournal and Their Topical Coherence', *Higher School of Economics Research Paper No. WP BRP 33/SOC/2013*, <https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2378312> [accessed 23 June 2017].

features receiving most comments and features receiving no comments, and compare these results with the findings about the same features' frequency rates (as described in the previous chapter of this thesis). Next, I reconstruct the evolution of each feature's commenting rates and again compare the results with my findings about the evolution of their frequency. I conclude by discussing the regularities.

Analysis of the Data

As described in the first chapter of this thesis, at the stage of hand-coding, each of the 21,097 texts of the sample twenty-three interlinked blogs was assigned a number of tags referring to its thematic, stylistic, paratextual and communicative specifics. Every time a feature was recorded, the number of comments on the entry in which the feature was identified was recorded. Two blogs in the sample had 'screened comments', meaning their comments could not be seen by readers. The working sample for this analysis therefore included twenty-one blogs, containing 17,076 entries and 207,474 comments.

The limitations of the coding relate to the impossibility of measuring the degree to which each feature of the text contributed to its commenting rate. For instance, stories about travels often contained photographs. In these cases, the number of comments on the story was recorded in both 'travelling' and 'photographs' categories. Other examples of the coupling of two features included 'music' and 'video file'; 'politics', 'social activism' and 'criticism'; 'health' and 'complaint'; and 'living conditions' and 'direct questions'. In these cases, the high commenting appeal of one feature could contribute to the increase in the recorded commenting rate of another feature. However, attempts to rank the contribution made by each feature are complicated by the fact that LiveJournal articles are heterogeneous entities characterized by the synergic action of their various attributes.

Fortunately, such a coupling was not typical for the majority of the texts analysed. In most cases, the combinations of features did not demonstrate obvious regularities, and I therefore had the opportunity to measure commenting rates for each feature in a variety of contexts and to discover the trends strong enough to resist occasional contextual influence. In addition, the results of the analysis have been filtered in order to refine the findings and minimize the limitations.

In order to compare the reception of different topics and styles by the audiences, first the number of comments associated with each feature was calculated per year per blogger. Next, the results for all blogs were aggregated to reflect average commenting rates for each feature in each year:

$$\text{Rcf}(\text{year}) = (\text{Ncf}_1 + \text{Ncf}_2 + \dots + \text{Ncf}_{21}) / (\text{Nef}_1 + \text{Nef}_2 + \dots + \text{Nef}_{21}), \text{ where}$$

Rcf (year) is the Rate of commenting of the feature in a certain year;

Ncf₁₋₂₁ is the total Number of commentaries made to the entries containing the feature in a certain year in each of the studied blogs; and

Nef₁₋₂₁ is the number of entries containing the feature in each blog.

To identify the most commented-on themes and styles in the sample, I ranked each feature's commenting rates for each year. This analysis aimed to refine the results obtained by Koltsova, Koltcov and Nikolenko by considering commenting rates in their relation to texts' stylistic, paratextual and communicative specifics, as well as to their thematic vectors. The commenting rates for all features (thematic, stylistic, paratextual, and communicative) were therefore joined in one list. Ten features with highest commenting rates for each year were selected (for the ranking, see Appendix 4.2). In addition, a list of features which had no feedback was generated (see Appendix 4.3). The data from the lists of topics receiving most

comments and topics receiving no comments were analysed and the features that demonstrated regularities in their commenting rates were defined.

Once those features with consistent levels of comments and those with no comments had been identified and peculiar deviations had been registered, the dynamics of commenting rates of each feature over the course of the period under study were reconstructed separately in search for meaningful trends (for an example, see Appendix 4.4). The results obtained during the analysis of the rankings and the evolutions of commenting rates have been filtered (a description of the filtering procedure follows in the next subsection). Next, the obtained results were compared to the findings about the frequency of topics and styles described in the previous chapter of this thesis. Cases of correlations between the features' frequency and commenting rates were recorded. All stages of coding and analysis have been saved for future reference.

Filtering and Summarizing the Results

Detailed coding of the data resulted in a list of 88 narrative features. The analysis of the thematic-stylistic profile of the sample described in the previous chapter revealed that some of these features could be found in the majority of blogs, while others appeared sporadically in particular journals. As outlined above, the study by Koltsova, Koltcov and Nikolenko has revealed that in LiveJournal, commenting rates of the posts were associated with the popularity of their authors rather than with their content. In this study, in incidences of frequent features the impact of particular bloggers' popularity upon the results of the analysis was minimized due to the availability of data from various journals. But where less frequent features were concerned, the calculated rate could reflect the popularity of

the blogger in whose text the feature was found, rather than the feature's own commenting appeal. Therefore, the yearly rankings that were generated during the analysis have been filtered, and cases where particular bloggers had an unusually high impact (more than 40 comments per post) have been discarded. Also discarded were results seen as unrepresentative because fewer than four bloggers' journals contained comments on posts with a particular feature. I decided to remove the data from 2003 from the ranking, as in this year only one feature satisfied the set criterion. For the years 2004-2013, 67 of 100 positions had to be discarded and replaced by those satisfying filtering criteria. The final ranking, consisting of the ten features receiving most comments identified in at least four blogs, included 30 features of different types (thematic, stylistic, paratextual and communicative). 13 of 30 features demonstrated a relatively regular presence in the ranking over the course of the studied period. These features included 'direct addresses', 'recollections of childhood' and 'observations', which entered the ranking in 9, 8 and 7 of 10 years respectively; 'mentioning other bloggers' and 'flashmobs' found in the ranking in 6 of 10 years; 'culture', 'LiveJournal' and 'work' that appeared in the ranking in 5 of 10 years; and 'language', 'literary works', 'politics', 'family', and 'travelling' that held top positions in the ranking in 4 of the 10 years studied.

17 out of 30 features entered the top positions only occasionally. 2 features ('reflections' and 'criticism') were found in the ranking in 3 of 10 years. 8 features ('romance', 'announcements', 'tragic tone', 'illness', 'complaints', 'food and drinks', 'image', and 'psychological characteristics') appeared in the ranking in 2 of the 10 years studied. And 7 features ('aromas', 'overview of multiple events', 'shopping', 'animals', 'historical persons', 'quotations', and 'video-files') were included in the

ranking of features receiving most comments on one occasion during the studied period.

Once the ranking of the most commented-on features had been generated, lists of those features attracting zero comments were composed for each year. In the years 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2009, no such features were detected. In other years, several features were associated with an absence of feedback. Among these were 'reflections', 'awkward situations', 'bureaucracy', 'obscene language', 'tragic tone', 'illustration' and 'audio-files'. 3 features appeared in the lists twice: 'religion' in 2008 and 2010, 'psychological characteristics' in 2012 and 2013, and 'self-reposts' in 2011 and 2012.

Comparing the lists of features receiving most comments and those receiving none to the frequency rates described in the previous chapter revealed that 11 features were characterized by both regular occurrence in the texts and high numbers of comments associated with them. These features were 'family', 'direct addresses', 'recollections of childhood', 'mentioning other bloggers', 'culture', 'LiveJournal', 'work', 'language', 'literary works', 'politics', and 'travelling'. At the same time, 19 features demonstrated contrasting results in frequency and commenting rates. 11 features ('dreams', 'living abroad', 'weather', 'leisure', 'living conditions', 'social activism', and 'computers and software', 'humour', 'hyperlinks', 'video-files' and 'photographs') were among most popular topics and styles, but never entered the ranking of those receiving most comments. By contrast, 8 features ('aromas', 'shopping', 'romance', 'historical persons', 'criticism', 'tragic tone', 'illness' and 'announcements') demonstrated low frequency rates, but entered the list of the most-commented-on features at certain points.

Initial results of the analysis of the evolution of commenting rates for each feature revealed 26 cases of relatively consistent trends and 30 cases of significant shifts in the dynamics of commenting rates in the sample. For each case of a shift in the trend, the number of bloggers whose posts hosted the considered feature in the year of the shift was checked and those results that were based on the contribution of fewer than four bloggers were discarded. Among the remaining cases, those that resulted from a large volume of feedback to the posts of a famous blogger (more than 40 comments per post) were discarded as well. 7 of 30 detected cases of shifts satisfied the filtering criteria. In total, 33 qualities could be considered representative of the dynamics of commenting rates in the community under study over the years 2003-2013. These included rising trends ('mentioning other bloggers', 'photographs', 'observations', 'culture' and its sub-topics 'books' and 'film', 'leisure', 'food and drinks', 'work', 'image', 'children', 'criticism', and 'complaints'); decreasing trends ('quotations', 'aphorisms', 'alcohol', 'social activism', 'reposts', 'self-reposts', 'LiveJournal', 'weather', and 'humour'); and trends with significant shifts at particular times ('living conditions', 'television', 'travelling', 'recollections of childhood', 'leisure', 'reflections', 'psychological characteristics', 'literary works', 'video-files', 'direct addresses', 'flashmobs').

The comparative analysis of the features' commenting and frequency trends resulted in 24 observations satisfying the filtering criteria. These observations could be grouped according to the nature of correlation between the two parameters. 4 features were characterized by similarities in the dynamics of frequency and commenting rates. These were 'LiveJournal', 'weather', 'family' and 'hyperlinks'. 13 features demonstrated opposite dynamics. These included 'observations', 'criticism', 'recollections', 'work', 'shopping', 'computers and software', 'social

activism’, ‘literary works’, ‘aphorisms’, ‘complaints’, ‘videos’, ‘reposts’ and ‘flashmobs’. Finally, 7 features had no obvious correlations in overall trends but demonstrated contrasting dynamics in frequency and commenting rates at particular years. Among these were ‘travelling’, ‘animals’, ‘studies’, ‘reflections’, ‘romance’, ‘dreams’, and ‘quotations’ (for visualizations of the examples, see Appendices 4.5-4.7).

Discussion

The analysis of the sample of hand-coded interlinked blogs allowed me to define a group of topics and styles that were actively commented on in the community over the course of the period studied. These included ‘recollections of childhood’, ‘observations’, ‘culture’, ‘LiveJournal’, ‘work’, ‘language’, ‘politics’, ‘family’, ‘travelling’, and ‘literary works’.²⁹⁷ Although 20 of the 41 topics in the blogs under study were associated with everyday experiences (from ‘living conditions’ to ‘food’ to ‘shopping’), only two of them (‘work’ and ‘family’) were among highly discussed themes. As mentioned above, the majority of the bloggers in the sample were creative professionals, thus their posts about work were thematically close to the posts about ‘culture’. Bloggers’ posts about their family members were not always created in order to capture everyday experiences either. As the following section of this chapter will illustrate, stories about families were often used as a means of self-inscription through taking particular discursive positions in the networks of family members.

²⁹⁷ Three more features (‘flashmobs’, ‘mentioning other bloggers’ and ‘direct addresses’) were characterized by high rates of commenting. However, this was due to their communicative appeal, rather than their thematic or stylistic specifics.

The topics consistently discussed in LiveJournal were therefore mostly associated with external matters rather than with bloggers' accounts of their everyday lives. This comes as no surprise since external events are more likely to be interesting to a larger number of readers (unless the blog belongs to a celebrity). In addition, where entries concern external matters, any reader may contribute to the discussion, while in cases of purely biographical experiences commentators are expected to have a closer relationship with the writer. At the same time, it is worth noting that only one third of all topics that reached top positions in the ranking demonstrated consistently high commenting rates. Other topics that took top positions did so unsystematically. This suggests that a large part of the discussion in this segment of LiveJournal was not associated with particular themes, but was dispersed among many topics, which could be highly popular in one year and hardly discussed in another. These findings largely correspond to those of previous studies of commenting practices in Russian LiveJournal.

Contrary to my initial hypothesis, specific stylistic and paratextual features did not contribute to higher commenting rates on the posts. As with topics, the distribution of commenting rates for stylistic and paratextual features was mainly irregular. The majority of the stylistic features reached top positions in the ranking of commenting at some points, but only 'criticism' demonstrated relative regularity by entering the top ten ranking in 3 of 10 years. Communicative features, such as 'direct addresses, 'mentioning other bloggers' and 'flashmobs' had consistently high commenting rates, which followed quite logically from their narrative function.

Overall, the analysis did not reveal any significant patterns that would allow me to suggest that the use of particular styles or the inclusion of particular elements (except for those that directly engaged in a dialogue with readers) was associated

with greater feedback. The discussion in the community was diverse, with shifting points of high interest in relation to both content and form of posts.

My assumption that the topics and styles attracting most comments would be addressed more frequently, given bloggers' desire for feedback, was partly confirmed. The analysis showed that all features characterized by relatively consistent feedback ('recollections of childhood', 'observations', 'culture', 'LiveJournal', 'work', 'language', 'politics', 'family', 'travelling', and 'literary works') could also be found among the most frequent features. Being both most commented-on and most frequent, these features composed the discussion core of the studied sample of blogs between 2003 and 2013. At the same time, reverse dependence (most frequent features becoming most commented-on) was not confirmed. Several features ('dreams', 'living abroad', 'weather', 'leisure', 'living conditions', 'celebrities', 'social activism', 'computers and software', 'humour', 'hyperlinks', and 'photographs') were among the most popular topics and styles at some points of the studied period, but never had high commenting rates. In fact, analysis of the data revealed the opposite tendency – those features that were less frequent often received high numbers of comments. This was confirmed by the results of the analysis of frequency and commenting rates' rankings, as well as by the comparison of frequency and commenting rates' evolutions.

The comparison of the rankings revealed that particularly low-frequency features (such as 'aromas', 'shopping', 'romance', 'historical persons', 'criticism' and 'announcements') received most comments in particular years. The outcomes of the filtering procedure, during which I had to discard more than two thirds of the features (77 of 110) from top positions, point to a similar trend. The fact that more than two thirds of the features that demonstrated particularly high rates of feedback

were those that appeared in the posts of fewer than four bloggers suggests that the attention of the audience was systematically drawn to the features that were not typical of the community's writing. The comparison of the evolutions of frequency and commenting rates also demonstrated that high commenting rates were often associated with less popular topics and styles. Only 4 of the 24 correlations discovered reflected similar dynamics of frequency and commenting rates (that is, the cases when increases and declines in commenting corresponded to increases and declines in frequency). By contrast, in 13 of the 24 identified correlations, the increase in a particular feature's frequency was accompanied by the feature's decrease in commenting rates, and vice versa. In 7 other cases, similar contrasts between frequency and commenting rates were discovered in particular years of the studied period. Overall, the majority of the correlations identified suggested that bloggers' response to topics and styles was higher when these features were less common.

Thus, the results of both threads of the analysis (comparison of frequency and commenting rates' rankings and comparison of frequency and commenting rates' evolutions) suggested that introducing new themes and developing atypical topics were journals' key paths to success with the audiences. The wide diversity of features (88 categories) registered during data coding also underlines bloggers' aspirations for developing their writing spectrum. Similar thoughts were expressed by Roman Leibov when he discussed LiveJournal's thematic scope in his interview.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁸ 'Ты должен о разном писать. Ты должен быть живым человеком, ты должен испытывать по разным поводам живые эмоции, уметь говорить в разных регистрах стилистических. Отчасти, на самом деле, такое вымирание ЖЖ связано с тем, что такие дневники просто сужались до какой-то одной темы. Просто превращались, например, в трансляцию публицистических текстов, или что-нибудь такое' (Leibov, p. 320).

In contrast to my initial assumption, the impact of the audiences upon bloggers' narrative choices mainly consisted in encouraging them to follow the principle of distinctiveness and originality rather than in outlining the canon of conventional topics and styles.

Overall, the analysis of commenting practices in the group of blogs under study confirmed that audience feedback had a significant impact upon bloggers. The most commented-on topics and styles often became the most frequent ones. By contrast, an increase in frequency was often associated with a decrease in discussion. In general, the findings suggested that in order to receive many comments in LiveJournal, a topic or style had to be rare. This conditioned the highly irregular presence of the majority of the features at top positions of the comment ranking. At the same time, several features, mostly associated with external matters rather than with biographical observations, resisted the trend of losing readers' attention with the increase in frequency. These features remained highly discussed in spite of their frequent occurrence in posts over the whole period and were categorized in this study as the discussion core of the studied group. Still, the main semiotic script conveyed by the human actors in the community was related not to particular narrative solutions but to following the principle of innovation and originality. The posts that satisfied this principle had the greatest feedback of the audiences in all eleven years analysed.

Section Two. Audiences as Human Actors

In the previous sections of this thesis, I described the array of semiotic actors characteristic of the ego-writing texts of the community under study. I also outlined that the appearance of particular semiotic actors (such as attention to external matters and following the principle of innovation) was conditioned by the influence of the human actors included in the network of identity production in LiveJournal. In this section, I aim to provide more evidence that bloggers' semiotic choices are regulated by certain human actors, and to reveal the mechanics of this influence. For this purpose, I perform close readings of bloggers' biographical stories and track the shifts in their self-presentations which occur as the audiences of their narratives change. I illustrate in more detail how LiveJournal biographical stories are tailored to satisfy the expectations of certain social circles.

In LiveJournal, the audiences of the posts are regulated by privacy settings. A blogger can choose to make his or her post accessible for any potential reader, for his or her LiveJournal 'friends', for a selection of 'friends', or for him/herself only. The functional differences of these various modes of ego-narration are fairly obvious. As the reconstruction of LiveJournal's thematic profile in the first chapter of this thesis illustrated, an open access regime can satisfy writers' various interactional goals. It provides space for literary experiments, practical communication, information spreading, and expression of writers' political positions and cultural views. A semi-closed regime allows bloggers to narrow down the circle of their readers. Yet the distribution of records among public and semi-closed journals is not necessarily regulated by the intimacy of the text. In fact, despite imitating the conventions of diary writing, these journals do not presuppose the production of truly intimate narratives. Neither is semi-closed mode necessarily used

for conveying certain messages to ‘friends’. Rather, it may function as a refuge from the gaze of particular individuals. The design of LiveJournal does not allow its users to create blacklists of readers. In order to prevent certain persons from accessing posts, bloggers avoid adding them to their lists of friends, thus limiting their access to texts.²⁹⁹ Consequently, open and semi-closed records often employ similar vocabulary, structural organization, and rhetorical strategies. By contrast, the allocation of records to double-locked and private journals is to a certain extent conditioned by the degree of texts’ intimacy. Naturally, these journals contain narratives that bloggers are not willing to share with all their ‘friends’, who often number in the hundreds. These texts convey narrative scripts that differ from the ones found in open and semi-closed journals and provide the space for the production of different Selves.

Previous scholarship on blogging (including the works on Russian LiveJournal) has largely focused on the genre hybridity, artistic production and interactivity of blogs.³⁰⁰ However, the relationship of journals with different access settings produced by one individual has not been investigated, despite being recognized as a particularly interesting research subject.³⁰¹ I aim to fill this gap by comparing stories from the open, semi-open, double-locked and closed online journals of my informants. In addition, I compare these stories to the ones told by them during their biographical interviews. Interviews provide another narrative

²⁹⁹ For instance, starting from 2008 the majority of the entries in Inna’s LiveJournal are semi-closed. In her interview, she explains that by allocating her entries to semi-closed mode she was attempting to escape the gaze of her lover’s wife (Inna. Interview 1, p. 8). Similarly, all the posts in Alina’s journal were semi-closed at the time of data collection in 2014. Alina revealed, in a letter to me, that her posts had previously been open but were moved to the semi-closed regime due to the presence of spiteful persons in LiveJournal.

³⁰⁰ On genre hybridity, see Gorny, p. 81; on artistic production, see Lindemann, 354-72; on interactivity, see Domingo et al., 326-42, and Quiggin, 481-96.

³⁰¹ Mary Garden, ‘Defining Blog: A Fool’s Errand or a Necessary Undertaking’, *Journalism: Theory, Practice, and Criticism*, 13 (2012), 483-99.

context for self-production, giving the narrators the possibility of sharing their life experiences with an attentive and interested listener. Therefore, interviews often provide even more intimate details from bloggers' biographical stories and reflect Selves that they do not produce under the gaze of their LiveJournal audiences. In addition, unlike journal records, which are often synchronized with life experiences, biographical interviews provide the writers with the task of organizing a variety of their past biographical episodes into a coherent life story. This often causes significant reinterpretation of their experiences and attitudes.

The following analysis focuses on a group of narratives by my informant Inna, where she describes her family. Different types of biographical reconstruction allow the blogger to register a complex mental map of her relationships with her significant Others: to crystallize different Selves of her relatives, to isolate various interactional styles, and to register the impact of these factors upon her own identity.

As mentioned above, William James's theory of identity distinguished three types of self-identifications, categorized as spiritual, material and social Selves. According to James, an individual's spiritual Self is related to his or her self-perception from the standpoint of morality, intellectuality and core values. The material Self is represented by the individual's body, possessions, and family, while the social Self is conditioned by his or her relationships with the others. James considered the individual's family to belong to the material – rather than social – Self due to the strong bond between the members of a family. As James put it in *The Principles of Psychology*, 'Our father and mother, our wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone. If they do anything wrong, it is our shame. If they are insulted, our anger flashes forth

as readily as if we stood in their place'.³⁰² According to James, while the spiritual Self is relatively permanent, material and social Selves come in many versions and are mutually dependent. The corpus of Inna's stories about her family illustrates how the blogger's material Self is reshaped as she switches between her different social Selves when telling her stories to different audiences.

When Inna was writing her blog between 2004 and 2009, her family consisted of herself, her mother and her son,³⁰³ and starting from 2010 it also included her partner, his daughter and the members of his family. Inna's family members repeatedly appear in her blog posts. In Inna's stories from open and semi-closed journals, her family members predominantly act according to humorous and amusing scripts. The relationship with them is narrated as tender and close, rooted in understanding, support and light-heartedness. The interaction between the members of the family is narrated as a constant exchange of witty jokes and puns, which indicate both their original and fine-tuned sense of humour and their high intellectual level.

As the reconstruction of LiveJournal's thematic-stylistic profile revealed, humorous narration was highly characteristic of the journals of the community under study. Between 2003 and 2007 humour was one of two most popular stylistic modes among those records that had distinct stylistic features, and after 2007 it became the most frequent narrative style. Skilful usage of language was also highly appreciated in the texts of the community. Debates about grammar and style, as well as literary exercises, were actively employed by bloggers to narrate their personalities as creative and sophisticated. When telling the stories about her family in her open and

³⁰² James, p. 292.

³⁰³ In her interview, Inna also mentions that she has a sister. However, her sister hardly appears in her stories.

semi-closed journals, Inna actively incorporates these two features of LiveJournal discourse into her stories.

In stories about her family, Inna predominantly writes about her mother and son. Inna's mother appears in 22 records of the blogger's open journal. 3 of these records contain childhood memories, while 19 narrate humorous episodes. 13 of 19 humorous records retell puns, slips of the tongue and jokes by Inna's mother. Inna's semi-closed journal contains 45 records about her mother, 39 of which are humorous. 35 of 39 humorous records are again based on her mother's facetious speech expressions. In these records, Inna registers how her mother amusingly comments on mundane events ('Света: - Я разделила суп надвое... Я: - Как Моисей. Мама: - Он не сам, ему бог помог!'), how she incorporates plays on words in her everyday language ('Я: - Где наша чесноковыжималка? Мама: -Сломалась. Я: - Как это она сломалась? Мама: - Она же китайская... Я: - Ну и что? Мама: - М-м... Восток – дело тонкое. Нажал посильнее – и все!'), and how she uses metaphorical language to make ironic or reflective statements ('Захожу в свою комнату, временно оккупированную мамой, а на журнальном столике газета "АиФ", на первой полосе фотка голого ВВП, а сверху - маминым почерком: "Деклар. о принятии реальности"').³⁰⁴

Inna's son Said is another personage characterized by witty and amusing utterances in the blogger's open and semi-closed journals. Entries about her son form the largest group of recurring topics in Inna's open journal and the second largest one in her semi-closed journal (61 and 43 records respectively). The frequency of records about Said gradually decreases over the years in both journals, which is presumably related to his growing up and becoming more independent of his mother. Most often

³⁰⁴ Inna. Open, 22/12/12, 16/10/07, 05/09/07.

the records about Said reflect Inna's admiration for her son's creative use of language. Similarly to the narratives about Inna's mother, in these texts Inna retells how Said communicates with his friends and family ('Я тебя сейчас не очень сильно люблю. У меня плохочувствие. Голод на шоколад. Вот поем шоколадного мороженого и залюблю тебя по-настоящему'³⁰⁵), fantasizes, and reflects on various subjects in a humorous and witty manner:

Саид долго рассказывал про человечков, которые живут у него внутри и время от времени выползают из-под ногтей. Спят они преимущественно у стенок носа. Меня более всего заинтересовали человечки-глупоговорители. Они, по словам Саида, заставляют человека говорить глупости путем смешения и подмены слов. Вот, - говорит Саид, - хочешь ты сказать 'у меня болит живот', а глупоговорители эти слова ловят и подменяют, и ты говоришь 'я какашка'.

Говорю Саиду 'Важно быть добрым, правда?', - Он отвечает: 'Нет, другое важно. Важно быть и тем, и тем, и ни тем, ни тем'. Кажется, я поняла. Но откуда, откуда?³⁰⁶

Stories about Inna's partner and his family occur less frequently in Inna's open and semi-closed journals. Nevertheless, they share a narrative similarity with the stories about Inna's mother and son, with 23 of 28 stories about Inna's partner and his relatives characterized by a humorous tone and word plays.³⁰⁷ A particularly striking example of the humorous reinterpretation of life experiences can be found in Inna's stories about her nephew, a disabled boy suffering from a rare genetic disease which causes dysfunctions in almost all the systems of his body. All 9 stories about Inna's nephew are told in a humorous manner and contain amusing quotations from his speech. In these stories, even the boy's disability is described in a light-hearted and jokey tone:

³⁰⁵ Inna. Open, 29/12/06.

³⁰⁶ Inna. Open, 02/09/07, 13/12/07.

³⁰⁷ For example, 'Я связала крючком платье. Реальное платье! Крючком! Это совершенно гипнотическое занятие. "Петля не может быть последней", - говорит Колин' (Inna. Semi-closed, 21/06/12).

Юхан постепенно теряет зрение и слух [...] Если Юхан не слышит толком, что я говорю, а переспрашивать нет сил или просто надоело, то он несколько секунд молчит, а потом важно отвечает: ‘Да, не правда ли’;

И вот этот юмор Юхана, в его полуавтономно развивающемся сознании:

Я: - А что больше - час или минута?

Юхан: - Кит!³⁰⁸

The second narrative focus in Inna’s stories about her family is their closeness and the mutual pleasure of interacting with each other. This is particularly evident in Inna’s stories about her son. The storyworld of Inna’s relationship with Said is a space of neverending games,³⁰⁹ poetry³¹⁰ and painting exercises,³¹¹ intimate³¹² and philosophical³¹³ talks, where Inna is deeply involved with her son’s

³⁰⁸ Inna. Semi-open, 30/05/12, 09/12/11.

³⁰⁹ For example, ‘В половине пятого меня вытащили из-за компа и отправили гулять с Яном и Саидом. Сначала мы катались с горки на подносе, потом стали играть в снежки, но вскоре я поняла, что надо искать менее травмоопасное занятие, и мы стали лепить снеговика. Снеговик получился с длинной шеей и крыльями, мы решили, что это будет ангел, полюбовались немного, а потом Ян придумал, что можно кого-нибудь закопать в снег. Закапывать решили Саида, как наименее объемного, он улегся в ямку и стал вопить, что он умер, но скоро воскреснет - "как только ангел задудит на трубе". Мы с Яном завалили его снегом, утрамбовали и стали ждать. Но ангел все не трубил. Потом мы поняли, что трубить ему просто не во что, и я стала искать трубу. Нашла подходящую ветку и стала вставлять её в рот ангелу, но у него от моих усердий отвалилась голова. Мы ужасно испугались, что Саид теперь не сможет воскреснуть, но мне удалось приделать голову обратно, ангел протрубил три раза и Саид восстал’ (Inna. Open, 06/01/06).

³¹⁰ For example, ‘Саид попросил запостить его новое стихотворение в ЖЖ. В небесах или в небе | летит туман | я неожиданно вздрагиваю | от салютов на празднике | я сижу и смотрю в окно | мне так хочется | взлететь на небо | и посмотреть на облачное | королевство’ (Inna. Open, 06/12/07).

³¹¹ For example, ‘У нас тут вчера вернисаж был. В рамках отдельно взятой квартиры. Текст приглашения гласил: “Дорогие жители города! Приглашаем вас на выставку “Пейзажи Африки”! Художник и кассир – Саид Новокленов Павлович”. Лауреат премии “Вязаная пчела” ознакомил публику с рядом работ, среди которых были особо отмечены следующие: “Когда люди не знали верблюда”, “Первое слово первого человека” (и слово было "МОЛОКО"), "Портрет Че Гевары" (внятных объяснений относительно связи между личностью кубинского революционера и природой Африки публика так и не дождалась), а также загадочное полотно “Доктор Смит. Рецепты”” (Inna. Open, 03/01/08).

³¹² For example, ‘Саид, в порыве нежности меня обнимая: - Как все-таки хорошо, что ты у меня есть! - Через пару секунд, подумав: - Хотя вообще-то, если б тебя у меня не было, то и меня бы у меня не было’ (Inna. Semi-closed, 28/01/11).

³¹³ For example, ‘Я все обдумал про бесконечность и про безначальность. Я думаю, что время идет по кругу, а мы не замечаем и думаем, что по прямой, поэтому и не можем понять, как может быть бесконечность” (Inna. Semi-closed, 15/12/10); ‘Диалектика души по Саиду - Когда человек злится, его душа улетает на небо. Потому что душа всегда добрая, не бывает

interests³¹⁴ and relationships,³¹⁵ and can always implicitly provide him with wise and encouraging advice.³¹⁶ On the whole, as the examples demonstrate, in Inna's public and semi-public journals the interaction between the members of her family consists in word-plays, humorous commentaries and puns. These are vividly represented in the blogger's own writing style and in her re-tellings of the discourse of her mother, son, partner and nephew. These language exercises transform the exchange of information into a pleasurable creative activity (labeled 'verbal creativity' by Inna), and hence are both the means and the purpose of communication. This style of interaction is recognized by Inna as an attribute of her family members' identities. When talking about her son in her interview, Inna interprets their idiosyncratic language as the base for bonding:

Мне кажется, что наша главная точка соприкосновения связана с креативностью. Мы очень часто находим друг друга в совместном каком-то словесном, какой-то совместной вербальной деятельности. То есть наши разговоры, наши шутки, наши шуточные перепалки, да? Наше поддразнивание друг друга, наши совместные рассуждения. Меня всегда восхищала словесная креативность Саида. С одной стороны, меня восхищает узнавание мною себя в нем, ощущение нашей похожести.

злой души. А на небе Бог. Когда человек злится, у него души нет. А потом, когда перезлишься, душа возвращается' (Inna. Open, 23/02/07).

³¹⁴ For example, 'Саид третий день подряд непрерывно слушает диск белорусской фолк-группы OSIMIRA, просто удивительно: когда у домашних лопается терпение, надевает наушники и в пятнадцатый раз слушает пластинку в одиночестве. До сих пор его так цеплял, кажется, только сборник шведских детских песенок, Том Уэйтс, одна песня Лале и "Роксет". Фолк в этом списке прежде не фигурировал' (Inna. Open, 15/06/06).

³¹⁵ For example, 'Саид проснулся утром и произнес: "Ида и Мелани вчера опять меня доставали, мне это надоело." Прямо беда-беда-огорчение, эти Ида и Мелани [...] Во-первых, они продолжают вредничать по мелочи, а во-вторых, и это серьезнее, прицепились к Саидиной нешведскости, акценту [...] Мы твердим Саиду, чтобы он после каждого такого случая рассказывал учительнице. Он старается, но не всегда успевает, не всегда удобно и проч. Сегодня я написала письмо учительнице и попросила нас принять и поговорить. Очень надеемся, что все это не превратится в систематическую травлю. Но у меня от беспокойства прямо сжимается все внутри. В среду Саид попросил забрать его посреди дня, сославшись на тошноту. У нас было сильное подозрение, что он таким образом просто сбежал. Об этом я, конечно, тоже написала учительнице. В общем, такой вот ох' (Inna. Semi-closed, 07/09/12).

³¹⁶ For example, 'Саид: "Даже не знаю, кем мне стать - художником или поэтом". Я стала объяснять, что можно и тем, и другим, как его вторая бабушка, да еще и музыкантом в придачу' (Inna. Open, 20/02/07).

И с другой стороны, ощущение, что он, тем не менее, идет каким-то другим путем.³¹⁷

The adoption of the narrative scripts of humour and ‘linguistic creativity’ allows Inna to picture her relatives and herself as deep-thinking and cheerful people with a great sense of humour. In addition, the frequency and the admiration with which Inna reproduces the discourse of her mother, as well as the abundance of idyllic entries about her son, build an image of particularly close and loving cross-generational family relationships in the family. In this context, sporadic registrations of anger and frustration related to Inna’s experience of motherhood, as well as rare indications of the distressing emotional states and hardships experienced by her mother, fall out of the plot. Mention of these feelings can be found in 3 of 104 records about Said in Inna’s open and semi-closed journals³¹⁸ and in 3 of 45 stories about Inna’s mother from the blogger’s semi-closed journal, one of which is repeated in the open journal.³¹⁹ Digressions from the generally cheerful tone are also very rare in stories about Inna’s in-laws from these journals, being found in only 2 of 28 narratives.³²⁰ Occasional non-positive and non-humorous narratives about Inna’s

³¹⁷ Inna. Interview 1, p. 39.

³¹⁸ For example, ‘Может быть, и я, сама того не замечая, отношусь к дитяте своему как к матери, отданной мне на растерзание?’ (Inna. Open. 04/07/07); ‘Как отучить этого человека писать в вазы с цветами? Цветы же вянут. Сегодня рассвирепела, конечно, всыпала по первое число (не знаю, правда, что это выражение в точности означает) застежкой-молнией’ (Inna. Open, 23/02/07).

³¹⁹ For example, ‘Злюсь на людей вокруг и злюсь на себя за то, что злюсь: разве они виноваты в том, что их бабушки и дедушки не были "контриками". И в том, что им потом никто не говорил "раз сидели, значит, было за что". И еще в том, что их мамы не бросались, побелев как простыня, на бабок, несущих портрет Сталина на какой-то демонстрации в начале девяностых’; ‘Почему мамины братья выросли такими уродами, а мама такой классной, хоть ей и пришлось столько скотства перетерпеть?’; ‘Мама на какие-то предпоследние деньги купила позарез понадобившуюся мне биографию Цветаевой’ (Inna. Semi-closed, 19/03/12; 17/07/13; 06/10/13); ‘На какой-то майской демонстрации моя мама, чей папа бежал из штрафбата, а финская мама сидела по обвинению в шпионаже в пользу США, она что-то гневное кричала старушкам, которые несли портрет Сталина’ (Inna. Open, 14/09/08).

³²⁰ For example, ‘Дедушку Колина лет двадцать назад избили то ли хорваты - за то, что он слишком много тусовался с сербами, то ли сербы - за то, что слишком много тусовался с хорватами. А когда он вышел из больницы, еще и его собственный окровавленный платок подбросили в почтовый ящик’ (Inna. Double-locked, 22/06/12).

family reflect events and feelings mainly excluded from her LiveJournal autobiography.

However, in Inna's double-locked journal (which only has ten readers) these alternative interpretations of her family start to emerge. In this journal, the humour and imaginative language emphasized in open and semi-closed descriptions of the family's interactions play a noticeably less important role. In half of the entries about Inna's mother from this journal, jokes and puns give way to stylistically neutral conversations. In the stories told to a small selection of close friends, Inna also explores psychological states. She recalls her childhood fears of losing her mother³²¹ and even touches on the taboo topic of her father when retelling her mother's stories.³²²

In the stories about Said in Inna's double-locked journal, humour also plays a less important role. Only half of the entries about Said have a humorous focus, compared to the vast majority in the open and semi-closed modes. And the descriptions of love and trust characteristic of the mother-son relationship narrated in Inna's open and semi-closed journals form a contrast with Inna's complaints about Said ('сын откровенно посылает'³²³) found in 3 of the 13 entries³²⁴ about him in the double-locked regime. Thus, in her different journals Inna follows different models when representing her motherhood.

³²¹ 'Свою маму такой молодой и элегантной видела только на серо-белых фотографиях. А я боялась, что [...] мама по-настоящему станет бабушкой. Эта мысль была очень страшная, потому что бабушки и дедушки - это те, кто в любой момент может умереть' (Inna. Double-locked, 26/10/09).

³²² 'Сегодня мама рассказала, как папа разговаривал со мной-младенцем [...] Он ушел в себя и почти перестал разговаривать с мамой и моей сестрой. Когда приходил домой, быстро молча раздевался, говорит мама, бежал в комнату, где лежала сколько-то-месячная я, брал на руки, гладил и разговаривал, долго. Только со мной' (Inna. Double-locked, 19/04/12).

³²³ Inna. Double-locked, 23/02/06.

³²⁴ The lower number of records about Said in the journal for close friends is due to the smaller size of this source (13,743 words, by contrast to 116,242 words in the open journal, and 63,404 words in the semi-closed one).

Historically, the subject of motherhood has often been excluded from life writing. With the exception of the diaries of wealthy women, most female-authored autobiographical documents were the work of either nuns or women who did not have children.³²⁵ Moreover, the intention of writing truthfully about the experience of motherhood is often overtaken by the desire to be a good mother, which results in a positive portrayal of the writer herself and her children. With the second wave of feminism motherhood did become a more frequent theme in women's biographical texts, and by the end of the twentieth century a body of unapologetic maternal autobiographies had been written. It is worth noting, however, that these texts normally talked about infants, rather than about older children who could censor their mothers' stories.³²⁶ In spite of this recent shift in the representations of motherhood in autobiographies, in the stories from her open and semi-closed journals, Inna largely follows the pattern of portrayal of her relationship with her son positively. She attempts to introduce a more critical and unapologetic perspective on her experience of motherhood only in her double-locked journal.

In her double-locked journal, stories about Inna's partner and in-laws also deviate from the humorous and idyllic pattern. Inna complains to her readers about the difficulties in her relationships with her new relatives ('Итак, Кшестин официально заявила, что ненавидит меня и что я одна из больших проблем в ее

³²⁵ An idiosyncratic genre of 'parent diary' formed on the wave of the child study movement presents an exception to this trend. In Russia, these diaries were often kept by mothers (and sometimes, fathers who were either interested in or professionally associated with the fields of psychology and pedagogy) between the 1880s and 1930s. This genre, however, did not allow for much self-exploration. Intended as sources of 'objective' data for research into early development, parent diaries were written along strict guidelines elaborated by psychologists which resulted in diarists' adoption of standard socially and culturally determined parental roles (See Andy Byford, 'Parent Diaries and the Child Study Movement in Late Imperial and Early Soviet Russia', *The Russian Review*, 72.2 (2013), pp. 212-41).

³²⁶ Karin Voth Harman, 'Motherhood and Life Writing', in *Encyclopedia of Life Writing: Autobiographical and Biographical Forms*, ed. by Margaretta Jolly (London: Routledge, 2013), pp. 617-18.

жизни'³²⁷). As the narrated versions of her family members changes in response to a shift in the audience, Inna's own discursive position is reshaped. In these stories, she starts depicting herself as more vulnerable and seeks readers' compassion and support. One learns from these narratives that Inna enlists the help of four psychotherapists to solve her family issues:

За последние полгода я плакала в четырех психотерапевтических приемных и у одного соцработника. Сначала у индивидуального психотерапевта, к которому попала из-за того, что почти год назад меня снова стали посещать панические атаки. [...]. Потом у 'кризисного' терапевта, которая должна помогать людям справляться с приступами ярости [...]. Потом у семейного терапевта, который работает в паре с индивидуальным терапевтом Кшестин [...]. Потом у парного терапевта, вместе с Колином.³²⁸

The reconstruction of LiveJournal's thematic-stylistic profile in the first chapter of this thesis revealed the gradual disappearance of complaints from the discourse of the studied community. At the same time, comparison of Inna's stories about her family found in her different journals shows that complaints were not erased from her ego-writing in general, but became unconventional for the narratives targeting a large online community, while remaining in use for self-production under the gaze of a different referential group.

Biographical interviews, where Inna again reconstructs her relationships with family members, provide another social context for the narrator and condition further shifts in the semiotic scripts she applies. In the open and semi-open journals, the blogger expects the language of entries and her choice of episodes worth sharing to be taken as a proxy for her wittiness. By contrast, the language game of the interview does not presuppose the construction of humorous, entertaining and

³²⁷ Inna. Double-locked, 18/05/11.

³²⁸ Inna. Double-locked, 06/07/13.

linguistically skilful narratives. In a similar way to the double-locked journals, it prioritizes intimacy and self-exploration. Moreover, as the audience is narrowed down to one attentive listener, the degree of intimacy in these stories becomes even higher. In addition, the stories recounted in interviews adopt different temporal perspectives compared to stories from online journals, which often avoid providing the context of the event. As Inna explains it herself:

Это какая-то сиюминутность записи. Ты рассказываешь что-то, что для тебя важно в данный момент, и объясняешь только то, что необходимо для понимания непосредственно вот конкретного события, вот конкретной рефлексии. Если Юхан, например, говорит что-то смешное, то я буду объяснять только то, что необходимо знать для того, чтобы тебе было смешно. Если это смешно и без знания того, кто такой Юхан, то я не буду разъяснять.³²⁹

The ‘snapshot’ nature of the description is related to the fact that the records are expected to be read soon after their appearance. In this case, the writer does not need to specify the historical context to her readers. On the other hand, in biographical interviews, the narrator may need to reconstruct the context if the listener is to be able to interpret the stories. According to the social psychologists Kenneth and Mary Gergen, the adoption of different temporal perspectives in biographical narratives can condition the nesting of the stories in larger historical and cultural narratives. These switches in perspective can lead to the co-existence of alternative interpretations of episodes and characters in life stories.³³⁰ As the context of Inna’s

³²⁹ Inna. Interview 2, p. 5.

³³⁰ Kenneth and Mary Gergen suggest the following example: ‘A man may view himself as bearing the contemporary standard for a race that has struggled for centuries so that he may live (a progressive narrative) and at the same time see himself as one who was long favored by his parents only to disappoint them with increasing frequency as he grew older (the tragic narrative) and simultaneously see how he managed to rekindle the waning ardor of a woman friend on a given evening (the comedy).’ See Kenneth Gergen and Mary Gergen, ‘Narrative and the Self as Relationship’, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 21 (1988), 17-56 (p. 34).

narrative changes, stories about her family are told from a different perspective which alters the narrated versions of her family and herself.

Stories about Inna's partner and in-laws are almost absent from her interviews. She only touches on the subject three times. In two of these cases she focuses on problems within the relationships.³³¹ In contrast, narratives about her mother and son occur regularly in her interviews. Here, as a result of a higher degree of intimacy and contextualization, Inna's discussion of her son focuses on the challenges of early motherhood in much more detail than in her online journals. And when talking about her mother, instead of telling humorous stories she mainly narrates tragic episodes of her family's past.

The stories of motherhood that Inna relates in her interviews allow us to reconstruct the context in which her sporadic negative portrayals of Said occur. This plot is not as idyllic as the one found in Inna's open and semi-closed journals. In this version of Inna's autobiography, having a baby at the age of eighteen is not without its challenges. First, she discusses her decision to continue her studies and leave Said with his father for most of the time. She proceeds by talking about her divorce and moving in with her mother. Inna acknowledges that between the work commitments of an early-career professional, and the temptations of social life, she found it difficult to devote herself fully to her child. Said is portrayed as detached from Inna, left to be cared for by his grandmother. When representing herself as mother in these stories, Inna tells of her feelings of guilt at her incapability to organize herself and cope emotionally with motherhood.³³² In the interviews, the mother-son relationship

³³¹ 'Спокойными эти отношения нельзя назвать, к сожалению, но семейными можно [...] Все оказалось гораздо сложнее в семейном плане чем казалось сначала' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 27, 32).

³³² 'С первыми годами жизни Саида у меня связано очень много ощущений, ну, как бы вины собственной недостаточности, да? То есть вот это вот ощущение, что я не уделяла достаточно времени, что мне не хватало терпения, мне не хватало усидчивости. [...] Моя

is portrayed as emotionally turbulent.³³³ Inna herself critically rethinks the presentations of her son created in her online journals, explaining that the abundance of positive stories about Said was designed to produce an alternative, compensatory version of her life experiences, a version which would agree with the social expectations of parenthood and would transform the image of Inna-the-mother in the opinion of her reference group.³³⁴

The version of Inna's mother that the blogger narrates in her interviews also differs from the image built in her online journals. As illustrated above, in her open journals, Inna tends to portray her mother as a humorous character. But in the interviews, the entertaining image of Inna's mother is not present at all. Here, the stories about her are nested in larger narratives about historical reality:

Маме конечно было очень-очень тяжело. Я сейчас даже не пытаюсь представить, как ей было тяжело. Как-то было бы слишком мучительно. Вообще, это начало девяностых годов. Это какие-то моменты, чуть ли не там голод. [...] Я ходила в какой-то одежде, которую нам там отдавал кто-то. Мне очень редко покупали новую одежду. Но мама просто очень старалась, выбивалась из сил, чтобы я там прилично выглядела.³³⁵

нетерпеливость, вот это вот моя нематеринская, не знаю, импульсивность, да? Она всегда присутствовала. [...] Я даже иногда чувствую, что, когда я думаю, там, чтобы завести еще детей, да? То я ловлю себя на такой мысли, что, прежде чем это произойдет, надо как-то разобраться вот с этими своими чувствами вины по отношению к Саиду, потому что иначе есть риск какой-то проекции, да? Риск, что я какое-то компенсирование буду производить' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 38).

³³³ 'Отношения у нас очень импульсивные, то есть они колеблются между таким страстными выражениями любви и привязанности и такими склоками, что ли. Вообще, я часто напоминаю себе какую-то собаку, которая играет со своим щенком. Знаете, как собаки со своими щенками играют? Они их треплют и щенкам нравится, а потом кто-нибудь случайно кого-нибудь жвакнет, вот, и начинается скулеж' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 39).

³³⁴ 'Мне кажется, что отчасти в этом есть такое, знаете, немножко компенсаторное поведение, да? То есть мне всегда казалось, что родители, которые очень много рассказывают о своих детях, они, на самом деле, мучаются от ощущения своей недостаточности. Ну, вот я думаю, что у меня что-то такое похожее. То есть такое желание компенсировать в своих глазах, в глазах окружающих свое вот это вот как бы недостаточное родственное, ну, или, как это, недостаточное родительское поведение' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 40).

³³⁵ Inna. Interview 1, p. 12, 18.

The representation of the mother as a victim of historical context can already be found in 3 of 45 entries from the online journals. In the journals however, this representation gets overshadowed by the humorous version of the mother, while in the interviews it is thoroughly elaborated. The introduction of the historical background allows Inna to picture her mother as a strong and courageous woman, who preserves her best personal qualities in the face of social and financial hardship:

У нее какая-то такая житейская мудрость, и чувство юмора, и вот эта какая-то несломляемость, и огромная любознательность, и такая открытость к миру, несмотря на то, что при такой жизни, какая ей досталась, можно было вообще отупеть, залезть, там, в раковину, закрыть там створки и смотреть там телек.³³⁶

Humour and light-heartedness are not completely erased from Inna's representations of her family members in her interviews. She mentions the presence of these features in her family discourse. Hence, this aspect of Inna's material and social Selves is preserved in all three social contexts of narration considered in this study. However, its proportion to other qualities differs as Inna's audiences change. Humour and light-heartedness have particularly high status in the narratives addressed to the LiveJournal community as a whole. In the stories told to a small selection of readers, Inna's self-conceptualization includes both cheerfulness and vulnerability. In Inna's interviews, this shift is even more noticeable.

Intelligence and out-of-the-ordinary thinking are also highly valued by Inna when producing her material and social Selves in all three settings. As mentioned above, in the narratives created for the LiveJournal community, as well as in the stories told to a small selection of friends, she endows the characters of her stories and herself with witty and imaginative language. This feature is recognized by her LiveJournal audience as an attribute of membership of an intellectually elitist socio-

³³⁶ Inna. Interview 1, p. 14.

cultural group. In her interviews, Inna employs a different rhetorical strategy to describe her association with the group. Interview is a genre with its own poetics depending upon the nature of communication, the topic of discussion, target audience, and place and time of the conversation. Unlike the online journals, research interviews do not presuppose peppering the narrative with quotes in order to entertain the listener. In her interviews, Inna places her narrated version of herself and her family in a larger historical context. This allows her to narrate herself as belonging to a family in which moral values and intellectual development are prioritized over financial well-being and transient pleasures. In other words, she reproduces the cultural scenario characteristic of intelligentsia discourse as described in the first chapter of this thesis. Finally, such features as happiness, tenderness, and devotion are also characteristic of Inna's different material and social Selves to a different degree. In the blogger's open and semi-open journals they constitute focal points of her self-conceptualization. As the audience of her stories narrows down to ten readers in her double-locked journal, they partially give way to vulnerability, impulsivity and frustration. In the interviews this trend continues and Inna's social Self additionally includes her self-awareness and the feeling of guilt.

Section Three. Particular Addressees as Human Actors

Another way in which the audiences impact the nature of the narratives consists in the possibility of conveying particular messages to particular readers through the stories. As mentioned above, the crucial function of blogs is communication. Bloggers actively use direct addresses in their records to trigger discussions or to get feedback. However, these addresses can also be indirect; bloggers can shape their stories in a way that allows them to send certain messages to particular members of their audiences. The stories about Tatiana's cat Martyn represent such a case. In the previous chapter of the thesis, I discussed these stories' possible function as a means of redirecting the feelings from one object to another, and maintained that they could be read as an example of a sophisticated auto-Freudianism. In this section, I aim to show that these stories are even more complex. By comparing stories from different journals and reconstructing their contexts of narration, I show that they relate to different Selves produced by Tatiana in line with different semiotic scripts and with different reference groups in mind. I also suggest that stories about Tatiana's cat found in her semi-closed journal are used by the blogger to communicate with two particular members of her audience.

As described in the previous chapter, Tatiana's cat Martyn is one of the recurrent characters in her journals. The narratives about Martyn include descriptions of his behaviour, expressions of attachment to him and his photos. Tatiana's open journal contains 16 records about Martyn and 11 photos of the cat. In her semi-closed and closed journals Martyn is mentioned 5 and 4 times respectively. In the storyworld of Tatiana's journals, Martyn is portrayed as a very close companion,

whose relationship with Tatiana oscillates between conflict and devotion.³³⁷ Tatiana ascribes to her cat human emotions and motivations.³³⁸ When her roommate moves out with the cat, the episode is narrated in terms of divorce, where separation from the cat acquires the status of the separation from a child.³³⁹

In her research on the nature of human relationships with pets, the psychotherapist Sheila Bonas claims that people are naturally anthropomorphic with their pets. This is reflected in language, where in the absence of special terms for human-animal relationship, pets are often categorized as friends or family members. Bonas maintains that the psychological benefits of human-animal relationships can in certain aspects exceed those of human-human relationships.³⁴⁰ A beloved pet can therefore be a part of an individual's material Self, just as a family member can.

According to William James, the loss of a significant Other leads to reshaping of the material Self.³⁴¹ But in case of the loss of a pet, this process is more complicated. Despite general acknowledgment of the importance of the human-animal relationship, the accepted scripts of behaviour associated with the death of an animal do not correspond with the emotional damage that can be caused by the loss.

³³⁷ 'Избежать вот этих мартыновских маневров утренних невозможно, уже пыталась закрывать на ночь от него дверь (тоже непросто, потому что вечером этот оборотень спит у меня на диване, как ангел), просила Марию выгонять его из моей комнаты по утрам и закрывать дверь (это у нее не получается). В общем, кажется, придется мне просто раньше вставать. Ненавижу уroda' (Tatiana. Semi-closed, 19/12/07); 'Итак, как и обещала, сейчас будет много фоток нашего с Ма кота-который-мечтает-стать-мальчиком, нашей горошинки-и-кукурузинки, нашей курочки - встречайте: кот Мааааааа...ррртын!' (Tatiana. Open, 11/09/07).

³³⁸ 'Кот у меня, по всей видимости, симулянт. Сегодня он напугал меня тем, что лежал с открытыми глазами, и не реагировал при этом на свое имя. Выглядел при этом, как мертвый. Поскольку незадолго до этого он получил от меня весомый тумак, я очень испугалась за его здоровье (Tatiana. Semi-closed, 19/08/07); 'Сейчас я ем пельмени (фу), а Мартын сидит рядом, смотрит на них и жмурится. Он всегда так вот медитирует на еду. Ему доставляет удовольствие смотреть, как **другой человек** ест. Это как мамашам приятно поговорить о дитячьих всяких делах, так мне – о кошачьих'(Tatiana. Open, 12/08/07 [emphasis added]).

³³⁹ 'Вчера моя Ма собрала вещи и уехала от меня жить в Губернаторский сад. Она забрала с собой Мартына!!!=((([...] Все напоминает какой-то развод'. (Tatiana. Open, 16/06/06).

³⁴⁰ Sheila Bonas et al., 'Pets in the Network of Family Relationships', in *Companion Animals and Us: Exploring the Relationships Between People and Pets*, ed. by Anthony Podberscek, Elizabeth Paul, and James Serpell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 210.

³⁴¹ James, p. 292.

According to the clinical psychologist Froma Walsh, ‘grief with the loss of a pet is commonly unacknowledged, trivialized, or pathologized, which complicates mourning’.³⁴² The death of Tatiana’s cat is documented in both her open and semi-closed journals. But the rhetorical strategies applied in the stories from these two sources differ.

In her open journal, Tatiana follows the accepted script of behaviour when describing the sickness and the death of her cat. In this journal, her pet does not form a part of her Self. The journal is mainly used for practical communication. Tatiana’s readers learn that Martyn fell out of the window. After the accident, Tatiana uses her network of friends to get in touch with a good vet and to find help with looking after the cat. She does not register her emotions, but gives detailed reports on the cat’s condition and her actions instead:

Лапы-голова целы, но писает с кровью. Нос прохладный,
Уши горячие.

Надо колоть в ногу, ну, то есть, в аналог ягодицы (хотя у котов ягодиц нет), там у Мартына мяса много, но игла все равно длиннее, а врач ее засадил полностью.

Таблеткой был очень недоволен, слюни пускал и переживал [and so on].³⁴³

The only instance when Tatiana mentions the impact of the cat’s sickness and death upon her emotional state functions as a public graveside oration. In this text, Tatiana acknowledges her feelings, expresses her hopes for the cat’s afterlife, and performs the ritual of ‘the last mentioning of his tag’:

Наверное, это еще один урок ответственности и любви. У меня явные пробелы. Кот, который мечтал стать

³⁴² Froma Walsh, ‘Human-Animal Bonds II: the Role of Pets in Family Systems and Family Therapy’, *Family Process*, 48.4 (2009), 381-99 (p. 387).

³⁴³ Tatiana. Open, 03/04/08; comment to 03/04/08; comment to 03/04/08.

мальчиком, надеюсь, теперь им станет. [...] Вот, в последний раз его тег: Мартын.³⁴⁴

But the real space for a grief spared of self-comforting fantasies and rituals is Tatiana's semi-closed journal. Here, the blogger breaks the conventions of talking about the loss of a pet. In the stories from this journal, Tatiana's cat is narrated as her child and, hence, forms a part of her Self:

Какой-то п-ц. Мартыну стало вдруг снова худо - после того, как он будто бы оклемался. Врач говорит, что все нормально при этом. И мы с М. собачимся, как паникующие родители [...] Говорить нормально не можем - всё только на нервах.³⁴⁵

Tatiana's suffering is intensified by numerous other adversities narrated alongside the tragedy of the cat:

На работе полный швах с деньгами, почему-то заработала за март очень мало, хватает на квартиру едва-едва [...]Пятый день спазматические боли в желудке - непонятно отчего [...] Спина постоянно тоже дает о себе знать. Полиса нет. Регистрация висит. Весна. ПМС.³⁴⁶

During the three weeks after the death of the cat, 5 out of 7 records from Tatiana's semi-closed journal depict a condition of depression and illness. Along with registering her general distress when writing about Martyn, Tatiana also mentions the feeling of guilt, which, based on her records, seems to be unfounded:

[Maria] плачет и ничего не ест, и вообще. Я виновата, и от этого все утешения звучат как-то бессмысленно.³⁴⁷

Overall, in the stories about Martyn's sickness and death from her semi-closed journal Tatiana portrays herself as suffering, helpless and guilty.

³⁴⁴ Tatiana. Open, 09/04/08.

³⁴⁵ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 07/04/08.

³⁴⁶ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 07/04/08.

³⁴⁷ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 07/04/08.

The rejection of ‘legitimate’ conceptualizations of the pet’s death, and the consequent invention of an alternative material Self by Tatiana, is partly related to the presence of particular individuals among her readership. Pets often serve as mediators in human interactions. According to the linguist Deborah Tannen, when making an apology, criticizing or complimenting, ‘talking through pets allows speakers to distance themselves figuratively from their own utterances’.³⁴⁸ In a similar way, talking about pets can be used as a way to express attitudes, legitimize emotions and establish one’s position in the narrative. The reconstruction of the context of narration of the stories about Martyn allowed me to reveal the network of relationships that Tatiana was involved in at the moment of writing and to suggest additional interpretations of her stories.

From Tatiana’s interview, we learn that the accident with the cat took place during a party, when Maria (Tatiana’s roommate and the co-owner of the cat) was away. The cat had walked out of the window unnoticed, and Inna, who was among Tatiana’s guests, closed the window. The cat jumped down, injured himself, and died several days later. The accident complicated an already difficult relationship in the social group. Apart from the love triangle between Inna, Tatiana, and their professor, who was also present in the kitchen when the cat jumped from the windowsill,³⁴⁹ the relationship between Inna, Tatiana and Maria was also a source of envy, jealousy, and resentment. When describing the reaction of Maria to the accident, Tatiana diverges from the narrative about the cat in order to explain Maria’s attitude to Inna:

А Мария еще не очень любит Инну, надо сказать. Ну, то есть она ее не то что не очень любила, она ревновала. Ей все время казалось, что Инна такая умная и что я Инну

³⁴⁸ Deborah Tannen, ‘Talking the Dog: Framing Pets as Interactional Resources in Family Discourse’, *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 37 (2004), 399-420 (p. 417).

³⁴⁹ ‘У меня в гостях были Инна и Жуков. Это ее друг, и мой тоже, в которого мы одно время были вместе влюблены драматично, но у нее при этом был роман, а у меня нет’ (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 14).

люблю больше, чем Марию. Плюс ей не нравился Иннин сын Саид, который, там, много безобразничал, когда у нас в гостях. Ему тогда было лет семь, вот. Мария, вообще, как-то не очень любит детей. И людей она как-то не очень любит. В смысле, она как-то не очень социальна, поэтому как-то ей не нравилось все это.³⁵⁰

At the beginning of this story, Tatiana tries to avoid specifying who was responsible for the accident. She first mentions Inna, but then makes the cat the subject of the sentence. She continues by using uncertain subjects, such as ‘we’ and ‘one of the guests’ to tell the story:

Я была поглощена компанией и не заметила, как **Инна**, как бы, как **кот вышел** в открытое окно на подоконник, а потом остался там сидеть. **А мы закрыли окно**, ну **кто-то из гостей закрыл окно**, не увидев там кота.³⁵¹

The insertion of the narrative about the relationship between Maria and Inna allows Tatiana to take a passive position when associating the accident involving the cat with Inna’s actions:

Она выясняла, кто закрыл окно. Я сказала – Инна. И она на Инну несколько лет была очень обижена. Инна об этом даже не знает. Но вот Мария была на нее очень обижена и только недавно стала с ней как-то тепло и нормально общаться. Ну, как я вижу, что она больше не держит зла и ей Инна интересна. И вообще, все нормально.³⁵²

The version of the incident with the cat found in Tatiana’s interview explains the informant’s terrible feeling of guilt for being infatuated with her friend’s boyfriend, instead of taking care of the pet. It also legitimizes Maria’s dislike of Inna. Finally, it complicates Tatiana’s position between her two best friends. Her posts about Martyn’s injury and death and her self-accusations may, consequently, be read as a way of communicating with her two friends. By excluding the details of the

³⁵⁰ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 15.

³⁵¹ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 15 [emphasis added].

³⁵² Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 15.

accident from the stories and by taking full responsibility for the death of the cat, Tatiana indirectly lets Inna know that she does not blame her. At the same time, these self-accusations, coupled with expressions of her deep sorrow, become a means of apologising to Maria. Thus, the production of Self by Tatiana in these stories is regulated not only by the conventional cultural scenarios and expectations of the LiveJournal audience, but by the actual goals of relationship management.

Section Four. The Characters of the Stories as Human Actors

The narrated Self of an individual is shaped not only by his or her relationships with the people to whom the stories are told, but also by the relationships that are constructed within the stories themselves. The selection of characters, the roles allocated to them in the storyworlds, and the narrators' self-positioning within these systems define the images of the stories' protagonists. Unlike in literary works, in autobiographical narratives the production of a particular image of a protagonist requires reworking autobiographical material and reinterpreting real individuals' actions. In this section of the thesis, I continue to look at the stories about bloggers' families, because, as outlined above, family members and relationships with them play a crucial role in the formation of individuals' material Selves. Bloggers' family members are the prototypes of the characters that appear in their autobiographical stories. The following analysis aims to illustrate how the inclusion or exclusion of particular characters from the biographical stories reshape the systems of narrated relationships and in this way alter the narrated versions of the characters including the narrators themselves.

Characters have been the objects of commentary since Aristotle's *Poetics*. Aristotle describes characters as auxiliary elements of tragedy, introduced in order to move the plot – the 'soul' of the tragedy. According to Aristotle, along with being 'good', 'appropriate' and 'true to life', a character should necessarily be 'consistent' or, at least, 'consistently inconsistent'.³⁵³ While Aristotle considered characters to be the bearers of particular qualities, Vladimir Propp in *Morfologiia skazki* offered a point of view on characters as incarnations of seven typical morphological units

³⁵³ Aristotle, *Poetics*, trans. by Kenneth McLeish (New York: Theatre Communication Group, 1999), pp. 20-22.

performing thirty-one possible plot-moving functions.³⁵⁴ Despite their different emphases, both these theories point to the consistency of characters and designate them as agents of a plot. Propp's analysis of the tales' structure was further applied in a vast variety of research on both literary and non-literary texts, proving its efficacy as a method of laying bare the inner logic of diverse and heterogeneous narratives.³⁵⁵

Applying this method to autobiographical data, however, presents certain difficulties. On the one hand, as illustrated in the previous sections of this thesis, autobiographical texts adopt plots and imagery from literature in order to organize and give meaning to real-life material. In fact, the very process of creating a story about one's life is inevitably guided by those narrative conventions that exist in the storytelling tradition of a particular culture. In literate cultures, these conventions are reflected in the heritage of literature. Thus, even in the stories told during the interviews, the invention and reinvention of Self is largely guided by the conventions of literary narration. At the same time, in spite of their proximity to literary texts, autobiographical stories produce different structures of characters. Affected by the order of consistency described by Aristotle, literary texts usually have one set of relationships between characters, such that even their most complex and controversial characters can only have those representations that relate to other personages. In contrast, the structures of autobiographical stories are noticeably more flexible when it comes to readjusting the whole set of characters and reinterpreting life events in response to changing images of particular personages. Despite being affected by the rule of consistency to a certain degree (as the following analysis will

³⁵⁴ Vladimir Propp, *Morfologija skazki* (Moscow: Nauka, 1969), pp. 29-61.

³⁵⁵ For literary texts, see Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (London: Verso; 1987); for non-literary texts, see Arthur Berger, *Narratives in Popular Culture, Media, and Everyday Life* (London: Sage Publications, 1997).

illustrate, bloggers attempt to justify the emergence of opposing versions of characters in their stories), autobiographical narratives created by an individual in various media, such as in different journals and during oral narration, may represent the same events in different ways. Each of these narratives constitutes a multi-faceted reconstruction of one life story. But instead of being synergic, different parts of the autobiographical corpora analysed incarnate different and sometimes contrasting plots and create alternative versions of characters. Therefore, when considering the corpora of biographical reconstructions, allocating their characters to clear-cut and inalterable templates becomes problematic.

A model of analysis more applicable to life writing data can be found in another structuralist theory. In his work *Structural Anthropology*, Claude Lévi-Strauss analyses the construction of meaning associated with various notions of kinship. Lévi-Strauss maintains that these notions do not exist as independent semantic units, but acquire their meanings through inclusion in differential relationships with other terms. For instance, if we compare the families belonging to two different cultures, and in one of these cultures the archetypical image of the son is characterized by emotional distance from his father, we can expect a predictable series of differentiations in the whole structure of kinship. Among these would be the emotional distance between the husband and wife, and the closeness and trust between uncles and nephews, as well as between brothers and sisters.³⁵⁶ Approaching the informants' storyworlds as paradigms of meanings where the alteration of one element alters the meaning of all related elements, allowed me to observe how changing various facets of an autobiographical story can influence its

³⁵⁶ Lévi-Strauss, pp. 42-46.

whole structure of relationships and trigger the appearance of different versions of the characters.

A significant example of the interdependence of characters in different storyworlds is the image of Inna's father and its role in the reinvention of the images of Inna's mother and the blogger herself. As discussed above, different versions of Inna's mother appear in different stories by the blogger. She functions as a humorous character in Inna's open journals, while being pictured as a strong and courageous woman in Inna's double-locked journal and interview stories. This multiplication of versions of the character is conditioned by the shift in the stories' audiences and by nesting the stories in larger narratives. However, as I aim to illustrate, the internal dynamics of the stories can also contribute to the appearance of an additional version of a character.

The introduction of the image of Inna's father in her interview causes the image of her mother to split into two versions: the heroic woman described above, pitted against political and financial instability, and the tragic victim of unbearable family circumstances. In her interview, Inna disclosed that her father had suffered from alcoholism since her earliest childhood, with his disorder affecting the home environment more and more as the years went by.³⁵⁷ During the interview, whenever Inna related an episode involving her father, she presented her mother as an utterly lonely and miserable woman, engaged in humiliating quarrels with her drunken husband, and trapped in her horrifying situation:

Это психический ужас, да? То что ты не можешь
разъехаться, да? Ты не можешь никуда уехать, ты не

³⁵⁷ 'Он не просто пил на протяжении пятнадцати лет, он деградировал. Просто катастрофически. То есть я видела своего папу в таких состояниях, в каких ребенок не должен видеть своих родителей' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 9).

можешь защитить своих детей, да? Не можешь защитить от этого, от этой грязи, от этого ужаса, от всего этого вот.³⁵⁸

Inna's own Self, as narrated in these stories, is also characterized by feelings of fear and helplessness. In the first family scene she describes in the interview, Inna establishes the causal link between her father's behaviour and her own growing anxiety. In Inna's interview stories, her father is not just pictured as a negative character, the antagonist of her mother, but as a source of chaos, a destructive force, rendering normal life impossible. His inevitable presence in the family geography (Inna's parents cannot afford separate accommodation) splits the space of the flat into homely and hostile environments:

Я помню что мы как-то сидим в наших вот этих запертых комнатах [...] это была как бы наша часть квартиры. Потом там длинный коридор и по другую сторону - папина комната.³⁵⁹

When the father sporadically intrudes into the territory of his wife and daughters, he steals and drinks away their scarce food and belongings.³⁶⁰ While the outside world is narrated as the paradise of childhood,³⁶¹ the stories about Inna's home space are full of representations of abnormal daily practices:

³⁵⁸ Inna. Interview 1, p. 12. See also, 'Они как бы не особо ругались сначала при мне. Но холод, наверное, чувствовался. Как папа не разговаривал с мамой. Как им было плохо, каждому по отдельности. Как они были одиноки в этой жизни совместной, которая не была совместной уже' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 10); 'Я как бы выбегаю в прихожую, потому что там какая-то возня и шум. И это папа пьян и он пытается уйти, чтобы, видимо, выпить еще. А мама с сестрой пытаются его силой, физически удержать. Он как бы пытается с ними бороться' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 8-9).

³⁵⁹ Inna. Interview 1, p. 12.

³⁶⁰ 'Папа прикрывает свои деньги, потом еще ворует что-то, берет там у нас что-то, что не успеваем запереть. Съедает продукты, которые, которых и так нет, я не знаю, или пропивает их же, там, я не знаю, крупы всякие' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 12).

³⁶¹ 'У меня появились там подружки, соседская девочка. И вообще началась довольно веселая такая там жизнь. Во дворе были дровяные сараи, которые, вообще, оказались очень крутыми, там были балкончики, в общем, куча всего: дрова и всякие старые вещи. И по всему этому можно было лазать и все это было страшно интересно [...] Там еще были гаражи по которым мы прыгали и рвали штаны себе. Мы играли в бадминтон вечерами летом. Играем в бадминтон вот так вот, следя за воланчиком, а воланчик летает на фоне заката. И вот эти вот закатные облака, ты бьешь по этому воланчику и у тебя все перед глазами прям это закатное небо. Это очень такое сильное переживание' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 7).

Во втором классе, в третьем классе, в пятом классе я прихожу домой, открываю дверь, и вот первое, что я чувствую, это запах. А запах может быть разный. Если папа опять в запой ушел, то значит пахнет соответственно. А может быть пахнет еще более-менее нормально, это значит - папа не в запое. Вот это вот ощущение, что ты принимаешься, да? И образно и буквально принимаешься, к тому что происходит. И никогда не знаешь. И всегда боишься.³⁶²

On the whole, the inclusion of the image of the father reshapes Inna's biographical space. Inna's mother becomes a lonely and miserable woman as opposed to a strong and indomitable survivor. And Inna herself actualizes her past Self as an anxious and timid girl, claiming that that past self-conceptualization has had far-reaching implications for her personality in later life. Yet the father-character in Inna's stories is not consistent either, appearing in different versions in Inna's interview and in her LiveJournal entries.

Inna's open and semi-open journals do not mention her father. However, 1155 of 13,743 words in her journal for close friends are devoted to him, forming 5 entries containing meticulous explorations of Inna's childhood and the revisions of the image of her father triggered by psychotherapy sessions which she attended in 2012:

[Психотерапевт] спросил, любила ли я папу. И этот вопрос был как удар мягкой и непреодолимо тяжелой боксерской перчаткой.³⁶³

Папа любил меня, а я любила папу. Потом он выпил яда и превратился в чудовище. Я стала бояться и ненавидеть папу и забыла, что любила его. Много лет я боялась и ненавидела папу. И жалела, потому что видела, что ему очень, очень плохо. Потом папа умер. Потом прошло еще много лет и я вспомнила, как любила папу. Что вначале

³⁶² Inna. Interview 1, p. 10.

³⁶³ Inna. Double-locked, 06/10/13.

была любовь, а потом только страх, ненависть и жалость.
Но в начале было много, очень много любви.³⁶⁴

These entries describe a tender and caring relationship between Inna and her father in her early childhood³⁶⁵ and suggest a story of the onset of tragic detachment and its consequences, instead of a story of a sick and degrading parent.

A similar image of Inna's father also appears in some of her interview stories. However, allowing this to co-exist with the disturbing scenes of her father's disorder requires narrative resourcefulness. At the moment of narration, Inna's father's role is not crystallized in Inna's life story. He figures as a point of convergence of love and hate, which complicates the task of talking about him. The beginning of the story about Inna's father contains three divergences. Inna exits this troublesome narrative by inserting stories about her career and several childhood memories before finally settling to the task of constructing this contradictory plot. Just as in her double-locked journal, this is achieved by inserting this narrative into the account of her psychotherapy session.³⁶⁶ This narrative frame allows Inna to explain the complexity and inconsistency of her attitudes towards her father and to justify the emergence of positive interpretations of him in a life story where he is routinely represented as the party at fault. To produce this positive version of the father-character, Inna juxtaposes the negative image of him with reminiscences about their faraway past. In this way she succeeds in reinterpreting the story of her father's

³⁶⁴ Inna. Double-locked, 06/10/13, 22/10/13.

³⁶⁵ 'Сегодня мама рассказала, как папа разговаривал со мной-младенцем (...) Он ушел в себя и почти перестал разговаривать с мамой и моей сестрой. Когда приходил домой, быстро молча раздевался, говорит мама, бежал в комнату, где лежала сколько-то-месячная я, брал на руки, гладил и разговаривал, долго. Только со мной' (Inna. Double-locked, 19/04/12).

³⁶⁶ 'Психотерапевт практически, не знаю, третьим или четвертым вопросом задал мне: "А вы своего папу любили?" И я стала у него рыдать' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 9).

disappearance from her life, indicated in the opening of the interview,³⁶⁷ as a story about the loss of her first true love and trust. The plot of the father-daughter relationship is thus rewritten:

На протяжении первых четырех-пяти лет жизни было море совершенно любви и нежности, которое потом было как-то вытеснено, да? Страхом, и ненавистью, и жалостью, и болью. И почему-то мне долгие годы казалось, что это не то, что это не важно. Как будто бы важны только все страдания, связанные с ним, как будто они перевешивают, будто нивелируют, там, не знаю, то, как он меня фотографировал, там, когда я выходила утром [...] и он сидел там, на кухне, перебирал гречку. И я садилась с ним, и мы перебирали гречку. Вот этот кайф. Или как мы с ним что-то еще делали вместе. Как я на работу с ним ходила. Как он мне приносил постоянно какие-то вещи вкусные, где-то раздобывал, хотя тогда очень трудно было достать какие-то необычные продукты. То есть, да, много было такого хорошего.³⁶⁸

Thus, in Inna's stories, the image of her father splits into two versions. In the interview stories her father is narrated as a debased alcoholic torturing his wife and daughters. The construction of such a father-character requires adjusting other characters to the plot: Inna's mother is thus recast as a lonely and weak woman, and Inna herself as a fearful and vulnerable girl. But in Inna's double-locked journal, and in her interview accounts of her psychotherapy sessions, her father is portrayed as a caring and loving parent who falls a victim to a disease. In these stories, Inna shifts the locus of control from her father to an external force (the 'poison'). In Inna's portrayals of herself as the daughter, the descriptions of her anxiety are thus replaced with statements about her feeling of security, the representations of alienation with stories about closeness, and the declarations of hatred with images of love.

³⁶⁷ 'Папа постепенно начинает исчезать. Он начинает исчезать ментально, потому что он начинает пить' (Inna. Interview 1, p. 3).

³⁶⁸ Inna. Interview 1, p. 10.

Another example of the interdependence of characters in bloggers' stories about their families can be found in Tatiana's narratives about her relationship with her father and stepmother. As narrated in her blog, Tatiana's attitudes to her father evolve from detachment in 1998, to love and closeness in 2006 and 2007, to grudge and resentment between 2012 and 2015, and to acceptance in 2016 (a detailed analysis of this evolution follows in the next chapter of the thesis). The stories from Tatiana's open and semi-closed journals from 2006 and 2007,³⁶⁹ represent her father as a close friend and a wise adviser. In these stories Tatiana recognizes her father's importance in various areas of her life, and the relationship with him is narrated in terms of love and trust. But in other sources, instead of a beloved and caring parent, Tatiana describes a repulsive and selfish traitor. In her hand-written diary from 1998,³⁷⁰ Tatiana employs obscene language to describe her father ('Вот они, ценности человека – его жена, которая его чаще обсирает, чем хвалит. Так человек превращается в дерьмо'³⁷¹). In her semi-closed journal from 2012 and 2013, 3 of 5 records about Tatiana's father contain accusations and suggest feelings of animosity towards him:

Поведение отца в отношении меня было настоящим предательством. Неважно, чем я оправдывала его раньше, но это было предательство - предательство и нелюбовь в конечном итоге.³⁷²

Я не понимаю, почему я ни разу не высказала ему претензию за то, что он не защищал меня от явных издевательств мачехи [...] Почему он не пришел ко мне в тот день, когда приехал в город, где в больнице умирала

³⁶⁹ These stories were later relocated by Tatiana to her private journal. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of the thesis.

³⁷⁰ The 1923-word fragment presents 23 dateless records (the year was given by the informant), typed and uploaded by Tatiana to her semi-closed journal.

³⁷¹ Tatiana. Hand-written, p. 2

³⁷² Tatiana. Semi-closed, 01/11/13.

моя мама, а я сидела дома одна.[...] Неужели ему было совсем меня не жаль?³⁷³

This negative image is also introduced in Tatiana's interview, where the first biographical event she mentions is her father's abandonment of the family.³⁷⁴ As the story unfolds, he is not pictured as a caring and supportive parent:

Он как бы тоже перестал для меня быть каким-то там компаньоном быстро, потому что все-таки я на них обоих [father and stepmother] свою обиду выносила уже и там лет в пятнадцать у меня уже не было иллюзий насчет того, что, ну, насчет них обоих. Я уже жила с мыслью о том, когда же я уже наконец закончу школу и смогу от них уехать.³⁷⁵

During the interview, Tatiana told five stories about insults that she suffered from during her childhood, and described feeling a grudge – rather than grief – at the time of her father's death.³⁷⁶

In these negative stories about her father, Tatiana repeatedly establishes the link between his actions and those of his wife (Tatiana's stepmother). The association of the negative image of Tatiana's father with the image of his wife is illustrated in the following table, where the first figure of each cell stands for the total number of the records about Tatiana's father (positive, neutral and negative), the second figure represents the number of negative images of him, and the third figure reflects the number of negative images found in the stories that also feature Tatiana's stepmother:

³⁷³ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 01/11/13.

³⁷⁴ 'И там, значит, было, собственно, семейная такая драма. Папа в 91 году сообщил нам, что любит другую женщину, и ушел от нас. И это была, действительно, такая, шок для всех, особенно для мамы. Она бурно переживала, не стесняясь высказываться про нашего отца все, что она думает. И мы все ее как-то поддерживали. Но мне было 7, моей сестре было 12. Мы все это переживали по-своему, по-разному. Я в более закрытой форме, самой такой, наверное, спокойной внешне. А там же были еще другие политические события, вот так это все переплелось. Все как-то так поплыло' (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 2).

³⁷⁵ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 5.

³⁷⁶ Tatiana. Interview 1, pp. 5, 7, 15.

	Hand-written	Online Open	Online semi-closed	Online Closed	Interview 1, Interview 2
1998	3/3/3				
1999-2005					
2006		2/0/0	2/0/0	2/0/0	
2007		3/0/0			
2008					
2009			3/0/0		
2010					
2011					
2012			3/1/1		
2013			2/2/2		
2014					
2015					9/6/4

As can be inferred from the table, in 10 of 12 stories where Tatiana's father is pictured as a negative character, his image is linked with that of his new spouse. In addition, this connection can be expressed indirectly. For instance, the fragment from Tatiana's hand-written diary is largely built around the theme of the everyday hardships of a young girl living with her evil stepmother. In these stories, Tatiana's father does not appear as an independent character. The recorded insults that young Tatiana has to endure are initiated by her stepmother. Her father's alleged unwillingness to protect his daughter turns him into an antagonist as well. However,

instead of straightforward accusations, Tatiana narrates him as a part of ‘them’ – him and his wife, torturing young Tatiana:

Пришел мастер по стир.машинке. Сейчас скажет, что барабан не вращается, т.к. он сорван, и они поймут, что сорвала я, и меня будут бить.³⁷⁷

Even when the father does not participate directly in the interaction, he is pictured as tacitly involved: the actions of the stepmother are recorded with the use of verbs in plural:

Сижу, занимаюсь. Тихо. Они спят. Вдруг старческая бессонница пробуждает т. Надю: (дословно):
 -Что тебе устроить?!
 - Я разве мешаю?
 - Да, мешаешь! Свинья! –
 Спали, спали, вдруг проснулись – и я мешаю.³⁷⁸

This correlation is also established by Tatiana in her interview. Tatiana says that her perception of her stepmother had been formed long before their actual meeting, through the stories that had been circulated among her family members. In these stories her future stepmother was pictured as a particularly negative character (‘Она очень большая сука, просто кошмарная женщина, вульгарная, злая, увела мужа из семьи от детей’³⁷⁹). After the death of her mother, Tatiana agrees to move into her father’s home, as he claims that he lives alone. But after several months, his wife unexpectedly arrives, and Tatiana has to accept the role of an unloved stepdaughter:

Стали мы жить с мачехой и с папой. И стала происходить, собственно, вот эта вот классическая история про Золушку, где мачеха мучает падчерицу.³⁸⁰

³⁷⁷ Tatiana. Hand-written, p. 1.

³⁷⁸ Tatiana. Hand-written, p. 2.

³⁷⁹ ‘Я выросла в семье, где женщина, к которой ушел мой отец, окутывалась мифом совершенно inferнальным’ (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 4).

³⁸⁰ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 4.

The interview with Tatiana contains multiple stories about absurd accusations and insults suffered during her adolescence: she is punished for leaving a hair-ribbon on the table, for using the wrong piece of toilet paper, and for displaying pictures of her sister and deceased mother.³⁸¹ Just as in Inna's stories, in Tatiana's narratives the home space is split into two territories. But here, it is Tatiana herself whose presence is undesirable but inevitable for her family³⁸² and who is not allowed to enter their territory.³⁸³ Finally, Tatiana narrates the refusal of the right to express her love for her father:

Я налила папе чай, и мне сказано, что это не моя ответственность - наливать папе чай. И мне показывают, что я здесь лишняя, что это она должна наливать папе чай.³⁸⁴

Again, when talking about these experiences, Tatiana tends to use impersonal and indefinite-personal subjects and the passive voice to blur the actors of her utterances ('меня выгнали', 'мне было сказано', 'мне показывают, что', 'на меня накричали'). As a result, her father is only indirectly included in the stories about her miseries. But later in the interview, he is straightforwardly blamed for the betrayal:

Мой папа как-то быстро понял, что лучший способ - это отползти и не вмешиваться, потому что, если он начинал вмешиваться, то начинался еще больший крик и скандал. Он меня как бы фактически немножко так предавал во всех этих мелких стычках.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹ 'Я оставила резинку для волос на парте, которая одновременно являлась еще и столом для обеда, и был скандал из-за этого' (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 7); 'Она устроила скандал по поводу того, что я считаю себя принцессой и не могу попользоваться вот этим корешком' (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 5); "'Сиди у себя, забери свои фотографии отсюда!" - я там поставила, в комнате, фотографии мамы и сестры, - "не надо тут папе ставить фотографии!"' (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 5).

³⁸² Tatiana never uses the word 'family', when talking about her father and step-mother. Instead, she calls them 'эти люди', 'мои родственники' (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 7).

³⁸³ 'Я думала, что можно заходить, там, смотреть телевизор, там, общаться, рассказывать про себя, про свою жизнь. В этот момент меня просто выгнали' (Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 5).

³⁸⁴ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 5.

³⁸⁵ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 6.

Thus, even when Tatiana does not portray her father as the primary actor in her maltreatment, the abundance of stories about her evil stepmother contribute to his image as a traitor. In this way, the introduction of the image of Tatiana's stepmother reorganizes the system of characters in Tatiana's autobiographical stories, renegotiating the positive image of Tatiana's father reflected in her journals from 2006 and 2007. This consequently impacts Tatiana's own self-conceptualizations, since in her accounts of life with her father and stepmother, Tatiana ceases to describe herself as a creative professional accepted in elite intellectual circles and enjoying a bohemian lifestyle, but actualizes a past Self as a humiliated, rejected and defenceless victim of mistreatment.

Section Five. Reciprocity of Human Actors

I have already described in this chapter how the production of the narrative can be regulated by the gaze of particular members of a blogger's audience. However, these cases can have a much more complex structure. The addressees of blog posts can respond to them by posting their own narratives. In this way, bloggers can enter a dialogue with each other, becoming human actors for the production of each other's narratives. In this section of the thesis, I consider one such case of mutual impact. I perform close readings of a series of entries by Inna and Tatiana, constituting a corpus of poems that the bloggers published in their open journals during the time when the friends were involved in a love triangle with their professor. By reconstructing the contexts of the poems, I show that despite their artistic form and public nature, these narratives are produced with the image of a particular reader in mind and function as utterances of a dialogue. This dialogue is in turn used by the bloggers to define their mutually dependent discursive positions.

According to the positioning theory of Bamberg, and Davies and Harré, social interaction is characterized by the correlation of three parameters: the allocation of positions, the illocutionary force (the conventions determining social meaning of actions and utterances) and the storyline. 'Positioning', in this sense, is the distribution of rights and duties, which constitutes an inner localization of the interlocutors, representing their subjectivity during the interaction.³⁸⁶ The following analysis illustrates how the bloggers use the space provided by their journals to crystallize their positions in a narrative characterized by an ambiguous plot.

In their interviews, both Inna and Tatiana described the challenges posed to their relationship by a situation that arose in 2007. Inna had become romantically

³⁸⁶ Bamberg, pp. 335-42; Davies and Harré, pp. 43-63.

involved with a professor from her university and had developed a strong emotional attachment to him.³⁸⁷ Sharing the same tastes, Tatiana has fallen in love with the same man as soon as introduced to him by Inna. Best friends became rivals.³⁸⁸

Although there is little to distinguish the two bloggers' narration of the sequence of events, Inna and Tatiana ascribe quite different meanings to the episode. When talking about this episode in her interview, Inna categorizes it as a period of suffering and anxiety. She recalls being frightened by fantasies that her lover would betray her with her friend and rival.³⁸⁹ By contrast, in Tatiana's interview this episode is described as purely pleasant ('милая, юная, нежная история дружбы и влюбленности'³⁹⁰). When narrating this story, Tatiana laughs five times and repeatedly mentions that being in a love triangle was very funny ('это было очень все смешно') sweet ('это было мило'), romantic ('все было очень романтично'), full of wonderful moments ('такие прекрасные были моменты') and very light-hearted ('это было легко и приятно').³⁹¹ In her stories, Tatiana does not accept the secondary position that she is allocated in Inna's version of events. In Tatiana's story, she is the first to set eyes on this man, and until the resolution of the plot she has an equal chance of forming a relationship with him.³⁹² Tatiana refuses to see herself as responsible for her friend's emotional state, maintaining that her own

³⁸⁷ 'Все это было для меня настолько как-то космически, потому что, ну, как, ну, божество спустилось с небес' (Inna. Interview 2, p. 2).

³⁸⁸ 'Там была такая турбулентность! Ну, м-да, было было тяжело, то есть. Были длительные выяснения отношений, выяснение того, кто на что имеет право и, да, и насколько вообще несправедливо делать то другое и третье и вот', 'Это была такая драма, что она тоже в него влюбилась, это было вообще такой любовный треугольник, Вы себе не представляете' (Inna. Interview 2, p. 1).

³⁸⁹ 'Как-то я сильно страдала, очень прям тогда страдала, как-то прям худо было совсем, для меня это было невероятно мучительно' (Inna. Interview 2, p. 3).

³⁹⁰ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 9.

³⁹¹ Tatiana. Interview 2, pp. 8-9.

³⁹² 'Для меня история с этим человеком, вообще-то говоря, началась еще в конце одиннадцатого класса, потому что это был человек который принимал у меня вступительные экзамены' (Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 8); 'До этого момента было бы еще непонятно, как бы, кому достанется этот чувак' (Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 9).

relations with the professor were blameless ('порядочно у нас все было, невинно') since they were not sexually involved, but met simply for tête-à-têtes ('ходить на озеро купаться, гулять под дождем в грозу на велосипедах').³⁹³ Such an interpretation of the story allows her to find a comfortable position in this triangle. As inferred from the interviews with the bloggers, these events did not break up their friendship.³⁹⁴ After numerous debates the friends were reconciled, a result partly achieved by following each other's blogs and writing their own texts with the friend's gaze in mind.³⁹⁵

As described in the first chapter of this thesis, the inclusion of literary exercises in journal entries was a very common practice in the community under study. Inna and Tatiana were no exception to this, both using their journals as the stage for their poetical self-expression. Inna's open and semi-open blogs contain 81 poems, while Tatiana had 35 poems uploaded to her public and semi-public journals. In Tatiana's closed journal, 9 poems were found, at least 6 of which had originally been published in her open journal. Inna's closed journals do not include poems. The events of the bloggers' complicated romance are not directly reflected in either of their journals, but their published poems can be read as a conversation aiming to negotiate their positions and resolve the conflict.

In August 2007, Tatiana published a poem dealing with her feelings for Inna's partner and her envy of her friend's romantic relationship:

У него эльфийские уши и ночь вместо дня,
Он готовит лучшие в мире суши
Для нее и меня.

³⁹³ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 9.

³⁹⁴ 'Мы ссорились, но не разбегались, выясняли все как-то довольно быстро' (Inna. Interview 2, p. 3).

³⁹⁵ 'Были длительные выяснения отношений, выяснение того, кто на что имеет право' (Inna. Interview 2, p. 1); 'Мы с ней заглушили вдвоем бутылку Йегермейстера на набережной под проливным дождем. Это был вечер какого-то тотального примирения' (Inna. Interview 2, p. 3).

Он говорит ей: хочу, чтобы ты
 Стояла ближе ко мне
 И называла меня на ты.
 А я, как же я, думаю, как же я?
 Как я
 Хочу, чтобы он стоял ближе ко мне и на ты называл меня [...]
 И мы обе знаем, что там нет рая,
 Что рая нет.
 Обе шлем туда смс и отчаянно ждем ответ.³⁹⁶

In her interview, Tatiana confirms that the poem refers to her experience of being in the love triangle. Four days after Tatiana had published her poem, Inna uploaded one of her own, describing her state of fear and anxiety:

Я боюсь под одеяло, где пахнет тоской.
 Я немного боюсь, что жизнь не будет такой,
 Как мы представляли.³⁹⁷

Tatiana quickly replied to her friend in the comments to express her support:

А по-моему, это уже больше, чем мы представляли.
 Под одеялом на самом деле нет грусти и нет печали.
 Все хорошо, и будет лучше. Не бойся жизни.
 У нас будет все и даже больше чем мы заслужили.³⁹⁸

On the same day, Inna replied to Tatiana with another short poem, where she expressed her intention of overcoming her worries and praised the inseparability of their bond. The emerging conflict of interest seemed to be resolved:

Вообще, мой друг, зашибись как прикольно,
 И ничего, что поначалу больно,
 Ведь чего-то мы действительно заслужили.
 И не то, чтобы голову на поле боя сложили,
 [...]
 А погоревали и потужили
 И разразились рифмованным ритмождем.³⁹⁹

However, a few days later, Inna published another poem, in which she re-entered the dialogue with Tatiana's first text on the subject:

А что поделаешь,

³⁹⁶ Tatiana. Open, 09/08/07.

³⁹⁷ Inna. Open, 11/08/07.

³⁹⁸ Tatiana. Comment to Inna. Open, 11/08/07.

³⁹⁹ Inna. Comment to Inna. Open, 11/08/07.

Я неизменно мини-умираю.
И ты, мой друг права: нет рая.
Ни там, ни где-либо еще.⁴⁰⁰

Although in her previous poem Inna had narrated a shift towards a more positive attitude, the new text again referred to her deadly suffering. In addition, it hinted at an ongoing passionate sexual relationship ('little death', or *la petite mort*, being a well-recognized French euphemism for orgasm). In this poem, Inna directly addresses her friend and refers to Tatiana's lines about the absence of paradise in the romance (compare to 'И мы обе знаем, что там нет рая | Что рая нет | Обе шлем туда смс и отчаянно ждем ответ'⁴⁰¹). On the one hand, she expresses agreement with her friend. Yet, by linking the images from the two poems and hinting at her sexual relationship Inna points to her priority position in the love triangle: she who by contrast to Tatiana has experienced repeated deaths can confirm that they are not followed by a paradise.

A week later, Inna returned to this subject, making another attempt to overcome her distress and preserve a warm relationship with her friend. This time, she had created a jocular variation on Veronica Dolina's song *Kogda b my zhili bez zatei*, which paradoxically merged promiscuity and attachment to family values:

Когда б мы жили без затей,
Я завела б себе мужей
Пятнадцать или двадцать.
И каждому по три жены,
Чтобы не чувствовать вины
И знать, что все улажены,
И чтоб не волноваться.⁴⁰²

This humorous admittance of promiscuity by Inna awakened Tatiana's feelings, as reflected in her emotional comment on the poem ('А вот за это я пожму

⁴⁰⁰ Inna. Open, 15/08/07.

⁴⁰¹ Tatiana. Open, 09/08/07.

⁴⁰² Inna. Open, 22/08/07.

тебе руку, Инна, когда ты приедешь!!! Нет, лучше я тебя зацелую⁴⁰³). Yet two weeks later, Inna pointed again to her disturbing emotional state and attachment to her (allegedly, former) lover in a poem titled *Flashback*:

Но, понимаешь, порой упираешься лбом
и ни туда, ни сюда, хоть плачь. И ты, может быть, даже плачешь.
[...]
меня сейчас больше всего волнуют эти эльфийские уши –
их обладатель отлично владеет искусством слушать.⁴⁰⁴

According to the narratologist Jane Speedy, poetical narration can have therapeutic application: it helps narrators to organize their stories, to establish priorities and to intensify the message.⁴⁰⁵ In her interview, Inna acknowledges no therapeutic intentions when talking about this practice:

И тогда начались стихи. Стихоз, как мы с Татьяной его называем - стихоз головного мозга. Мы сами не поняли. Ну, у Татьяны же тоже в тот момент так выглядит ЖЖ. То есть, проза исчезает. И мы с ней писали друг другу. У нас с ней такие поэтические диалоги были, мы отвечали друг другу стихотворением на стихотворение. Я не знаю, это был, знаете, вот такой, как из форточки надуло.⁴⁰⁶

However, the analysis of the bloggers' poetical dialogues allows me to conclude that they served the purpose of allowing their authors to cope with controversial emotional experiences and negotiate sensitive issues indirectly through creative work. Both bloggers repeatedly changed their discursive positions in response to each other's utterances. First, Tatiana positioned herself as a third participant in a relationship and narrated her envy. In response, Inna positioned herself as a victim and narrated her fear and anxiety. Tatiana reacted with statements of support and both bloggers withdrew themselves from the narrative of rivalry and co-produced a

⁴⁰³ Tatiana. Comment to Inna. Open, 22/08/07.

⁴⁰⁴ Inna. Open, 06/09/07.

⁴⁰⁵ Jane Speedy, 'Using Poetic Documents: An Exploration of Poststructuralist Ideas and Poetic Practices in Narrative Therapy', *British Journal of Guidance & Counseling*, 31 (2005), 283-98.

⁴⁰⁶ Inna. Interview 2, p. 13.

story of unbreakable friendship. Tatiana reacted with gratitude to Inna's jocular speculations on the possibility of a *ménage à trois*. This was followed by Inna's repeated statements of obsession with her boyfriend and feelings of distress. As this case demonstrates, each of the poems was created with a gaze of a particular LiveJournal friend in mind and was used as a tool for renegotiating the positions within the relationship.

In contrast to the exchange of letters, managing the positions through the 'exchange' of blog entries does not oblige the participants to react to each other's messages. While in letters participants would use arguments to support their desired distribution of positions, in blogs they artistically narrate their emotional states with the goal of evoking their addressees' compassion thus manipulating their positions. In addition, in contrast to the exchange of diary records, managing positions in blogs requires participants to follow dialogue etiquette. Unlike diaries, blogs are not characterized by the unlimited right for ego-narration. The narratives employed to manage positions, therefore, have to refer both to emotional states of the narrators and to the statements and feelings of their addressees.

Section Six. Co-production of Selves

The previous examples have illustrated how the Selves produced by bloggers in their texts could be shaped by their reciprocal gaze at each other's journals. The final case that I want to consider in this chapter aims to show how the gaze of a wider audience can stimulate the co-production of identities. The following analysis again focuses on the stories by Inna and Tatiana about their relationship. These stories to a large extent follow the plot of the same-sex romance.

In *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler maintains that gender is socially constructed and performed through particular narrative resources.⁴⁰⁷ The rhetoric articulated by Inna and Tatiana in their stories about their relationship allows them to perform ambiguous gender identities. Generally, the question of gender production falls outside the scope of this research. Selecting the sample of blogs that would reflect strong online connections of the four informants resulted in a non-random dataset with uneven gender composition (only 6 of 28 participants are male, only 2 participants straightforwardly self-identify as gay, and only 1 of 4 participants whose semi-closed and closed journals are considered is male). The dataset considered in this research, therefore, is not optimal for a comprehensive comparative analysis of the production of gender-specific identities. While registering certain gender-marked aspects of self-writing, I avoid establishing oppositions between different gender scenarios and making far-reaching conclusions about the specifics of gender production in LiveJournal. In this study, gender-specific narrative strategies of bloggers are considered in association with the socio-cultural factors that steer bloggers' stories. Thus, in the following analysis I look at a case of a gender-specific narrative self-positioning. I maintain that the performance of ambiguous gender

⁴⁰⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), p. 33.

identities is, on the one hand, conditioned by the limits of the conventionalized vocabulary associated with female friendship. But on the other hand, it is employed by the narrators in order to indirectly position themselves in a political discourse and to secure their membership of the progressive liberal community. The successful realization of this project is secured by bloggers' narrative collaboration.

From their interviews, we learn that Inna and Tatiana are best friends in real life. They are also inseparable in the online space. Inna appears in Tatiana's journals 51 times, and Tatiana is featured in 75 stories produced by Inna. They are also the most frequent commentators on each other's posts. In their journals and interviews, their friendship is reciprocally claimed to be one of the most important relationships of their lives. The nature of this relationship is portrayed in different ways, however.

In her early journals, Tatiana makes an attempt to adopt the category of sisterhood.⁴⁰⁸ Indeed the bloggers family experiences have certain similarities: both have lost one of their parents, both have an elder sister called Svetlana whom they struggle to stay close to, both have left home early by Russian standards (at seventeen and eighteen), and both have an older man as their first partner. In their journals and interviews, they play with the idea of forming a single creature:

У меня ни с кем, наверное, не было такого вербального симбиоза, как с Татьяной. Мы очень взаимно с ней дополняли друг друга. Мне кажется, на какой-то момент все наши знакомые перестали воспринимать нас как отдельные единицы. Потому что мы постоянно были везде как единый художественный образ.⁴⁰⁹

However, the most frequently-used frame for the representations of their friendship is a romantic one. In the stories told by Inna in her interview the onset and

⁴⁰⁸ 'С дебютом тебя, несравненная сестра!' (Tatiana. Semi-closed, 07/02/07); 'Мы год назад познакомились с сестрой моей Инной' (Tatiana. Open, 20/10/06).

⁴⁰⁹ Inna. Interview 2, p. 13.

the development of their friendship is structured as a love story. She describes life before meeting her friend in the traditions of romantic cinema: as a kind of quest through a sequence of university assignments, jobs and parties, any of which could have brought them into contact but didn't, until the day they finally met:

Мы так удивлялись, что как, один университет один город да? Но нет, только в этот момент. То есть мы с ней умудрились пять лет проучиться вот это в университете, у нас была куча общих знакомых. И не встретиться! А тут встретились.⁴¹⁰

Inna's story of their first meeting is full of romantic elements: the eye contact, the spark, the admiration, the fear that the feeling is not mutual. The structure of this episode is cinematic as well, with visualized memories and slow-motion; the tense of the narration shifts from past to present when Inna meets the eyes of Tatiana and at this moment the action slows down, giving way to Inna's inner monologue:

Мы с ней познакомились. Ей было двадцать два. Мне было двадцать три. Мы играли в игру 'Что? Где? Когда?' университетскую. И там мы с ней увиделись. Я сижу и смотрю на нее и думаю: 'Какая красивая умная девушка, вот бы с ней общаться, ну, на фиг я ей сдалась такая?' И она, оказывается, все это время сидела и думала то же самое.⁴¹¹

The story continues with the women's first steps in approaching each other ('Потом мы с ней осторожно зафрендились в ЖЖ и она меня позвала на чашечку чая. И я пришла. И все заверте...' ⁴¹²). While for Inna it is love at first sight, Tatiana's feelings develop more slowly. Not seeming to share Inna's initial spark of excitement, Tatiana finds herself drawn to the other woman as further communication reveals how many opinions and values they share:

⁴¹⁰ Inna. Interview 1, p. 26.

⁴¹¹ Inna. Interview 1, p. 25.

⁴¹² Inna. Interview 1, p. 25. 'И все заверте...' is a quote from Arkady Averchenko's satirical short story 'Neizlechimyie. This line has become a catchphrase in intelligentsia circles.

Мы познакомились на игре ‘Что? Где? Когда?’. Практически сразу после игры этой она позвала меня домой к себе. Тогда мы с Аленой жили. И мы пришли и стали болтать, и как-то сразу в разговоре стало понятно, что Инна такой свой очень человек. И мы как-то сразу встали на одну сторону в каком-то споре про ксенофобию. Потом я ее позвала как приятную новую знакомую на свой день Рождения.⁴¹³

While Inna describes mutual chemistry at the first encounter, Tatiana makes it the story of a courtship in which she has a passive role. Inna invites Tatiana to her home right after the game; Inna brings roses, the symbolism of which does not need to be interpreted, to Tatiana’s birthday party.⁴¹⁴ Like a romance, their relationship goes through intense challenges and excitements which are registered in their journals:

Набираю смску: ‘Татьяна, я так тебя люблю все-таки’. И не могу отправить: нет денег на счету. И вот уже полчаса сижу как на иголках. Ну, Татьяна, ну, может, ты почувствуешь как-нибудь, может, позвонишь? А до утра еще сколько времени... Не пойду же я ночью платить за телефон...С ума сойти, Татьяна, ты слышишь? Я люблю тебя очень.⁴¹⁵

Her friend soon leaves a comment: ‘Аааа! Инна!!!! Я поймала, поймала! Я тебя тоже очень люблю! Какие ж мы дуры, все-таки :)’.⁴¹⁶ Like a romance, their relationship gives them the feeling of happiness at finding the right person, which they articulate using similar vocabulary:

Inna: Не знаю, такое счастье, что можно просто с человеком говорить на своем языке, что ему интересно то что тебе интересно.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹³ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 8.

⁴¹⁴ ‘Мне исполнилось двадцать три года. И я помню, что она принесла розы. Пришла такая Инна hah’ (Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 8).

⁴¹⁵ Inna. Open, 13/07/06.

⁴¹⁶ Tatiana. Comment to Inna. Open, 13/07/06.

⁴¹⁷ Inna. Interview 1, p. 26.

Tatiana: Такое приятное чувство узнавания, что вот не ты одна такая. И вот возникает диалог, вам приятно говорить, потому что вы друг друга понимаете.⁴¹⁸

Finally, they both analyse their bond in terms of conventional romantic relationships:

Inna: Если бы это были гетеросексуальные отношения, ну, то есть, если бы мы были мальчиком и девочкой, это был бы колоссальный по интенсивности чувства роман;

Tatiana: Я думаю, что если бы у нас были бы еще какая-то эротическая составляющая, если бы там она или я были бы мужчиной, или были гомосексуальными женщинами, то это была бы, конечно, большая и сильная любовь.⁴¹⁹

And then both confirm that that their involvement with each other is love:

Это было большое счастье, ну, и до сих пор, но тогда это вообще был, это было очень круто, это была влюбленность, это был такой вот дружеский роман. Очень сильные ощущения!⁴²⁰

Да это вот такая коммуникация, которая является сама по себе чистым счастьем, ну, вот прям на самом деле это и есть любовь.⁴²¹

Again, these feelings are reflected in the bloggers' open journals, often in a humorous manner ('Ну, еще вчера в очередной раз звала Татьяну замуж, но, обсудив вопрос, мы решили не торопиться', 'Сидим с Татьяной за соседними компами. Я: "Ну и как попасть в это сообщество?", Т.: "Так не получится... Лучше войди в меня и там все сделай!'" Наши отношения становятся все более знойными⁴²²). In addition, their journals are full of other elements which can provide the grounds for romantic interpretations, such as the exchange of poems and

⁴¹⁸ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 8.

⁴¹⁹ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 15.

⁴²⁰ Inna. Interview 1, p. 25-26.

⁴²¹ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 15.

⁴²² Inna. Open, 12/08/06; 11/10/06.

the involvement in the love triangle, or the erotic potential of the stories about two women spending their holiday together on a nudist beach.⁴²³

It is worth noting that similar representations of close relationships between women can be found in biographical documents created long before the arrival of blogs. For instance, in the United States of the nineteenth century, they were so common that there were even specific terms to describe female romantic friendships, such as ‘Boston marriage’, ‘sentimental friendship’, or ‘the love of kindred spirits’. However, at that time romantic and sexual relationships were largely conceived through the prism of heterosexuality, and hence these emotionally intense friendships were not usually subjected to sexual interpretations.⁴²⁴ By contrast, similar stories created in the twenty-first century can hardly avoid being interpreted as representations of bisexual love. It is the platonic love of kindred spirits that becomes largely excluded from the frames of reference of the readers of these stories. In other words, the cultural script that might once have been applicable to the bloggers’ emotional experience is no longer widely recognized. The concept of female friendship as it exists in contemporary discourse turns out to be insufficient to fully describe the bloggers’ experiences. At the same time, the sexual-romantic rhetoric with its abundant resources for representing emotionally intense relationships provides them with the necessary forms of expression. The bloggers may therefore construct romantic narratives without any intention of suggesting that they are bisexual, simply employing romantic vocabulary in the absence of another narrative script suitable for representing their biographical material. However, since this code is no longer habitually used to describe female friendship, its adoption results in the construction of sexually ambiguous narratives.

⁴²³ Tatiana. Open, 11/07/07; Inna. Open, 05/07/07.

⁴²⁴ Carren Strock, *Married Women Who Love Women* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2009), p. 25.

Alternatively, these ambiguous self-representations can work as an instrument of ideological positioning. Both bloggers claim to be feminists and thus may simply be affected by the imperative of the myth of the alliance between feminism and lesbianism. A closer look at their writings, however, reveals additional facets of the link between their political and sexual identities. Both bloggers constantly articulate ideas of tolerance for ethnic and sexual minorities. Inna marries a Russian Muslim, converts to Islam for three years and gives her son a Muslim name. Later in life, she works with political immigrants in Sweden and publishes stories about the hardships of their lives in her journals. In her texts and private conversations with me, she also repeatedly touched on the subject of homosexuality, animatedly asserting her abhorrence of homophobia. Tatiana, in turn, also dates a Russian Muslim, also works in welcome centre for immigrants, and also creates numerous entries about ethnic minorities living in Russia as well as about domestic violence and abuse of women. Moreover, to express her ideological views she often claims her readiness to represent an ethnic or gender minority to which she does not in fact belong. To protest against ethnic discrimination she writes:

Я всегда жалела, что во мне нет этой крови, а теперь я – грузинка!;⁴²⁵
 Мне куда как больше хочется рожать маленьких кеосаянчиков, а не уродов-жириновских.⁴²⁶

To support liberal gender discourse she writes:

Один гомофоб решил, что я лесбиянка и дал мне в нос [...] Я беру сумку подруги и ухожу, зачем-то произношу еще банальность вроде: ‘Как ты можешь: мужчина, а бьешь женщину!’ А он мне отвечает: ‘А как ты - женщина - можешь спать с женщиной! Ты - мужик, да? Так давай я тебя побью!’⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ Tatiana. Open, 09/10/06.

⁴²⁶ Tatiana. Open, 10/04/07.

⁴²⁷ Tatiana. Open, 21/08/07.

Some elements of Tatiana's image (clothes, haircut) also imitate the stereotypical attributes of lesbian identity. Even her heterosexuality is constructed through a double negation of queerness. In one of her records, the blogger makes a mental circuit from a woman to a man, then to a gay man and then back to a woman:

Рассеянно рассматриваю полуголого красавца на обложке,⁴²⁸ и так же рассеянно думаю: а что это мне, мальчики что ли нравятся? Может, я тоже гей? То есть я впервые в жизни на секунду забыла, какого я пола!⁴²⁹

This fantasy provides two narrative keys to the writer's self-positioning. The gender shift happens when she is 'absent-minded', not in control, which hints at the possibility of an alternative subconscious sexuality. Importantly, the emerging sexuality is not 'gay', but 'gay as well', which signals entering the community through broadening sexual preferences. Another example of narrated subconscious bisexuality can be found in Tatiana's record of her dream: 'Снилось, что лежу в постели с мальчиком, так похожим на меня, что я не могу различить, где чьи руки'.⁴³⁰ Occasionally, both bloggers semi-seriously express their erotic attraction to women:

Сегодня на набросках довольно красивая девушка-модель примерно на второй позе легла на бок лицом ко мне, запрокинув голову и глядя на меня. Очень красивая поза, великолепные изгибы - там где бедро это просто вообще что-то невероятное, Ключица, грудь, рука - в одну линию. И меня накрыло такое волнение - кажется, не эротическое, а именно эстетическое. Хотя фиг там разберешь, с другой стороны [...] Еще не хватало сейчас гомосексуальность в себе обнаружить. Ведь с мужчиной моделью не было и близко ничего похожего.⁴³¹

⁴²⁸ Tatiana writes about looking at *Queer* magazine's website.

⁴²⁹ Tatiana. Open, 24/02/10.

⁴³⁰ Tatiana. Open, 24/10/12.

⁴³¹ Tatiana. Open, 03/11/13.

Это когда куртки становятся короче и попы, обтянутые разного рода материей, являются миру. Я не знаю, что бы со мной было, если бы мое суперэго сопротивлялось порывам любви к красоте в меньшей степени [...] я километрами, конечно, ни за кем не хожу, но руки прятать в карманы приходится, иначе не ровен час... А как бы я, интересно, сама отреагировала, если бы меня какая-нибудь девочка на улице по попе похлопала... или погладила... На шею бы не бросилась, это точно. Вообще, у меня иногда такое чувство, что попы в какой-то степени существуют отдельно от своих обладательниц. Мне, например, может быть совершенно наплевать, что там, выше пояса, да вообще фасад персоны совершенно параллелен мне может быть, если я вижу такую прекрасную, круглую, широкую, в хорошо сидящих джинсах попу.⁴³²

Unlike their numerous other liberal narratives, these posts address a powerful rhetorical instrument. By shifting their point of view, the bloggers move the narration from the position of the Other, to the position of the bearer of the discourse. This allows them to make their tolerance palpable and to validate their voice when supporting the minorities. In this vein, the ambiguous public representation of their friendship and manufacturing of bisexual Selves can have a political function. It can be a deliberate mystification, allowing the women to speak for minorities. Thus, the production of bloggers' bisexual Selves is, on the one hand, regulated by human actors forming the audience of their journals, but on the other – it is achieved through their mutual involvement in this process.

⁴³² Inna. Open, 09/04/06.

Conclusion

As with any type of self-writing, LiveJournal narratives are produced with the image of a reader in mind. From the perspective of Actor-Network Theory, these readers are interpreted as human actors influencing the production of the bloggers' identities. In this chapter of the thesis I have described an array of human actors responsible for the appearance of particular versions of the bloggers' identities in their stories. Unlike in traditional biographical texts, the human actors in LiveJournal are split into different groups aligned with the narratives' different privacy settings. The production of Selves in these stories is also regulated by those individuals who function as characters in bloggers' texts. In addition, the work of the human actors in the online world can be reciprocal and collaborative. To comprehensively describe the role of these different types of human actors, I have combined quantitative analysis of the journals of a group of bloggers with close readings of the stories where the influence of particular types of human actors could be observed.

In the first section of this chapter, I described how the speech community formed by human actors produced and maintained its specific narrative canon. By reconstructing the dynamics of commenting rates for each thematic and stylistic feature of the 17,076 texts, I showed how the response of the audience stimulated bloggers' writing by contributing to the consolidation of the group's discussion core, largely consisting of narratives on general subjects, at the same time as promoting the principle of innovation which inspired bloggers' constant search for new themes and styles. In the second section of this chapter, I provided further evidence that the bloggers' semiotic choices were regulated by the influence of the community's narrative conventions. Comparative micro-analysis of the stories by my informant Inna associated with different narrative contexts revealed that the blogger adopted

different semiotic scripts when adjusting her stories to different audiences. In the stories produced for her general LiveJournal readership, the blogger prioritized humorous and witty narration and demonstrated her sophistication and high intellectual status through creative use of language. As the reconstruction of LiveJournal's thematic-stylistic profile in the first chapter revealed, these narrative patterns were highly characteristic of the writing of the community under study. The introduction of these scripts into her narratives was one of the ways in which the blogger emphasized her membership of the Russian internet intelligentsia.

In the third section of this chapter, I explored how the production of the narratives could be influenced not only by the expectations of the community, but also by the gaze of particular readers. My informant Tatiana's stories about the injury and death of her pet were used in the first chapter of the thesis to illustrate the adoption of the semiotic script of indirect narration by the blogger. Further comparison of these narratives to the stories told by the informant during her interview revealed that the set of entries from her semi-closed journal was most likely produced with the aim of conducting certain messages to two particular members of her audience. The fourth section of this chapter was devoted to human actors that influenced the production of the stories 'from the inside'. The analysis of the stories of bloggers' family relationships showed that the inclusion of particular characters in the stories reshaped their system of characters and narrators' related self-conceptualizations. In Inna's stories this was the inclusion of the image of her father that spurred different version of her biography, while in Tatiana's case this was the image of her step-mother. These findings allowed me to conclude that those Selves that bloggers narrated in their LiveJournal stories were conditioned by the influence of both external and internal human actors.

In the fifth section of this chapter, I provided evidence that the influence of human actors could be reciprocal. The case of two bloggers' using their LiveJournal entries as the utterances of a dialogue was analysed to reveal how narrators' discursive positions were formed and transformed in response to each other's actions. Finally, in the last section of this chapter I described how the production of particular Selves could be simultaneously influenced by those human actors who set the expectations for the stories and those who indirectly participate in the stories' production. I analysed a case of bloggers' mutual involvement in the construction of their apparently bisexual identities and showed how this rhetorical collaboration could be employed to indirectly position the narrators in liberal political discourse.

CHAPTER THREE. THE AGENCY OF THE MATERIAL IN LIVEJOURNAL'S EGO-NARRATIVES

According to Actor-Network Theory, agency is exerted not only by human intentional actions but also by non-human material objects.⁴³³ Ships in John Law's study of Portugal's naval expansion, scallops in Michel Callon's reconstruction of scientific and economic controversies underlying the ecosystem of a bay and its implications for the social world, or food products in Jane Bennett's more recent work on the role of non-humans in the public sphere and political agency – these objects are interwoven with human actors and semiotic scripts in a network of causal relationships.⁴³⁴

In the digital era, Actor-Network Theory's association of non-human actors with material objects needs to be renegotiated. Being non-material at their core, the practices of online communication are still conditioned by the agency of non-human actors. Approaching digital technologies as non-human actors has become widely recognized as an efficient analytical tool in studies of the internet.⁴³⁵ In the area of self-writing, the production of ego-text – once conditioned by the agency of paper and pen, or the design of the prefab diary⁴³⁶ – became mediated by the technological capabilities of websites, where the stories of lives were composed and stored.

In terms of design, LiveJournal consists of personal journals and 'communities' (journals on particular subject where different bloggers can write). As described in the second chapter of this thesis, journals can have different privacy settings. The option of creating 'friends lists' allows journals to be linked with each

⁴³³ Latour, p. 71.

⁴³⁴ Law, pp. 234–63; Callon, pp. 196–233; Jane Bennett, 'Edible Matter', *New Left Review*, 45 (2007), 133–45.

⁴³⁵ An overview of the applications of Actor-Network Theory to studies of the internet can be found in the work of Rocci Luppicini. See Luppicini, p. 38.

⁴³⁶ José Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, p. 62.

other. This feature lets LiveJournal function as a platform for both blogging and social networking. The lay-out of journals' pages can be customized by users: background colours, fonts and userpics (avatars) can be changed at any time. Every journal has a 'User info' page where bloggers' biographical and contact information, as well as their interests and 'friends' lists' can be displayed. Each LiveJournal entry can be displayed on a separate page with comments left by readers shown under the entry. The 'like' button was only introduced to LiveJournal in 2016, which explains the frequent appearance of one-word comments (such as 'cool', '+'/'+1' and the like) in the entries from the preceding years. Both the entries and the comments can contain hyperlinks to other journals as well as to external resources. LiveJournal can also host images, and audio- and video-files.

The development of the technological capabilities of LiveJournal reflected overall trends in the shaping of cyberspace. In Russia, the internet (along with an alternative computer network, FidoNet) was in use by researchers and computer enthusiasts at the beginning of the 1990s. By the mid-1990s, the first websites and chat services had started functioning, and by the beginning of the new millennium, Russian users could enjoy a variety of Russian-language websites, including the first online shops and magazines. They had access to search engines sensitive to the morphological specifics of the Russian language (Aport, Rambler, and Yandex), used electronic mail and communicated with other users through numerous chat services and forums, as well as the first messenger services, particularly ICQ. In other words, by the time LiveJournal arrived in Russia, RuNet represented a swiftly developing informational space. At the same time, access to it was limited, since only a small number of users had access to the internet from their homes. Others connected from their workplaces, post offices, and the internet cafés which by that time had opened

in big Russian cities. In addition, online practices of that time largely consisted of communication (often anonymous) and information consumption. To produce online content knowledge of HTML was required. With the arrival of the web 2.0 culture, developer-controlled software products were largely replaced by services designed to host user-generated content. Content delivery services gave way to file-sharing clients such as BitTorrent, Wikipedia has taken over Britannica online, and even operating systems (Linux), web servers (Apache) and programming languages (PHP, Python) started to rely on peer-production methods.⁴³⁷ The transition from personal websites to blogs followed logically from the overall decentralization of the internet. In Russia, LiveJournal was one of the first websites that allowed individuals with no knowledge of coding to produce and share their content. It gave the possibility of self-expression to the segment of RuNet that until then had remained silent. And with the spread of the home internet, this possibility could be enjoyed by a large number of users.

In Moscow, the number of users connecting to the internet from their homes surpassed the number of those who went online from their work in 2003.⁴³⁸ In the beginning of the 2000s, households that had internet access used dial-up connections with a maximum speed of 56 kbps. At these speeds, downloading a few songs could take the whole night, and video-files could take weeks. Therefore, online activities of that time mostly involved the exchange of textual information. In the context of low connection speeds, reading and keeping an online journal was a very popular online practice.

⁴³⁷ Tim O'Reilly, 'What is Web 2.0?: Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software' in *Online Communication and Collaboration: A Reader*, ed. by Helen Donelan, Karen Kear, and Magnus Ramage (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 225-35.

⁴³⁸ *Fond Obshchestvennoe Mnenie, 'Internet v Rossii', Otechestvennye zapiski*, 4 (2003) <http://magazines.russ.ru/oz/2003/4/2003_4_19.html> [accessed 17 May 2018].

With the arrival of ADSL, the connection speed increased to 25 mbps and the scope of online practices broadened. Yet despite the technical possibility of uploading photographs and videos to LiveJournal, Russian bloggers still hardly included visual materials in their stories. Digital cameras could only be afforded by a small minority of RuNet users, and uploading audio-visual content was expensive in terms of data. Thus, the ego narratives articulated in Russian LiveJournal were not yet visibly different to those produced in the offline realm.

In contrast, communicative texts, such as chat and forum messages, as well as comments in LiveJournal, reflected the formation of a new rhetoric from the very beginning. The development of various cyberspace subcultures conditioned the appearance of idiosyncratic jargon, such as the famous Padonkaffsky slang,⁴³⁹ while the need for efficient emotional expression contributed to the increasing use of smile symbols in online messages and SMS texts. Further diversification (reflected in messengers' inbuilt palettes of symbols) led to the formation of a repertoire of emotional reactions widely used in online communication. It also laid the foundation for the practice of replacing textual messages with symbolic images of various kinds, which became particularly widespread with the arrival of smartphones a decade later.

By the middle of the 2000s, visible transformations started to affect not only the language of short messages but also the nature of personal narratives. Increasing connection speeds and affordable prices for internet data packages enabled the inclusion of multimedia elements in ego-texts, while the colossal diversification of web content provided users with the possibility of referring to an almost endless variety of external resources in their stories. The increasing accessibility of digital

⁴³⁹ Padonkaffsky slang is a Russian internet jargon based on phonetic spelling of Russian and use of obscene language and idiosyncratic idiomatic expressions. The slang was formed on such platforms as Udaff.com, Fuck.ru, and LiveJournal.com. By the middle of the 2000s, it had turned into a widespread jargon of RuNet. (See Vera Zvereva, *Setevye razgovory: kul'turnye kummunikatsii v Runete*, ed. by Ingunn Lunde (Bergen: University of Bergen Press, 2012), pp. 51-83.)

cameras contributed to the popularization of visual representation in online journals. And the introduction of YouTube in 2005 simplified the inclusion of video-content in blogs.

At the same time, technological progress led not only to the diversification of LiveJournal's content but also to the website's 'cluttering' with fake accounts. With the development of algorithms and the appearance of a market of rank boosting services at the end of the 2000s, thousands of bots available for 'befriending' and able to automatically generate comments were created. The functioning of the algorithms secured an increase in the numbers of short standardized comments in LiveJournal. This, however, was not characteristic of the blogs analysed in this study, since the members of this group prioritized elaborated intellectual discussions and displayed explicitly disparaging attitude towards 'cheating' for the sake of a higher position in the ranking.

In the beginning of the 2010s, the spread of smartphones caused further shifts in the strategies of online self-writing. Use of wifi hotspots and the mobile internet became associated with short, frequent online sessions. This new rhythm of online presence required the replacement of long narratives with short texts and with visual content that could be produced and consumed on the go.

This chapter of my thesis treats particular technological capabilities of LiveJournal as an assemblage of material non-human actors of a socio-technical network, where bloggers' multiple Selves are produced. The first insights into the mediation of the human psyche by technology were made by the philosopher Marshall McLuhan, who coined the phrase 'the medium is the message'. In *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan suggests that the interiorization of meanings that shape individuals' consciousness depends not on the

content consumed, but on the very form of the medium that delivers the content.⁴⁴⁰ With the arrival of the digital age, McLuhan's ideas remain as topical as ever. Personology psychologist Sherry Turkle was first to approach the personal computer as a medium affecting the production of users' identities. In *Life on the Screen*, Turkle describes an ongoing mass transformation of individuals' self-perception towards the interiorization of postmodern paradigms of the decentred Self. She maintains that the ideas of a centralized Self derive from Western monotheistic religious tradition and our experience of ourselves as unitary actors. But no less importantly, they are conditioned by the fact that we lack concrete objects that could channel the idea of decentralization. The postmodern interpretation of identity as multiple and decentered cannot be appropriated by individuals unless its multiplicity is made perceptible. According to Turkle, this first becomes possible with the arrival of computer culture, with its possibility of online interaction. Turkle writes: 'In the computer-mediated worlds, the Self is multiple, fluid and constituted in interaction with machine connections; it is made and transformed by language, sexual congress is an exchange of signifiers. In this virtual reality, we self-fashion and self-create'. In this way, 'computer-mediated experiences bring the philosophy down to earth'.⁴⁴¹

However, Turkle considers computers to be mediators of cultural scripts of Self, rather than the factors exerting their own agency, as suggested by McLuhan. Her observations also pay insufficient attention to biographical testimonies of the processes of identity production. The interviews are used to find out users' interpretations of their experience of designing alternative Selves. But the transcripts of their online encounters ('logs') are addressed only a few times, and as an auxiliary

⁴⁴⁰ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 1964), p. 7.

⁴⁴¹ Turkle, pp. 15, 17, 165, 180.

source. As a result, the very mechanisms through which the discussed multiplicity is achieved remain undescribed.

This gap has partly been filled in later works on computer-mediated experiences, such as Jill Walker Rettberg's *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology* and *Blogging*. In *Seeing Ourselves Through Technology*, Rettberg addresses empirical materials to describe the mediation of textual, visual and quantitative self-presentations, found in contemporary social media, by cultural scenarios and technological conditions.⁴⁴² In *Blogging*, she chronicles the evolution of blogs and highlights the succession of various social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Pinterest) in the practice of blogging. In Rettberg's account, the agency of the material is just as essential as the agency of the cultural and social.⁴⁴³ Yet her book is rather focused on communicative, networking and economic aspects of blogging, while the question of identity production is addressed cursorily and without sufficient theoretical grounding.

In this chapter of the thesis, I supplement the description of technologically mediated self-production with an analysis of personal blogs shaped by the agency of the material actors. In my analysis of LiveJournal, I explore the agency of such material actors as the possibility of supplementing the stories with multimedia elements and hyperlinks; the syntax of the web page; and the availability of access to an easily navigable archive of records. In the first section of this chapter, I look at the architecture of the journals' entries and interpret the presence of audio elements and hyperlinks, as well as cases of multi-thematic entries on one 'page', as examples of what Almira Ousmanova and Andrei Gornyxh call mosaic-schizophrenic syntax.⁴⁴⁴ I show how this complex architecture conditions the polyphonic nature of writers'

⁴⁴² Rettberg, *Seeing Ourselves through Technology*.

⁴⁴³ Jill Walker Rettberg, *Blogging* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013).

⁴⁴⁴ Gornyxh and Ousmanova, p. 203.

self-conceptualizations and enables the simultaneous articulation of their different Selves.

In the second section of this chapter, I suggest that the journals' easily navigable archives provide bloggers with the visualizations of their multifaceted autobiographies and allow them to engage in a dialogue with their formerly narrated Selves. I analyse a case in which the particular Selves of a blogger are temporarily discarded by moving them to closed journals, in order to bring the journal's story into line with the writer's changing self-conceptualizations. I maintain that these cases represent new practices of image management, formed in LiveJournal's socio-technical environment.

Finally, in the last section, I correlate the decrease in melancholic narration in LiveJournal stories to increasing numbers of published photographs. I suggest that the journals' gradual shift from the inherently melancholic tone of traditional diaries to a more optimistic mode is accompanied by the migration of the conventions of photographic representation to ego-text. The trend is identified by quantitative analysis of twenty-three blogs, interlinked with the blogs of four informants. Close reading of the narratives, with and without photographs that represent similar Selves of the writer, is provided to reveal the mechanics of the photographs' influence upon self-presentation.

Section One. Architecture of Entries and Polyphonic Selves

This section focuses on the architecture of the LiveJournal page and its implications for the production of bloggers' Selves. I suggest that such material actors as the display of multi-thematic entries on one page and the presence of hyperlinks condition the production of fragmented and polyphonic Selves and influence the transition of personal journals to the notebook-like writing of today's social media.

Ego-narration in today's cyberspace seems to have a closer genealogical tie with notebooks than with personal diaries. The diary and the notebook are undoubtedly related forms of biographical registration: historically, the diary grew out of the notebook.⁴⁴⁵ But as the notebook evolved into diary, the status of its subject changed as well. By accumulating references on external phenomena, short remarks and notes of a practical nature, notebooks undoubtedly created zones of proto-identity, but were not purposefully and systematically employed as spaces of self-inscription. By contrast, elaborate introspective narratives recorded in diaries were intended and perceived as the representations of writers' Selves.⁴⁴⁶ The narratives of today's social media seem to have undergone a form of backwards hybridization: from fair-sized, self-focused texts akin to diary entries, to fragmented and heterogeneous records more like material from a notebook. Unlike the coherent and consistent stories recorded in diaries, Twitter feeds and Facebook timelines articulate short, momentary thoughts, merging personal experiences, external phenomena and life plans. However, they have maintained a strong focus on self-production, to a degree that is more characteristic of diaries than of notebooks.

⁴⁴⁵ Svetlana Efimova, *Zapisnaia knizhka pisatel'ia: stenogramma Zhizni* (Moscow: Sovpadenie, 2012), p. 85; Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, p. 417.

⁴⁴⁶ Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, p. 55.

It must be said that examples of texts merging the structure of notebooks with the high degree of introspection characteristic of the diary existed long before the appearance of online media. In the Russian life writing tradition, Vasilij Rozanov's work *Opavshie list'ia* gives us the image of the writer's inner world emerging as an assemblage of notebook records.⁴⁴⁷ In spite of its kaleidoscopic nature, this text embraces qualities of a personal diary, such as intimacy, synchronicity and non-fictionality.⁴⁴⁸ Due to its alliance of fragmented structure and soul-searching content, *Opavshie list'ia* has been recognized by both academics and bloggers as the prototype of cyberspace ego-narratives.⁴⁴⁹ Another example is Mikhail Gasparov's book *Zapisi i vypiski*, three chapters of which contain collages of literary quotes, sketches of life events, and reflections on philosophical subjects.⁴⁵⁰

Similar interlacement of biographical narratives with references to external content can be found in Dmitry Galkovsky's novel *Beskonechnyi tupik* and Mikhail Bezrodnyi's *Konets tsitaty*.⁴⁵¹ *Beskonechnyi tupik* was inspired by Rozanov's work. It consists of a philosophical essay followed by a vast body of commentaries. As in the works by Rozanov and Gasparov, the image of the narrator in this novel is assembled from allusions to other literary works as well as to a wide array of cultural phenomena. *Konets tsitaty* also consists of Bezrodnyi's fragmented

⁴⁴⁷ Vasilij Rozanov, *Opavshie list'ia* (Saint Petersburg: Pushkinskii dom, 2015).

⁴⁴⁸ Elena Krivolapova, 'Priznaki "dnevnikovosti" v proizvedeniiakh V. Rozanova "Opavshie list'ia" i "Uedinennoe"', *Vestnik Leningradskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta im. A.S. Pushkina*, 1 (2012), 22-9.

⁴⁴⁹ Nikolai Vokuev, 'Mezhdu dnevnikom i mass-media: osobennosti bloga kak sredstva kommunikatsii', *Analitika Kul'turologii*, 19 (2011), <<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/mezhdu-dnevnikom-i-mass-media-osobennosti-bloga-kak-sredstva-kommunikatsii>> [accessed 11 June 2018]; Kaspe and Smurova, <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2002/4/kaspe.html>> [accessed 19 February 2018]; See also my informant Pavel's comments on the genre of his texts: 'Это такой кивок Розанову с его "коробами" таких спонтанных и сумбурных (и очень личных) заметок - вольных по форме и птстрых по содержанию. Он вообще наверное был бы отличным блоггером, будь у него интернет' (Form correspondence with Pavel, 12/08/16).

⁴⁵⁰ Mikhail Gasparov, *Zapisi i vypiski* (Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2001).

⁴⁵¹ Dmitry Galkovsky, *Beskonechnyi tupik* (Moscow: Dmitry Galkovsky Publishing, 2008); Mikhail Bezrodnyi, *Konets tsitaty* (Saint Petersburg: Ivan Limbakh Publishing, 1996).

commentaries and reflections. In addition, Bezrodnyi introduces a visual dimension to his text by supplementing it with images and photographs, as well as switching to bold type and using a variety of graphic symbols. Written only a few years before the arrival of the internet in Russia, these books come closest to the narratives of cyberspace in terms of their organization of content. Bezrodnyi's collision of the textual and the visual resembles the design of blog entries. And Galkovsky's commentaries often trigger further commentaries, presenting the reader with a fragmented and non-linear text that must be navigated much like an online document filled with hyperlinks. Still, in the works of Rozanov, Gasparov, Galkovsky, and Bezrodny, the expression of diary-like content through a notebook-like structure was an original literary method, while in the digital age it has gradually become a conventional form of self-writing.

In *Blogging*, Jill Rettberg establishes the historical succession from blogs to Twitter.⁴⁵² Indeed, it was in this earlier form of online self-writing that coherent diary-like stories started to split into short, unrelated notes and engage in dialogues with external content, gradually leading to the conventionalization of fragmented and polyphonic ego-narration. Different authors pinpoint different factors that conditioned the shift towards fragmentation and polyphony in online self-presentations. For instance, Sherry Turkle emphasizes the impact of users' 'distributed presences', as well as the influence of the design of the first personal computers and websites.⁴⁵³ Almira Ousmanova and Andrei Gornyx point to the 'mosaic-schizophrenic' syntax of cyberspace, where 'dozens of links, banners, and windows to other webpages' cause a complete destruction of narrative logic, replacing it with 'a heterogeneous set of "voices" that "speak" on behalf of their

⁴⁵² Rettberg, *Blogging*, p. 15.

⁴⁵³ Turkle, pp. 13, 61.

subjects'.⁴⁵⁴ Although these authors mention global shifts of cultural paradigms, they focus their precise attention on the technological factors – software design and website architectures – responsible for the fragmentary and polyphonic nature of digital narratives.

In LiveJournal too, these technological aspects were recognized as providing a breeding ground for the production of fragmented notebook-like ego-narratives. Among these, Il'ia Kukulin suggested the possibility of a montage of a writer's text with potentially contradictory visual representations and audience voices, while Linor Goralik highlighted the role played by sporadic access to the Web and the resulting interrupted presence of the subject.⁴⁵⁵ In addition, the heterogeneity of the stories in LiveJournal derived from the possibility of joining multi-thematic entries on one page and of interlacing the writer's narrative with hyperlinks.

The display of several entries on one page can create a dissonance between formal coherence and the thematic multiplicity of the text and condition the appearance of sudden junctions of unrelated narratives, possibly articulating authors' different Selves. For instance, on 13 July 2009, Tatiana first describes her weekend, then uploads two audio files in which she performs songs, then writes about the cartoon artists she likes, and then addresses her editor regarding work issues.⁴⁵⁶ Inna starts with a story about her child and nephew, then provides an excursus on the history of her town, then criticizes a literary work, and finally narrates a romantic

⁴⁵⁴ Gornykh and Ousmanova, p. 198.

⁴⁵⁵ Il'ia Kukulin, 'Glava 11. Mezhdue istoriei i media' in *Mashiny zashumevshego vremeni: kak Sovetskii montazh stal metodom neofitsial'noi kul'tury* (Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2015), <<https://bookmate.com/reader/nVe7eKlz>> [accessed 21 November 2016]; Linor Goralik, 'Sobrannye list'ia', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 54 (2002), <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nlo/2002/54/lgor.html>> [accessed 10 November 2016].

⁴⁵⁶ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 13/07/09.

episode.⁴⁵⁷ Pavel narrates a comic situation in a bookstore, then retells a film plot, then writes about the history of his family and last name, and then comments on politics.⁴⁵⁸ Finally, Alina writes about omens, then reflects on people's different social roles, then narrates about a weekend at the lake, and then describes some technical issues with software.⁴⁵⁹

The opportunity to articulate different Selves in the narratives about different areas of life seems fairly natural, even if the stories are displayed on the same webpage. But different stories of Self can also emerge when the entries address the same theme. The possibility of splitting the reflection into separate segments and associating these segments with different cultural scripts of self-presentation can result in the coexistence of different interpretations of the same phenomena. In this way, one LiveJournal page can visually represent the coexistence of a blogger's different Selves. For instance, Tatiana's narratives from 13 September 2010 contain descriptions of her life events made in three genres: the first entry represents a humorous sketch, the second one a diary-like entry, and the third one a poem.

The first entry contains short, jocular dialogue (supposedly from an SMS correspondence), in which one interlocutor asks another to translate a slang phrase into French. Tatiana does not specify who the interlocutors are. But it can be inferred from her interview⁴⁶⁰ that she is referring to a conversation with her French boyfriend from 2010, and her readers understand the context of the dialogue. In the comments on this entry, she discusses possible translations with her friends. In the second entry, she tells her friends about being under pressure from a heavy workload and mentions her studies for a degree in teaching Russian as a foreign language. She

⁴⁵⁷ Inna. Open, 13/01/06.

⁴⁵⁸ Pavel. Open, 28/03/13.

⁴⁵⁹ Alina. Open, 01/07/13.

⁴⁶⁰ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 7.

proceeds to hint at her financial difficulties and invites her friends to come over and bring some food. Finally, she writes that she plans to go to a park in the near future and to attend a theatre festival, the link to which she includes in the entry.

The first entry by Tatiana is characterized by positive emotions; the second one is rather gloomy, yet here Tatiana still refers to a number of pleasurable activities (meeting friends, going to the park and the theatre). But in the third entry, written as a poem, the emotional mode of narration becomes profoundly pessimistic.

By 2010 pessimistic narration in online journals is no longer the norm (discussion of this aspect will follow in the third section of this chapter). Yet this trend does not affect the discourse of poetry, in which a melancholic tone has traditionally been associated with elegiac narration. In the early nineteenth century, the elegy became a leading genre in Russian lyric poetry, and the Russian elegiac school had a particularly strong influence on the formation of the poetic canon.⁴⁶¹ Through poetry, cultural representations of melancholy and pessimism appeared in countless versions. According to literary scholar Vladimir Kozlov, in spite of short periods of waning popularity, over the last two centuries the elegy has preserved its influential status in the Russian literary tradition.⁴⁶²

Tatiana's poems seem to follow the traditions of elegiac poetry: 17 out of 35 poems found in her journals narrate loneliness, sadness and regret. The one uploaded on 13 September 2010 clearly belongs to the same genre. In this poem, Tatiana describes her professional and social idleness ('У всех есть какие-то планы, А у меня нет даже дедлайнов'), a break-up ('А потом француз меня бросил'), and her incompetence in French ('Я недавно начала учить французский | Успела выучить

⁴⁶¹ Lidiya Ginzburg, *O lirike* (Moscow: Intrada, 1997), p. 21; Il'ia Mechnikov, *Etiudy optimizma* (Moscow: Nauka, 1988), pp. 204-206; Vadim Vatsuro, *Lirika pushkinskoi pory. 'Elegicheskaia shkola'* (Saint Petersburg: Nauka, 1994), p. 5.

⁴⁶² Vladimir Kozlov, *Russkaia elegiia nekanonicheskogo perioda: ocherki tipologii i istorii* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul'tury, 2013), p. 9.

ТОЛЬКО ЗВУК “а” | Adèle est malade | Madame Armal va à la gare⁴⁶³). Thus, four subjects that the poem shares with previous entries (romantic relationships, professional activity, personal plans and the French language) take on an opposite interpretation. Moreover, when re-narrating her experiences in a poem, Tatiana not only switches the emotional mode of her story, but also suggests to her readers a different version of biographical facts: in the first two entries she is busy with work and leisure plans and helps her boyfriend with a translation; in the third one she has no work or leisure plans, no boyfriend and no competence in translation.

As a result, the fragmentation of the journal page into three sections leads to the fragmentation of the narrator’s self-presentation. The channelling of a cultural script of melancholia conventional for poetic self-expression conditions the renegotiation of biographical facts narrated shortly before and leads to the narrator’s production of a contrasting Self. In this way, one page of the journal becomes a collage of the blogger’s two alternative self-conceptualizations.

The production of contrasting self-presentations can be realized not only vertically (through different interpretations in earlier and later entries) but also horizontally – through the interweaving of writers’ utterances with hyperlinks telling their own stories in parallel to the voice of the narrator. In her analysis of LiveJournal texts from the perspective of Lacanian structural psychoanalysis, Lidia Mikheeva suggests calling these highly referential ego-narratives ‘cultural paradises’. ‘Cultural paradises’, writes Mikheeva, enable the ‘creation of the mosaic portrait of the ego-ideal by accumulating cultural phenomena with which the blogger wants to establish an identificational link’.⁴⁶⁴ Similarly, media researcher Kate Eichhorn

⁴⁶³ All quotes from Tatiana. Semi-closed, 13/09/10.

⁴⁶⁴ ‘Создание мозаичного портрета собственного Я-идеала путем аккумуляции в блоге тех культурных феноменов, с которыми блоггеру хотелось бы выстроить идентификационную

considers that archival practices – collecting, preserving and ordering – underlay the development of blogging culture, where authors turn collections of links, which serve as records of readers’ engagements with other texts, into representations of their Selves.⁴⁶⁵

What Mikheeva and Eichhorn suggest, and what bloggers themselves seem to think, is that the inclusion of hyperlinks in journal entries allows the blogger to self-narrate by referring to external texts. In the first chapter of this thesis, I illustrated how certain LiveJournal flashmobs allowed bloggers to compose their stories from pre-selected elements. Similarly, the practice of selecting and organizing hyperlinks can function as a strategy of self-inscription. In contrast to diary-like first person narratives, the production of Self in these entries consists not in creating but in accumulating and managing the meanings. John Potter suggests calling this type of identity production ‘self-curatorship’. Drawing on Foucault’s ideas about subjectivation of discourse in notebooks, Potter proposes seeing the practices of collecting, distributing, assembling, and disassembling media artefacts and content as a fundamental technique of self-inscription in the digital age.⁴⁶⁶ Potter also refers to the work by Christine Greenhow and Beth Robelia to emphasize the importance of coherence between self-produced material and curated media assets.⁴⁶⁷ However, this coherence may be difficult to achieve. The identificational link with external content may not function as intended by the curator. In blogs, the context of writers’

связь’. See Lidiia Mikheeva, ‘Psikhoanaliticheskie aspekty avtorepresentatsii v bloge’, *Digital Icons: Studies in Russian, Eurasian and Central European New Media*, 1.2 (2009), 27-36 (p. 29).

⁴⁶⁵ Kate Eichhorn, ‘Archival Genres: Gathering Texts and Reading Spaces’, *Invisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture*, 12 (2008) <http://rochester.edu/in_visible_culture/Issue_12/eichhorn/eichhorn.pdf> [accessed 22 May 2018].

⁴⁶⁶ John Potter, *Digital Media and Learner Identity: The New Curatorship* (New York: Springer, 2012), p. 31.

⁴⁶⁷ John Potter and Øystein Gilje, ‘Curation As a New Literacy Practice’, *E-Learning And Digital Media*, 12.2 (2015), 123-27 (p. 124).

biographical stories may lead to the appearance of additional interpretations of external content. And the collision of direct and referential self-narration may change the initial vector of self-inscription: the appropriated cultural text can start contradicting and contesting its host narrative. The following example presents a case where self-narration through external content partly goes out of the blogger's control. Cultural references contained in the blog entry create a zone of confrontation of different sentimental scripts.

Alina's journal page from 23 August 2013 has two entries. The first entry narrates Alina's episode of homesickness. It contains indications of 'current mood' and 'current music', as enabled by the design of the LiveJournal page, and displays a hyperlink to a YouTube file. The YouTube file included in the entry contains the song 'Vечно Molodoi', by Russian pop-rock band Smyslovye Galliutsinatsii. The song is the soundtrack to Aleksei Balabanov's film *Brat 2*. The file does not have a video, but contains the poster of the film, which can be seen by readers even if they choose not to listen to the song. In the second entry, Alina gives her readers instructions on how to moderate discussions in the commentaries on her texts. Although there are only two entries, their content and paratextual elements do not form a single coherent narrative. Alina's indicated mood ('angry') is not explained and is not supported by the content of her entries. The practical nature of her second entry is not consonant with her highly emotional post on homesickness. And the story narrated in the first entry prompts two contrasting interpretations of the love of one's homeland.

In the first entry, Alina tells her readers about her unbearable homesickness ('Так скучаю, что сердце кровью обливается! Кажется, сейчас всё брошу нафиг,

и уеду назад'⁴⁶⁸). She narrates an episode in which she walks along a street in Finland and hears the song 'Vechno Molodoi' from a passing car. The song triggers a strong wave of nostalgia:

У меня внутри всё вдруг остановилось. Как будто идёшь себе, никого не трогаешь и вдруг - раз! и ты вспомнил всё. Как громом ударило. Я до дома добежала, и как давай реветь прямо в лифте.⁴⁶⁹

She proceeds to recall happy moments of her life back in Russia and claims that she cannot achieve a similar feeling about life in Finland:

Вот вижу я озеро, и говорю ему: 'Ты очень красивое озеро', а в ответ тишина. В Питере было так, скажешь мысленно 'Улица, ты классная' - и тут же начинает случаться всё что угодно.⁴⁷⁰

In her research on music and memory, José van Dijck describes the inseparable nature of personal experiences and cultural scripts in recollections triggered by music. According to Van Dijck, pop music produces 'a cognitive framework through which (collectively) constructed meanings are transposed onto individual memory, resulting in an intricate mixture of recall and imagination, of recollections intermingled with extrapolations and myth'.⁴⁷¹ Alina's text presents an example of the interweaving of personal recollections with collectively constructed meanings. Her nostalgia is triggered by the association of the song with a period of her life when this song was popular, but also resonates with the ideas of love of one's homeland, imprinted in the cultural text to which the song refers.

⁴⁶⁸ Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

⁴⁶⁹ Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

⁴⁷⁰ Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

⁴⁷¹ José Van Dijck, 'Remembering Songs through Telling Stories: Pop Music as a Resource for Memory' in *Sound Souvenirs: Audio Technologies, Memory and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Karin Bijsterveld and José Van Dijck (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), pp. 107-19 (p. 110).

The analysis of emotional experience becomes possible due to the collective nature of emotions. Different socio-cultural environments produce various emotional matrices, which are employed by individuals in the process of conceptualizing their experiences. However, individuals' simultaneous belonging to different socio-cultural contexts determines the presence of different, and sometimes contrasting, emotional matrices in their emotional repertoires. Emotional experiences thus include the adjustment of emotional matrices to individuals' unique biographical situations.⁴⁷² In Alina's case, the collision of two models of patriotic feelings creates a complex and polyphonic narrative, which triggers contrasting interpretations by her readers.

To channel her nostalgia to her readers, Alina suggests they join her in listening to the song ('Кто ещё хочет прочувствованно поплакать, вот вам песня из "Брата-2"')⁴⁷³. For Alina and her audience (mainly consisting of members of the same generation), the song 'Vechno Molodoi' is strongly associated with the film *Brat 2*. As the first contemporary Russian film about patriotism,⁴⁷⁴ according to cinematologist Roman Olenev, it creates an emotional matrix for conceptualizing the love of one's homeland. *Brat 2* – a sequel of Balabanov's film *Brat* – was released in 2000 and enjoyed enormous popularity at that time, not least because of its soundtrack, which consisted of fifteen songs by famous rock bands. The film narrates the story of Danila Bagrov, who travels with his brother to the USA to take revenge on Chicago's mafia leader for the murder of his friend. As a result of a series of circumstances, Danila becomes a target for several mafia groups but succeeds in accomplishing his mission and returns to Moscow. The theme of Russian identity

⁴⁷² Zorin, pp. 15, 30, 34.

⁴⁷³ Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

⁴⁷⁴ Roman Olenev, 'Patriotizm v kino', *Stop-Kadr (programme's transcript)*. <http://newlit.ru/~olenev/5172.html> [accessed 17 November 2016].

and patriotism – sometimes grotesque and even bordering on chauvinism – plays in the film on many levels, from soundtracks and repeatedly quoted poems to the direct utterances of the characters. The idea that the motherland is where one has a good life, articulated twice by other characters, is rejected by Danila. In the film's finale, Dasha – a Russian prostitute from Chicago, 'saved' by Danila and travelling back to Moscow with him – is told by the border guard that due to the expiry of her visa, she will not be allowed back into the USA. She gives the officer the finger, gets on the plane, orders a vodka to celebrate her coming home, and the plane takes off to the sound of the song 'Goodbye, America'.⁴⁷⁵ On the whole, the pathos of the film's patriotic theme can be summarized as love for the motherland despite all its imperfections.

Yet in Alina's case, her biographical situation determines the application of one more emotional matrix – that of the aesthetically charged nostalgia of the émigré intelligentsia – to her experience. In Alina's text, Russia is narrated not as distant in space, but as distant in time. Having moved to Finland at the age of 25, Alina interprets Russia as a locus of happy childhood and youth. Her positive representations of Russia, narrated in this entry, are not linked with any particularly Russian realities but with the practices of Alina's younger Self ('Чтобы был летний вечер, и идти домой от озера, через огороды. Чтобы мокрые волосы, и полотенце на плече'⁴⁷⁶). But the intention of going back, mentioned at the beginning of the entry, is soon rejected by the narrator. In describing examples of social injustice in Russia, she maintains that the practicalities of life should triumph over sentimentalism ('Я человек очень сентиментальный, но не

⁴⁷⁵ A song by Soviet/Russian rock band Nautilus Pompilius. In *Brat 2*, 'Goodbye, America' is first performed by a children's choir, and then by Nautilus Pompilius.

⁴⁷⁶ Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

слабохарактерный [...] я буду делать то, что для меня лучше'⁴⁷⁷). She concludes by claiming that 'Россия - замечательная страна, самая любимая, но жить в ней нельзя'.⁴⁷⁸

The confrontation of two emotional matrices in Alina's text is intensified by her readers' reaction to it. Alina's audience splits into those who align with the first model and those who adopt the second. Predictably, both of the comments that criticize Alina's assertion of the impossibility of coming back – one of which refers to the line from *Brat 2*, uttered by Danila's antagonist⁴⁷⁹ ('Родина в наше время - там, где задница в тепле'⁴⁸⁰) – are made by those who currently live in Russia. And six out of seven comments supporting Alina's feeling of simultaneous devotion and rejection are made by Russian immigrants to different European countries.

Although Alina introduces a reference to another cultural text to channel her emotions, its presence results in a tension between two alternative self-conceptualizations. If Alina quoted the lines of Vechno Molodoi, or retold the scene from *Brat 2*, she would have control over their interpretation and her narrative would be more coherent. But the possibility of uploading the file brings with it the independence of another text, its ability to tell its story for itself. Altogether, the inclusion of a YouTube file results in the construction of a polyphonic narrative.

Over the last fifteen years increasing internet speeds, and the rapidly growing quantity of web content that can be referenced, have made the practice of including hyperlinks one of the core features of blogging. However, the collision of personal narratives with external texts has created the conditions for possible confrontations of different scripts of Self. Together with the possibility of

⁴⁷⁷ Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

⁴⁷⁸ Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

⁴⁷⁹ I refer to the contraposition of Danila's and the taxi driver's interpretation of homeland.

⁴⁸⁰ Comment to Alina. Open, 23/08/13.

juxtaposing different narratives on one page, this feature has contributed to the production of increasingly fragmented and polyphonic self-presentations in blogs. And the further evolution of technology, including the growing availability of smart phones with the possibility of using devices on the go,⁴⁸¹ has led to an intensification of this trend in more recent social media.

⁴⁸¹ Rettberg, *Blogging*, p. 14.

Section Two. LiveJournal Archives and Revision of the Past

Another transformation in the personal journal's strategies of self-production associated with the digital era consists in the fundamentally different relationship writers have with their past stories. In today's social media, such as Facebook, re-actualizing former narratives by displaying old posts and photographs on the timeline, or revising photo albums in order to eliminate the traces of relationships that have come to an end, have become widespread practices. In the early days of online ego-writing, however, the possibility of easy access to and revision of former stories presented bloggers with a paradox. José van Dijck repeatedly addresses this question in her books. She highlights that, on the one hand, individuals wish their memories to function like an archive or like a storage facility for lived experience,⁴⁸² and personal blogs can provide us with the means of approaching this goal; on the other hand, our storytelling patterns condition our desire to align our live experiences with a linear and coherent plot. This is why the elements of the archive that fall outside this plot need to be brought into alignment with the constructed picture. This can be achieved by editing blogs' former entries. These two opposite desires condition bloggers' peculiar relationship with their former stories. As Van Dijck puts it:

Although the Internet is characterized as a transient, evanescent medium, web-logs have the ability both to fix and the potential to morph; blogging constitutes a new concept of memory, allowing for preservation and erasure simultaneously.⁴⁸³

In RuNet, this new relationship was formed in the sphere of LiveJournal – the first resource to provide its users with easily navigable visualizations of their past

⁴⁸² Van Dijck, 'Remembering Songs through Telling Stories: Pop Music as a Resource for Memory', p. 111.

⁴⁸³ Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, p. 29.

and with the tools for remodeling it. In this section of my thesis, those LiveJournal features that enable navigation and revision are interpreted as material actors which shape specific strategies of self-production applied by bloggers. In 2017, when the data from a group of twenty-three journals were collected, the average number of open entries in bloggers' archives was nine hundred and twenty-four.⁴⁸⁴ And as the biographical archives of my informants illustrate, semi-closed and closed journals often contained even more entries than the open ones. This means that the real size of bloggers' archives (that is, all posts regardless of their privacy setting) most likely numbered in the thousands of entries. Various versions of bloggers' Selves are imprinted in these numerous stories, as they relate to different stages of their authors' lives and belong to different narrative contexts. Thanks to such LiveJournal features as the 'archive' page, these Selves remain under the gaze of bloggers themselves and their readers. The 'archive' page displays the number of records made on each day of the journal's existence, as well as the topics of the entries. In addition, such features as a list of tags and an inbuilt search engine facilitate navigation of the journals' archives. The readaptation of past self-presentations, in order to adjust them to bloggers' changing life goals, can be realized by changing the access settings of former entries, as well as by editing or deleting them.

As outlined by Van Dijck, the practice of revision did not originate in blogs: examples of personal journals being edited by their authors at later points in their lives can be found long before the digital era.⁴⁸⁵ What was introduced by computer technologies is the possibility of making this process untraceable, and, as a result, the capacity for every new edition of a journal to be perceived as an original set of

⁴⁸⁴ The average archive was measured as the ratio of the total number of open entries found in the archives of all bloggers to the number of bloggers. Hence: $Aa=Ne/Nbl= 21248/23= 923,82$.

⁴⁸⁵ Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, p. 27.

entries.⁴⁸⁶ This factor, however, complicates the task of comprehensively describing bloggers' interventions in their archives. This may be why Van Dijcks's significant observations remain theoretical in her books. While providing empirical evidence of blogs functioning as a memory storage facility for Alzheimer's patients, she suggests no cases of blogs' old entries being reconfigured in order to correspond to their authors' changed identities. Naturally, if bloggers desire their chronological records to be perceived as an authentic reflection of their past thoughts, and avoid revealing their revisions, then it is only in the unlikely case of a failure to make changes that a blogger can leave a trace of his/her editing practice.

On rare occasions, close reading of blogs can help to detect such cases. For instance, in her journal entry from 28 May 2011, Tatiana attempts to discard a record made two days before:

Я в пять утра включаю компьютер с важной идеей удалить ту длинную запись [...] а мне жж выдает ошибку внутреннего сервера и отказывается ее удалять! Черт возьми. Придется так. Я была права и в частностях, и в целом. [...] Черт, почему не удалить запись.⁴⁸⁷

In this case, the attempt to delete the entry only attracts readers' attention to it. In the comments to the second entry, Tatiana's friend questions her new interpretation of the subject and tells her that she should not delete her former record.⁴⁸⁸ Thus, instead of erasing the initial statement, the coexistence of an original entry with the record of its attempted deletion produces a twofold story. Yet this case represents an exception. As a rule, such a dialectic narrative would not be constructed: in the case of a change of heart, the blogger would normally delete her first entry, and the second statement would be perceived as her original unaltered

⁴⁸⁶ Van Dijck, *Mediated Memories in the Digital Age*, p. 64.

⁴⁸⁷ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 28/05/11.

⁴⁸⁸ Comments to Tatiana, 28/05/11.

position. With the exception of rare cases when bloggers unintentionally leave traces of editing, their revisions of the past remain untraceable for readers.

To test Van Dijck's theoretical proposition about bloggers' revisions of their earlier stories, it is necessary to find elusive empirical evidence about these revisions. This can only be achieved by performing micro-analysis of consequent entries. In order to detect the signs of a writer's later revisions of the stories, the analysis needs to be supplemented with a reconstruction of the contexts of their narration. In this section of my thesis, I apply Van Dijck's theory of simultaneous preservation and erasure of the past to empirical data. I first establish the bloggers' awareness of the contents of their former records, stored in their journals' vast archives. I then analyse a case of a blogger revising the stories about her father, as her perception of their relationship evolves.

Staying in dialogue with their past self-presentations requires bloggers to have accurate memories of the contents of their LiveJournal archives. This task can be challenging not only because of the enormous quantities of narratives, but also because of their fragmented notebook-like structure and the abundance of references to different sources. In his study of the impact of digitalization upon memory, sociologist of the internet Ori Schwarz emphasizes that in the digital era, keeping track of one's former Selves becomes an impossible task. Schwarz maintains that representations of the past cease to be docile objects of memory, and become 'memory actants', playing a role equal to human subjects in the reconstruction of the past. By providing examples of people unintentionally finding forgotten items in their digital archives and being shocked by their forgotten Selves, he concludes that digital representations drive individuals' internal memories about themselves and in this way destabilize their biographical narratives. In his article, Schwarz repeatedly

includes blogs (alongside e-mails, hard drives and photo collections) in the list of personal archives that renegotiate our relationship with our past. However, this categorization of blogs seems to be based on Schwarz's intuitive association of blogs with other types of biographical documents, and not on empirical evidence. The example he gives describes a blogger's experience of finding an old email, not an old blog entry.⁴⁸⁹ There is no example in Schwarz's work of bloggers failing to recognize their old entries. In fact, as was revealed during my interviews with bloggers, their knowledge of the contents of their former entries is strikingly detailed.

To test the accuracy of bloggers' memories of their old stories, I have asked three bloggers to finish particular sentences randomly extracted from the records from ten years of their blogging practice. None of the stories produced by the bloggers confirmed the hypothesis that being faced with former narratives would cause the narrators confusion. In spite of the great number of entries contained in the bloggers' archives, none of the sentences suggested to them elicited their surprise. The three bloggers could continue 14, 15 and 18 out of 25 tested utterances. None of the sentences suggested to them elicited their surprise. The three bloggers could continue 14, 15 and 18 out of 25 tested utterances. Even though individuals generally have a good recollection of autobiographical stories that they previously shared with others, the bloggers' capacity to reproduce their former narratives was characterized by unusual accuracy. The informants had no control over the selection of narratives offered for remembering and were able to continue stories randomly chosen from hundreds of entries contained in their archives. Moreover, not only could they recall their thoughts and the details of the described events, but the language of recollections and pragmatic associations between seemingly unrelated

⁴⁸⁹ Schwarz, p. 12.

subjects reproduced the imagery found in the blogs.⁴⁹⁰ Even the quotes that were acknowledged by bloggers to be different from their current views could be reproduced in their original form. Such a powerful ability to reproduce former stories testifies to the bloggers' accurate knowledge of the contents of their LiveJournal archives, and suggests that, unlike correspondence and photo collections, blogs constitute a type of archive that remains active in spite of its large size.⁴⁹¹

To find out whether the bloggers used the opportunity to edit their archives, I interviewed my informants on the subject. They revealed that they had indeed reorganized their former records in order to adjust them to their current life goals. For instance, Pavel removed his reflections on religion in order to avoid family conflicts, Inna restricted access to her entries to make them inaccessible to the wife of her lover, Alina deleted many entries because of her changes of perspective on their topics,⁴⁹² and Tatiana reshaped her journal to adjust it to her new significant Others. As she put it:

Когда я начинаю смотреть на себя взглядом другого человека, какой-то новый бойфренд или работодатель, я хочу чтобы они видели одно и не видели другое [...] но потом когда я сталкиваюсь с тем, что есть какие-то записи закрытые, которые могли бы быть открытыми, я могу их открыть.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹⁰ For instance, Inna's recollections contained the images of *rustling beeches* and *quickly scudding clouds*, also found in her journal record (Inna. Interview 3, p. 10) and when asked to continue the utterance about first spring flowers, she immediately said: 'This is about my mother', and indeed in her blog entry the utterance about flowers was followed by the story about her mother (Inna. Interview 3, p. 11).

⁴⁹¹ When interviewed on this subject, Tatiana explained the reasons for this high level of awareness: 'Я всегда помню, потому что я же не раз перечитываю. То есть запись, которую я сделала скажем в 2006 году, я ее уже перечитывала раз десять, наверное, каждый год. Забыть сложно [...] Ну, то есть, там как бы такой вырастает на этом месте памятник, который ты вряд ли забудешь' (Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 14).

⁴⁹² Pavel. Interview 2, p. 4; Inna. Interview 1, p. 8; Alina. Correspondence, 13/05/14.

⁴⁹³ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 11.

To find empirical evidence of the practice of revision of the past, I tracked the dynamics of Tatiana's stories about her relationship with her father. In different periods of her life, Tatiana deployed different discursive resources to conceptualize her daughterhood. In each period, she created mnemonic signs of her experiences by recording the situations of interaction with her father in her journals. Yet as her interpretation of their relationship changed, becoming diametrically opposed to her former stance, the presence of these signs put obstacles on the way of producing a linear and coherent plot: the old stories needed to be revisited and brought into line with new versions of her relationship with her father.

Tatiana's journals (including the fragment of her hand-written diary and her open, semi-closed, and closed online journals) contain a total of 20 entries about her father. Put all together, they allow the reader to reconstruct the evolution of Tatiana's attitude to him: from enmity in 1998 to adoration in 2006, to resentment in 2012 and to acceptance in 2016. This reconstruction, however, only becomes possible with access to all Tatiana's records, including private ones. The story accessible to Tatiana's readers at each stage of the evolution of her feelings was represented by the records supporting Tatiana's life narrative of that time. By discovering the signs of these stories' re-allocation to different journals over the course of time and by comparing them to the stories told by Tatiana in her interview in 2015, I reconstruct the chronology of the blogger's consequent revisions of her former stories and their adjustment to her changing sense of Self.

The first narrative script employed by Tatiana in the records available to me is the story of Cinderella (a comparison made by the blogger herself in her interview⁴⁹⁴). This version of the father-daughter relationship is constructed in

⁴⁹⁴ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 4.

Tatiana's hand-written diary from 1998. The fragment of this diary, analysed in this research, is largely built around the theme of the everyday hardships of a young girl who, after the death of her mother, has to live with her father and evil stepmother. In her diary, Tatiana does not specify who are the characters of her stories (called he and she), but from her interview it becomes clear that she is writing about her father and stepmother. In these stories, Tatiana's father appears as a profoundly negative character. As I explained in the previous chapter of the thesis, his negative representation is achieved not through straightforward accusations but through his association with Tatiana's stepmother. The overall emotional tone of this diary, which also features Tatiana's conflicts with her schoolmates, as well as her loneliness and frustrations, is highly pessimistic. In this text, the portrayal of Tatiana's father as manipulated by his wife and indifferent to his daughter's miseries contributes to Tatiana's self-inscription as profoundly unhappy.

By 2006 and 2007, Tatiana's strategy of self-inscription changes considerably. Although the records found in her LiveJournal from this time are still characterized by a high degree of pessimism, she does not depict herself as painfully sensitive and victimized by others. In 2006 and 2007 Tatiana portrays herself as a creative professional, highly self-reflexive, leading a bohemian lifestyle and accepted in elite intellectual circles. In these stories, the relationship with her father is described by Tatiana in terms of trust and emotional intimacy. Tatiana's stepmother is not mentioned once, and her father appears as a close friend and a wise adviser. In the stories from 2006 and 2007, Tatiana recognizes her father's importance in various areas of her life. She writes about accepting his political guidance, highlights how much she enjoys his company, indirectly expresses the intention to be around

him wherever his home is, states his special status in her emotional map, and emphasizes their similarities.⁴⁹⁵

The expression of Tatiana's emotional attachment to her father is most pronounced in her story about her complicated romantic relationship (as discussed in the first chapter of this thesis) and in the comments to her post about depression. The role of the father in the conceptualization of romantic experience is outlined in Tatiana's entry titled 'А папа мой говорил вот что', which records the conversation of the blogger with her father about her unorthodox romance, and in which she indicates her father's competence on the subject.⁴⁹⁶ As I described in the first chapter of the thesis, in the entry made on the next day, Tatiana again invokes the theme of father–daughter collaboration in evaluating romantic experiences by quoting a scene from a novel by Linn Ullmann.⁴⁹⁷ The scene pictures a wise father talking to his daughter about the purpose of marriage, and the quote is followed by Tatiana's approving commentary, 'Папы по-прежнему рулят, не так ли?'.⁴⁹⁸ The post about Tatiana's depression contains 29 comments, where the blogger's friends propose various solutions for coping with melancholy (changing job; reconsidering the problem; taking antidepressants; finding a lover; changing her attitude and so on) each of which Tatiana rejects in turn.⁴⁹⁹ The twenty-third comment contains (among other things) the advice: 'взять и написать бумажное письмо, например, папе, или подруге'. Though the semantic emphasis of this advice is the therapeutic potential of hand-writing, and not the connection to the addressee, who is suggested as optional, Tatiana approves of this solution and adds a comment – 'Папе. И вообще. К папе' – followed by a short dialogue with one of her readers about her

⁴⁹⁵ Tatiana. Open, 28/04/06; 08/04/07; 06/08/06; Semi-closed, 03/05/06.

⁴⁹⁶ Tatiana. Closed, 31/07/06.

⁴⁹⁷ Ullmann, *Prezhde chem ty usnesh'*.

⁴⁹⁸ Comment to Tatiana. Open, 01/08/06.

⁴⁹⁹ Tatiana. Closed, 14/12/06.

father.⁵⁰⁰ Evidently, such utterances build the image of a caring and supportive parent, the relationship with whom is seen as therapeutic.

Yet the way Tatiana portrays the positive qualities of her father and the intimacy of her relationship with him allows me to suggest that biographical material is reshaped and idealized in her online journals of that time.⁵⁰¹ In Tatiana's stories, her father's apparent competence in interpersonal relationships derives neither from his previous helpful recommendations nor from his own successful family experience. It is an abstract idea of parental wisdom based on other people's stories ('опыт - чаще, правда, не свой, а чужой - показывает, что папам и мамам можно верить [...] Как-то так получается, что они оказываются правы'⁵⁰²) that is used to impute a model of good parenting to her father. The acceptance of her father's political views ('Ельцин - мой президент [...] я за него никогда не голосовала, так как маленькая была [...], зато мой папа связывал в 1990 году с ним большие надежды'⁵⁰³) is not supported by Tatiana's life experiences either. In her interview, Tatiana pictures herself as a politically active individual who does not adopt the views of others unthinkingly, even if they come from close members of her family.⁵⁰⁴ But when interacting with her father, she approves and interiorizes his political views without reflection. Neither do Tatiana's claims regarding the similarities she finds with her father ('Нашла много общего в нашем с ним восприятии мира'⁵⁰⁵) stand up to critical evaluation. Her father's alleged ability to accept his life the way it is and always stay happy is hardly similar to the anxiety and melancholy that

⁵⁰⁰ Commentary to Tatiana. Closed, 14/12/06.

⁵⁰¹ As outlined in the previous chapter, the tendency of open journals to produce idealized versions of relationships was also found in the case of Inna's stories about her son: 101 out of 104 stories found in her open and semi-closed journal narrated a world of love and harmony, while 4 out of 13 stories from her closed journal contained descriptions of Inna's anger and frustration.

⁵⁰² Tatiana. Closed, 31/07/06.

⁵⁰³ Tatiana. Open, 24/04/07.

⁵⁰⁴ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 21.

⁵⁰⁵ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 03/05/06.

characterize Tatiana's descriptions of her life experiences; it is, however, reinterpreted as the tendency to live 'in his own world' ('Живет в каком-то своем мире, в себе. Как я, когда иду по улице, задумываюсь и никого не замечаю'⁵⁰⁶) – an overly generalized quality, which Tatiana also finds in herself.

Altogether, in these stories, Tatiana's evaluations of her experiences do not follow logically from the facts that she narrates. These are Tatiana's subjective positive reinterpretations, which produce the image of a wise and supportive father to whom she is very close. To judge by the presence of comments, all eight stories about her father from 2006 and 2007 were initially published in her open or semi-closed journals – the space used by bloggers to construct their social Selves. This signals that in 2006 and 2007 Tatiana aspired to be perceived by her wider readership as a kind of woman who has a particularly good relationship with her father. In order to achieve this, she renegotiated her biographical material and constructed stories strikingly different from the ones recorded eight years before in her hand-written diary.

Although her 1998 interpretation of her relationship with her father as a profoundly negative experience is at odds with her newly constructed stories, in her blog entries from 2007, Tatiana does not experience the need to deny or destroy her past. On the contrary, she makes use of her previous diary to highlight her transition from adolescence to adulthood, and to self-reflectively oppose her mature Self to her former stories. In her LiveJournal entry from 28 October 2007, Tatiana uploads the fragment of her old hand-written diary, containing the descriptions of her miserable life with her father and stepmother described above. In the comments to this entry, Tatiana suggests that by uploading her old diary she aspires to embrace and

⁵⁰⁶ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 03/05/06.

overcome her past ('Это попытка одновременно принять прошлое и сбросить его за борт').⁵⁰⁷ To achieve this goal, she distances herself from her younger Self ('Это уже не совсем я. Я довольно отстраненно все это воспринимаю'⁵⁰⁸) and interprets negative narratives from her old diary not as representations of her individual inner world, but as examples of universal feelings, characteristic of all teenagers ('Что может быть поганее, чем когда тебе 14-16 лет?'; 'Все, что чувствует этот человек - нормально и вовсе не стыдно чувствовать в 16 лет'⁵⁰⁹). The aestheticization of her past ('В этой тетрадке я такая, селлинджеровская'⁵¹⁰) contributes to the task of its objectification and association with a recognizable cultural script. Through the framework constructed by Tatiana for her old stories, the depiction of her Self as Cinderella is replaced by her interpretation of herself as Holden Caulfield.⁵¹¹ Tatiana's narrative goal in this entry is successfully achieved. The discussion in the comments on this post is focused on generalized teenage perceptions of the world and does not pinpoint her individual negative experiences.

To sum up, Tatiana's dialogue with an item from her personal archive (containing the representations of her relationships that are at odds with the version from 2007) becomes possible due to its reinterpretation in terms of the allegedly natural opposition of teenage and adult selfhood. In this case, old diaries' mnemonic signs not only do not compromise Tatiana's new self-conceptualization, they actually contribute to its production.

Yet by 2013 Tatiana's vision of her relationship with her father has changed again. And this time, her past records cannot be adjusted to her new narrative.

⁵⁰⁷ Comments to Tatiana. Semi-closed, 28/10/07.

⁵⁰⁸ Comments to Tatiana. Semi-closed, 28/10/07.

⁵⁰⁹ Comments to Tatiana. Semi-closed, 28/10/07.

⁵¹⁰ Comments to Tatiana. Semi-closed, 28/10/07.

⁵¹¹ The protagonist of the novel *The Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger, an icon for teenage rebellion and angst.

Tatiana's old LiveJournal records interfere with her changing story, and this is why they get removed. During the six years separating Tatiana's idealized representation of her father from 2006 and 2007 and her reintroduction of the theme of daughterhood, both actual biographical facts and Tatiana's conceptualizations of herself as daughter are moved almost completely to the area of untold experiences. As Tatiana told in her interview, her father committed suicide in 2008. There is no mention of her father's passing away in her journals until May 2012. Between 2007 and 2013, there are only three entries referring to Tatiana's father, and they all narrate events that took place prior to 2007.⁵¹² As I mentioned in the second chapter of the thesis, in 2012 and 2013, Tatiana's father reappears in her journal, but in a different light: instead of a beloved and caring parent, Tatiana portrays a selfish traitor and bursts into accusations.⁵¹³

At the same time as narrating a new story about her father, Tatiana revises her old entries about him. The entries from 2006 about Tatiana's depression and her challenging romantic relationship that reveals her particular emotional attachment to her father ('Папе. И вообще. К папе', 'Папы по-прежнему рулят, не так ли?'),⁵¹⁴ contain readers' comments. This testifies that they were initially shared with Tatiana's audience. Yet at the moment of data collection in 2015, they were located in Tatiana's closed journal, not accessible to any of her readers. Without these records, the story of Tatiana's relationship with her father that could be assembled by

⁵¹² Tatiana. Semi-closed, 13/02/09; 20/06/09; 30/05/12.

⁵¹³ 'Поведение отца в отношении меня было настоящим предательством. Неважно, чем я оправдывала его раньше, но это было предательство - предательство и нелюбовь в конечном итоге' (Tatiana. Semi-closed, 01/11/13); 'Я не понимаю, почему я ни разу не высказала ему претензию за то, что он не защищал меня от явных издевательств мачехи. Почему я ни разу не спросила его о том, почему он не предупредил меня, что я буду жить с ней? Почему он не пришел ко мне в тот день, когда приехал в город, где в больнице умирала моя мама, а я сидела дома одна [...] Неужели ему было совсем меня не жаль?' (Tatiana. Semi-closed, 01/11/13).

⁵¹⁴ Tatiana. Closed, 14/12/06; 31/07/06.

her audience from her remaining open and semi-open entries, became more in line with her narratives from 2012 and 2013. Having constructed a new interpretation of her relationship with her father, Tatiana experienced the need to take control over her past, which was exposed to her readers and did not accord with her changed self-conceptualization.

During her interview in 2015, Tatiana kept articulating a negative version of the father–daughter relationship that corresponded to her LiveJournal archive of that time. The interview contained five stories about insults that she was exposed to during her childhood, as well as the declaration of feeling a grudge – not grief – about his death.⁵¹⁵ In these stories Tatiana reintroduced the image of her stepmother and employed the same strategy that she had used 18 years before in her handwritten diary: she used impersonal and indefinite-personal subjects and the passive voice (‘меня выгнали’, ‘мне было сказано’, ‘мне показывают, что’, ‘на меня накричали’) to make her father responsible for her miseries.

Finally, in 2016, Tatiana’s conceptualization of her relationship with her father seemed to have undergone another turn. Her most negative entry about her father, in which she listed his betrayals and affirmed that he had never loved her,⁵¹⁶ could not be found in her LiveJournal archive anymore. Present in the copy of her journal that I made in 2015 and in the interviews taken the same year, these highly emotional accusations were erased from her LiveJournal biography. The most emotional positive entries from 2006 remained closed as well. As a result, the story of Tatiana’s relationship with her father found in her LiveJournal archive – at once highly positive and highly negative – by 2016 was deprived of its emotional peaks. However, the rewriting of the past is a dynamic and never-ending process, in which

⁵¹⁵ Tatiana. Interview 1, p. 5, 7, 15.

⁵¹⁶ Tatiana. Semi-closed, 01/11/13.

biographical data are always subject to reinterpretation. Having these contrasting stories at her disposal in her LiveJournal archive, Tatiana reserves for herself the possibility of engaging in a dialogue with her past by further discarding or re-actualizing her former narratives.

Empirical data analysed in this section confirmed the proposition that due to the archival nature of LiveJournal, the policies of subjectivity that formed within its sphere became inalienably associated by bloggers with managing their identity archives. The results of the analysis supported José van Dijck's ideas about simultaneous preservation and erasure of the past. On the one hand, as was revealed during the interviews, bloggers used LiveJournal archives as memory storage facilities. On the other, the materials in the archives were continuously transformed, with some mnemonic signs being reinterpreted and reinstalled, and others deleted. The analysed case also illustrated that the description of the mechanics of self-production in blogs could only be realized through participatory observation and close reading of the narratives.

Section Three. Photographs and Positive Narration

In 2003, the users of Russian LiveJournal occasionally started to include photographs in their biographical narratives. Yet at that time they could not enjoy the variety of digital technologies available today. Digital cameras were luxury gadgets, while the insertion of the picture into a LiveJournal text required mastery of specially designed software. As the technology became more available, the presence of photographs in LiveJournal increased dramatically. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, photography, both as leisure practice and profession had become unprecedentedly popular,⁵¹⁷ resulting in the appearance of numerous photo albums in the majority of online journals. This was also the time when mobile phones with inbuilt cameras became widely accessible in Russia, at least among urban populations. Cameras were no longer reserved for special events and holidays. Merged with phones, they were now carried around all day. Although the quality of mobile pictures was poor compared to separate digital cameras, the rapid evolution of easy-to-use smartphone photo-editing tools, as well as individuals' almost permanent access to their phones, contributed to the swift popularization of mobile photography. In addition, the hybridization of cameras and phones, as well as the spread of the mobile internet, led to the renegotiation of photographs as communicative tools. Taking pictures for forwarding to friends and family or for sharing on social media has now become at least as common as using photographs for preserving memories and creating biographical archives. From 2010, when Instagram was introduced, photographing the details of everyday life, aestheticizing them through the use of various filters and sharing them with wide audiences has

⁵¹⁷ Oleg Bakulin, 'Photography and Photojournalism in Russia: Current Trends of Development', in *World of Media*, ed. by Elena Vartanova (Moscow: Lomonosov Moscow State University, 2013), pp. 316-19.

became one of the favourite activities of social media users. Thus, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, self-production through photographs outweighs textual ego-narratives.⁵¹⁸ In the era of LiveJournal, however, the dominant form of online biography was yet to be chosen. In LiveJournal, photography entered the scene of online self-writing and counterposed its own patterns of identity production to the ones that online journals had inherited from the traditions of diary writing.

Research into diary writing testifies that in spite of the perceived freedom in the choice of writing modes, this genre demonstrates well-established scenarios of self-production. The protagonist of a diary is usually narrated as a melancholic and frustrated individual, regardless of identities that the diarist may take on in his or her other discursive practices.⁵¹⁹ For instance, in his analysis of identity production in the diary of Andrei Turgenev, Andrei Zorin illuminates the discrepancy between the joylessness of the narrative and the diarist's alleged archness repeatedly referred to in his texts.⁵²⁰ The pessimistic narration characteristic of personal diaries is historically related to their use as a space for confession and self-improvement in Catholic and Puritan traditions. Employed as tools of self-criticism, the narratives of religious diaries have traditionally articulated the themes of writers' sinfulness and unworthiness of salvation.⁵²¹ With the secularization of diaries, their thematic scope was broadened, and diarists' constructed ego-ideals became subject to different discourses. But the emphasis on self-discipline and the striving for an unachievable

⁵¹⁸ Despite their fundamental difference to texts, photographs without doubt contribute to bloggers' biographical projects and should therefore be considered a form of self-writing. Autobiographical and biographical testimonies have always existed in a wide range of forms. In order to classify them as a particular literary practice, in the 1980s the eighteenth-century term 'life writing' was rediscovered and widely adopted in academic discourse. According to Margareta Jolly, non-written forms, such as photography and film, represent idiosyncratic genres of contemporary life writing. See Margareta Jolly, 'Introduction', *Encyclopedia of Life Writing*, p. ix.

⁵¹⁹ Didier, pp. 84-94, 95-110.

⁵²⁰ Zorin, p. 386.

⁵²¹ Rettberg, *Seeing Ourselves through Technology*, p. 5.

perfected version of the Self remained a distinctive feature of diaries.⁵²² Research into online journals shows that in the early stages they widely reproduced the narrative mode of traditional diaries. For instance, in *The Mirror and the Veil: An Overview of American Online Diaries and Blogs*, published in 2004, Viviane Serfaty highlights the evolution of the patterns of self-inscription found in online journals from the traditions of early diaries, picturing the ‘anxious and tortured journeys’ of their authors.⁵²³ And Michael Keren in his work of the same year pinpoints the discrepancy between the emancipatory nature of blogging and the melancholic, destructive and passive protagonist constructed in blog narratives.⁵²⁴

By contrast to personal diaries, self-production through photography is characterized by a bias towards optimism.⁵²⁵ Photographs usually depict smiling individuals. However, it was not until the twentieth century that wide ‘toothy’ smiles became the norm of the visual self-representation. In Western portraiture, noble subjects tended to be depicted with light smiles with no exposed teeth. Angus Trumble suggests that painting teeth was rather difficult and therefore artists avoided depicting wide smiles. This proposition is, however, called into question since (as Trumble notices himself) portraits of individuals of lower social classes abounded in grins, especially in the seventeenth-eighteenth century Dutch genre portraiture.⁵²⁶ Fred Schroeder adds that wide smiles were also characteristic of the representations of drunks, madmen, and children.⁵²⁷ Thus, tight lipped smiles on the portraits of

⁵²² Zorin, p. 49.

⁵²³ Viviane Serfaty, *The Mirror and the Veil: An Overview of American Online Diaries and Blogs* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 4-7.

⁵²⁴ Michael Keren, ‘Blogging and the Politics of Melancholy’, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 29.1 (2004), 5-23 (p. 10).

⁵²⁵ Richard Chalfen, *Snapshot Versions of Life* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987), pp. 97-99.

⁵²⁶ Angus Trumble, *A Brief History of the Smile* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), pp. xxxii-xxxiv.

⁵²⁷ Fred Schroeder, ‘Say Cheese! The Revolution in the Aesthetics of Smiles’, *Journal of Popular Culture*, 32.2 (1998), 103-45 (p. 110).

aristocrats did not result from the technical difficulty of painting open mouths but rather reflected social norms of emotional expression. Nineteenth-century photographs followed the established traditions of portraiture, but with the arrival of the twentieth century, the aesthetical canon started to shift towards wide teeth-exposing smiles. By the mid-1940s personal photographs have become largely responsible for producing optimistic biographical representations, with their grinning subjects engaged in leisure pursuits.

The historical causes of this phenomenon were explored by Christina Kotchemidova in her study on snapshot photography. She came to the conclusion that the photographic representation of happy Selves was historically shaped by Eastman Kodak's advertising campaigns. The company's success was achieved through selling the idea of photography as a particularly pleasurable activity. Manuals and journals on photography, mainly produced by Kodak, claimed that positive facial expressions were more lifelike, better grasping the individuality of the photograph's subject. They 'avoided associating photography with sadness, work, and the humdrum of everyday life. Instead it focused on vacation, leisure and pleasure [...] Thus, it was life's pleasurable moments that comprised the snapshot subject matter', writes Kotchemidova. As a leading expert in the market, Kodak framed the way photography was to be used and conceptualized: the happy Self became the cultural norm.⁵²⁸ Ultimately, the obsession of twenty-first century social media with photography has been recognized as the cause for individuals overestimating, on an epidemic scale, the quality of life of others.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁸ Christina Kotchemidova, 'Why We Say "Cheese": Producing the Smile in Snapshot Photography', *Critical Studies In Media Communication*, 22 (2005), 2-25 (pp. 5, 6, 9, 15).

⁵²⁹ Hanna Krasnova et al., 'Envy on Facebook: a Hidden Threat to Users' Life Satisfaction?', *Wirtschaftsinformatik*, 92 (2013), 1-16.

Despite its different historical context, contemporary Russian photography inherited similar emotional optics. Numerous studies of Soviet photography persuasively show that the ‘rules’ of photographic representation in the USSR also advocated the use of positive imagery. The images that appeared in Soviet press and those featured at international photo-exhibitions, particularly before the Thaw, portrayed happy builders and factory workers, sportsmen and musicians, kindergarten children and pioneers. At that time, photography was given the task of creating an idealized version of life in the USSR.⁵³⁰

However, Soviet personal photographs, and especially group ones, did not always depict happy individuals. Compared to Western tradition, the smile was a less frequent attribute of the subjects of Soviet home photographs.⁵³¹ Moreover, the tradition of funeral photography, which included ritual pictures of the deceased in coffins surrounded by their family members, determined the inclusion of overtly pessimistic visual representations in families’ archives.⁵³² At the same time, an alternative script (that of photographs’ bias towards positivity), equally affected the production of domestic photographs in the USSR. This occasionally resulted in emotionally contrasting visual representations of the same events, where even the photographs of funerals (those that did not depict the body of the dead) could

⁵³⁰ Erika Wolf, ‘The Soviet Union: From Worker to Proletarian Photography’, in *The Worker-Photography Movement, 1926-1939: Essays and Documents*, ed. by Jorge Ribalta (Madrid: Museo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2011), 32-69 (p. 44); Martha Rosler, ‘Negotiating New (His)Stories of Photography’, *Art Journal*, 53.2 (1994), 53-57 (p. 53); Silja Pitkänen, ‘Smiling Children of the Soviet Socialist Republics: Representations of Children of the Soviet Socialist Republics in the Propaganda Photographs Published in the Magazine SSSR Na Stroike’. Bielefeld Graduate School in History and Sociology Working Paper Series 2 (2017), 1-45 (p. 23); Jo Anna Isaak, ‘The Future of a Disillusion: Sex, Truth, and Photography in the Former Soviet Union’, *Art Journal*, 53.2 (1994), 45-52 (p. 46); Nadezhda Azhgikhina, “‘Zheleznaia ledi” ili Baba laga? “Zhenskaia tema” v sovremennoi rossiiskoi presse’, in *Materialy Pervoi Rossiiskoi letnei shkoly po zhenskim i gendernym issledovaniiam ‘VALDAI-96’* (Moscow: MCGI, 1997), pp. 43-46 (p. 43).

⁵³¹ Varvara Chumakova, ‘Digital Bride: Clichés in the Post-Soviet Russian Wedding Photography’, *Communications. Media. Design*, 1.4 (2016), 33-53 (p. 43).

⁵³² Olga Boitsova, “‘Ne smotri na nikh, oni plokhie”’: fotografii pokhoron v russkoi kul’ture’, *Antropologicheskii forum*, 12 (2010), 327-52.

represent smiling people. In these cases, the smile reflected individuals' reaction to being photographed.⁵³³ In terms of the selection of material for representation, except for the tradition of funeral photography, Soviet domestic photographs were typically focused on pleasant life experiences, such as weddings, family celebrations, and award ceremonies.⁵³⁴

With the Thaw, Western cultural scripts, including those related to visual representations, started to influence Soviet discourse.⁵³⁵ This trend grew even stronger during Perestroika and after the collapse of the USSR, where the development of the market economy and advertising industry boosted both the unprecedented popularization of photography and its association with Western visual models.⁵³⁶ By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the practice of funeral photography had become extinct and the canon of family photography had been consolidated as a reflection of an idealized version of life, with pictures not contributing to this project often being edited or hidden.⁵³⁷ The conventions of photographic representation that were inherited by LiveJournal, therefore, were related to the ones introduced by Kodak. With the heritage of ideologically-biased Soviet photographs and with the decades-long influence of Western visual models, by the beginning of the digital era positive emotional optics were the norm for Russian amateur biographical photography.

⁵³³ Boitsova, p. 342.

⁵³⁴ Oksana Sarkisova and Olga Shevchenko, 'V poiskakh sovetskogo proshlogo: liubitel'skaia fotografiia i semeinaia pamiat' (trans. by Nadezhda Katricheva), *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 1.131 (2015), 85-107 (p. 90).

⁵³⁵ Ekaterina Vikulina, 'Reprezentatsiia gendera v sovetskoii fotografii "ottepeli"', *Sovremennyi diskurs-analiz*, 5 (2001), 21-34 (p. 28).

⁵³⁶ Bakulin, p. 313; Isaak, p. 45.

⁵³⁷ On funeral photography, see Boitsova, p. 329; on photo albums, see Oksana Sarkisova and Olga Shevchenko, 'Sovetskoe proshloe v liubitel'skoi fotografii: rabota pamiati i zabvenii', *Otechestvennye zapiski*, 4.43 (2008), <<http://www.strana-oz.ru/2008/4/sovetskoe-proshloe-v-lyubitelskoy-fotografii-rabota-pamyati-i-zabveniya>> [accessed 6 June18].

As a meeting point of the melancholic protagonist of the personal diary and the happy subject of photography, LiveJournal should bear the traces of the transition from the prevalence of melancholic narration to the social construction of optimism.

One of my informants shared her experience of this shift in her interview:

Сейчас уже такое время все-таки, когда никто не пишет о том, как он несчастен. Все пишут о том, как жизнь удалась. А раньше было нормально написать, что ты переживаешь, страдаешь, чувствуешь себя ничтожеством и так далее. Все об этом писали. Это был такой дневниковый тренд в жж. То есть, если посмотреть ленту там 2006 года мою, мои страдания они не были чем-то таким выбивающимся из общего стиля, а сейчас это уже не так.⁵³⁸

Although the interplay of emotional tone and photographs in the narratives of blogs has not thus far attracted scholars' explicit attention, some works provide observations that can be used as a starting point for this discussion. For instance, Elizabeth Mazur and Lauri Kozarian's analysis of one hundred and twenty-four blogs, conducted in 2009, revealed the presence of photographs in half of the blogs and discovered the prevalence of positive narration (42% against 21%) in the sample.⁵³⁹ Yet their research did not aim to establish the correlation between the two phenomena. This link was pointed out by Agnès Rocamora in her study of fashion blogs. Rocamora shows how the inclusion of photographs allows the writers to resist the male gaze of the beauty industry and produce positive self-representations (both through photographs and text), in spite of their divergence from conventional femininity.⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁸ Tatiana. Interview 2, p. 11.

⁵³⁹ Elizabeth Mazur and Lauri Kozarian, 'Self-Presentation and Interaction in Blogs of Adolescents and Young Emerging Adults', *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25.1 (2010), 124-44.

⁵⁴⁰ Agnès Rocamora, 'Personal Fashion Blogs: Screens and Mirrors in Digital Self-Portraits', *Fashion Theory*, 15.4 (2011), 407-24.

To test the proposition that over the course of LiveJournal's presence in RuNet its conventions of self-presentation shifted from more negative to more positive narration, I explored the dynamics of the degree of negativity and the inclusion of photographs in the sample of twenty-three journals over the course of eleven years. To discover the mechanics of the production of a more positive Self, I conducted close readings of the narratives, where similar Selves of the writer were produced with and without the inclusion of photographs.

To measure the negativity/positivity of the narrative, sentiment analysis is typically applied in social sciences. However, while in the case of European languages sentiment analysis relies on computer-aided approaches, its application to Russian language data presents a number of difficulties. First, existing software is tailored to opinion analysis in market research, but not to the negativity/positivity measurement of complex narratives. Second, there is no vocabulary of emotional lexemes that could be used for sentiment analysis of Russian-language texts (however, a vocabulary for this kind of qualitative research is currently being composed).⁵⁴¹ This is why, for the aims of this research, a new negativity measurement code was developed and the data were hand-coded.

To compose a new negativity code-book, I used the associations vocabulary provided by the crowd-sourcing project sociation.org,⁵⁴² and biographical narratives found on the most prominent forum on depression.⁵⁴³ From the associations vocabulary, 30 words were selected that were most often associated with the word 'depression'. Subsequently, these words were searched in 50 narratives on the depression forum. Words detected in more than three separate narratives were

⁵⁴¹ Koltsova and Koltcov, <<http://ojs.ifmo.ru/index.php/IMS/article/view/17>>, p. 100.

The crowd-sourcing project on Russian sentiment analysis vocabulary composition can be found at <<http://linis-crowd.org/>> [accessed 29 May 2018].

⁵⁴² <sociation.org> [accessed 29 October 2016].

⁵⁴³ <<http://psycheforum.ru/forum98.html>> [accessed 29 October 2016].

deemed representative of depression in popular characterizations of the condition.

The resulting code-book consisted of 27 words:

Бессилие
 Боль
 Грусть/грустно
 Депрессия
 Невыносимо
 Ненависть/ненавидеть
 Обида/ обидно
 Одиночество
 Печаль/ печально
 Плакать
 Плохо
 Проблема
 Разочарование
 Слезы
 Стрдание/страдать
 Страх/страшно
 Тоска, тоскливо
 Тяжело
 Усталость/устать

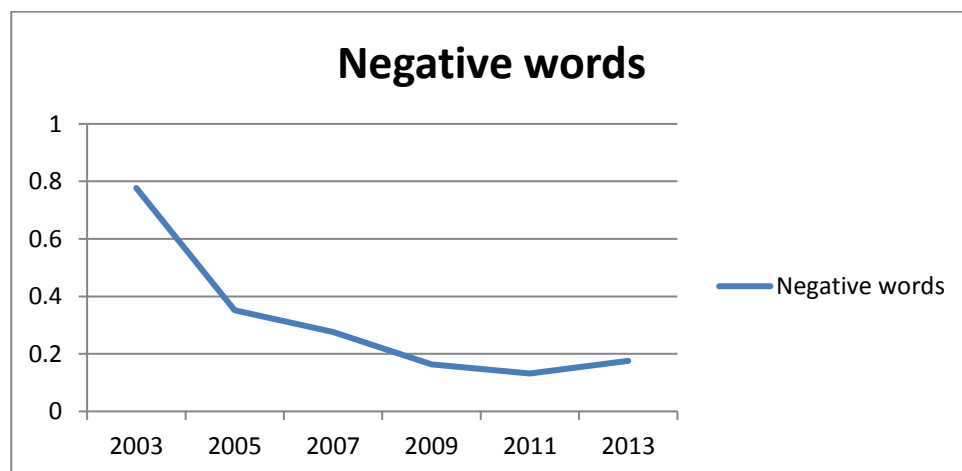
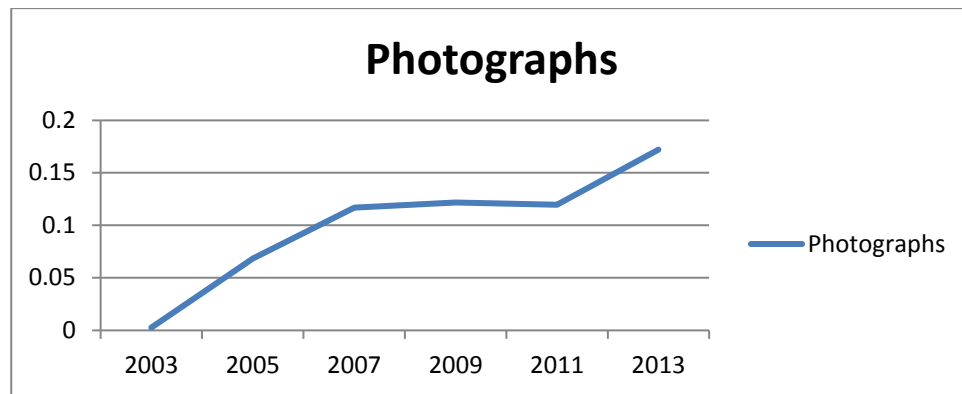
The negativity degree (Neg) was measured as the ratio of the number of negative words to the number of entries calculated for each alternating year:

Hence: $Neg = Nw/Ne$

To identify the number of negative words, the service LJSeAr.ch,⁵⁴⁴ created in 2016, was used. Each unit of the code-book was searched in each of twenty-three selected blogs. The number of words for the years 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2013 were hand-coded from the search results for each separate word and subsequently aggregated to reflect the presence of all words in the code-book for each alternating year. These data were further compared to the findings about the evolution of photographic representation from the first chapter of the thesis. All stages of the analysis were documented and preserved for future reference.

The results of the analysis are presented in the following graphs:

⁵⁴⁴ <https://ljsear.ch/> [accessed 20 October 2016 – 5 December 2016].



As can be inferred from the graphs, over the period from 2003 to 2013 the authors of the journals analysed used increasing numbers of photographs and decreasing numbers of negative lexemes when composing their life stories. As I described in the first chapter of the thesis, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, an overall cultural shift to a more positive narration started to affect the production of biographical stories in LiveJournal. The shift towards the representation of success and happiness coincided with an increase in photographic representation online. The latter's focus on pleasure and happiness contributed to further consolidation of the optimistic narrative mode. The following analysis compares two groups of stories, where similar Selves of the narrator are composed with and without the inclusion of photographs. The analysis aims to illustrate how

the introduction of photographs into ego-text supports the narrator's more positive self-production.

Working with biographical data makes it impossible to create sterile conditions for analysis. The stories are constructed in different periods of life and in different contexts; they are naturally influenced by different biographical factors, and hence finding two cases in which the presence or absence of photographs would be the only variable affecting the mode of narration, is an unattainable goal. In the analysis of the interplay between photographs and the emotional tone of narration, two types of limitations were expected to have most influence upon the results. First, as outlined by Kotchemidova, photographs tend to represent positive events, such as holidays and parties, and the ones published in LiveJournal are no exception. The narratives hosting them would naturally be more positive than those narrating other life experiences.

To find 'photographless' articulations of similar Selves of the writer, I would need to consider narratives on similar (positive) subjects. Thus, the positivity of these stories would be likely to derive from the nature of the biographical material represented. Second, the stories with similar Selves of the writer produced for early LiveJournal, and at the stage when it hosted numerous photographs, would be likely to differ not only due to the means of their representation but also because of changes in the life circumstances and status of the author. To reduce the impact of these factors, I chose a case in which the narrated Selves were not related to inherently positive experiences and were produced in similar, although naturally not identical, biographical contexts.

The stories chosen for analysis narrated one blogger's work experiences and depicted her professional Self. Both the representation of success and the complaints

are conventional ways of talking about work; hence, unlike when talking about customarily pleasurable experiences, the writer was expected to have more freedom in choosing the emotional mode of narration. The stories about work were split into two groups, with a ten-year gap between them. The impact of possibly higher professional status upon the positivity in recent stories was reduced due to the fact that the blogger changed profession, and therefore both groups of narratives described the experiences of a new employee.

The narratives about work experiences were taken from the journal of my informant Alina. As well as being a writer (with two published books) and a translator of fiction, Alina had been employed in different areas over the course of the last fifteen years. The first group of narratives analysed consists of five entries by the 26-year-old Alina, from 2002 and 2003. In these stories Alina tells her readers about her experience of working as a lawyer. These entries do not contain photographs. The second group of narratives is represented by four entries from 2012 and 2013, in which the 36-year-old Alina describes her new job in a hospital as a physiotherapist. These stories contain 121 photographs.

Interestingly, the professional Self of the narrator in both groups of stories is produced alongside the descriptions of leisure practices. However, in the first group of stories this relationship is expressed in terms of opposition, but in the second group in terms of integration. The stories about work from 2002 are built on the contrasts between the narrator's descriptions of work and non-work spaces. These different spaces are interpreted in Alina's stories as causative for her physical and emotional states, the descriptions of which, as a result, also split into two contrasting types.

From its first mention, Alina's work place is described as unbearable ('Прямо чуть не плакала, как хотела домой',⁵⁴⁵ 'отпустили с работы, потому что я в обморок падала'⁵⁴⁶) and full of unpleasant individuals with whom she has to interact ('Сотрудники - все сплошь девчонки и тоже приезжие. Я к приезжим питаю неприязнь с детства, а девчонок я вообще не люблю, так как не пидораска'⁵⁴⁷). Alina inscribes herself in this fundamentally hostile environment as taking and being allocated to different discursive positions. In one story, she takes part in the practice of bullying and narrates herself as the aggressor ('Взяли на работу новую девочку. Она пока что всех боится, а мы её чморим'⁵⁴⁸). In another story she portrays herself as a victim of others' aggression: following a conflict at work, she starts receiving anonymous letters and phone calls with insults and threats expressed in extremely obscene language.⁵⁴⁹

In contrast to this negative environment is Alina's life outside of work. When juxtaposing these two spheres in her stories, Alina switches from negative to positive narration. The story that first seems to be a negative narrative about sickness at work, with its first two complicating actions being Alina's two successive fits of fainting, unfolds into a positive story about leisure. The shift in the narrative takes place as Alina exits her work place ('Вышла я на Садовую улицу, мне сразу же полегчало [...] работа - это больно, а не работа - не больно'⁵⁵⁰). Further complicating actions picture the narrator visiting four different supermarkets in

⁵⁴⁵ Alina. Semi-closed, 15/07/02.

⁵⁴⁶ Alina. Semi-closed, 12/07/02.

⁵⁴⁷ Alina. Semi-closed, 09/07/02.

⁵⁴⁸ Alina. Semi-closed, 16/03/02.

⁵⁴⁹ Alina. Semi-closed, 07/05/03.

⁵⁵⁰ Alina. Semi-closed, 12/07/02.

search of her favourite alcoholic drinks, relaxing at home, and partying with friends.⁵⁵¹

Alina's descriptions of herself as an employee are also built on the opposition of work and leisure. In her stories, she avoids mentioning her professional qualities. Instead of positioning herself as a successful lawyer (the statement that would logically follow from her critique of her incompetent colleagues), she rather takes pride in her skills in avoiding work and devoting her time to other activities. In her entry 'вечер трудного дня', Alina ironically portrays her work day as represented to her boss during a phone conversation: she visits the tax office, but owing to the incompetence of its workers cannot fulfil her task; as a result, she only has enough time left to come and collect her salary and promises to finish off her paperwork the next day.⁵⁵² The version of her working day 'as it was', narrated in the same entry, is at odds with the one told to her boss. Here, instead of working hard, she depicts her idle wandering in the city: first she goes to a bookstore, then to a café, then buys cognac in a supermarket and drinks it looking at the river from the bridge; she then visits an internet club, and takes a nap in a park. She concludes by archly remarking 'Ох, люблю ничего не делать, а деньги получать. And I always will - как пел Элвис Пресли'.⁵⁵³ In this story, as in the previous example, the pleasures of the day are associated not with work but with Alina's success in avoiding it and indulging in leisure activities.

While the stories about work from 2002 and 2003 are constructed as oppositions of the misery and hostility of the work environment to the pleasures of leisure, in which Alina depicts herself as successful when she manages to switch

⁵⁵¹ Alina. Semi-closed, 12/07/02.

⁵⁵² Alina. Semi-closed, 10/07/02.

⁵⁵³ Alina. Semi-closed, 10/07/02.

from one discourse to another, the stories about work from 2012 and 2013 narrate a fundamentally different relationship between work and leisure. In these stories the two discourses are integrated, and the representations of work experiences are exceptionally positive. In spite of being only at the beginning of her career as a physiotherapist, Alina pictures herself as a particularly successful professional and her job as a vocation ('Поздравляйте меня все! Я о таком не смела и мечтать'⁵⁵⁴). Rarely mentioned unpleasant aspects of work are reinterpreted as positive: the need to get up at 5.30 a.m. is celebrated for allowing the narrator to travel out of peak hours; impolite treatment in a café is narrated as a humorous event; and a poor mood at the end of the day is explained as regret that the day is over and impatience to start the next one.⁵⁵⁵

Naturally, the difference in the emotional tones of these two groups of stories may to a certain extent be conditioned by the fact that Alina enjoys her new profession more than working in a law firm. In addition, moving to Finland and starting a family may contribute to her more optimistic perception of her experiences. At the same time, considering the nature of Alina's profession (rehabilitation of injured and disabled people), it would be logical to expect her representations of her daily activities to have sporadic divergence from positive narration. As demonstrated by the analysis of Alina's story about nostalgia from the first section of this chapter, not all her stories from this period are characterised by a rosy view. However, as the following examples will illustrate, Alina's stories about work consistently follow the cultural script of positive representation. The narrator's successful application of this script is supported by her inclusion of photographs into the stories.

⁵⁵⁴ Alina. Semi-closed, 14/03/13.

⁵⁵⁵ Alina. Semi-closed, 10/06/13.

Three of the four records about work from 2012 and 2013 contain detailed photo-reports on Alina's daily activities. The photographs of these days start with her breakfast at home and then capture Alina's journey to work, interiors of the hospital she works at, some of her activities at work, houses she attends on home visits, and coffee and lunch breaks.

The impact of the subjects of photographs upon the photographer's Self was highlighted by John Urry and Jonas Larsen in *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*. Urry and Larsen maintain that photography (both as the means of the gaze and its object) plays a fundamental role in the construction of an individual's experience as a tourist. By branding particular objects as attractions, the industry of tourism directs the choices of what gets captured on camera. This directed visual consumption underlies an individual's performance as a tourist and his/her self-perception as such.⁵⁵⁶ Following this logic, an individual's photographs of work construct their experience as an employee. At the same time, as outlined by Kotchemidova, amateur photographs tend to depict pleasurable leisure activities rather than the routines of everyday life. Alina's photographs suggest that this tendency can be preserved in any photographed environment. In spite of Alina's statement that her pictures are aimed at representing her average working day,⁵⁵⁷ they cannot avoid capturing the interesting, special and attractive instead of the trivial. As a result, it is not the people and places directly related to Alina's work (even though 14 out of 121 photographs do portray her colleagues and professional equipment) that constitute the image of her work and herself as an employee.

Through its visual representations, Alina's hospital is produced as a space of coffee areas (seven photographs); flowers (four photographs); various

⁵⁵⁶ John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: Sage, 2011), pp. 176-80.

⁵⁵⁷ Alina. Semi-closed, 19/06/12.

interior decorations (sixteen photographs); and objects resulting from the creative activities of patients and staff, such as crafting and baking (four photographs). Alina's representations of her work activities merge the discourses of work and leisure. Her travels between home visits and hospitals are narrated and photographed as an adventurous journey, in which the narrator sporadically loses her way and stumbles across unexpected places. By contrast to the stories from 2002, in which wandering in the city was narrated in opposition to work, here it becomes an organic part of it, and Alina's professional Self here is constructed more as a flâneur than as a physiotherapist on call. As Alina herself puts it: 'Я зевака! Видели бы вы моих коллег, они бегом бегают с сумками и тачкам. Я по сравнению с ними - мечтатель и интеллектуал'.⁵⁵⁸ The photos of buildings (four), street views (six), tourist sites (five), interiors of patients' houses (four) and flowerbeds (seven) are supplemented with Alina's commentaries praising simultaneously the importance of her profession and the beauty of the city:

[Пациентам] нужно разрабатывать руки после инсульта; я установила и подключила подъёмник, чтобы человека из кровати поднимать; [собрала] табуретку в душ, на которой можно сидеть и мыться.⁵⁵⁹

And

Рядом с остановкой очень красивая клумба. Шикарные алые маки [...] как огоньки горят в этот серый тусклый день; отсюда статуи не видно, зато виден маленький пруд, образуемый ручейком, бегущим по камням; всё буйно цветёт и растёт. Жалко, невозможно заснять запах цветов и травы после дождя!⁵⁶⁰

In addition, direct references to leisure activities – such as going to the party-goods shop during a break (two photographs), and witnessing and taking part in celebrations of different events (two photographs) – are included in the stories

⁵⁵⁸ Alina. Semi-closed, 19/06/12.

⁵⁵⁹ Alina. Semi-closed, 10/06/12; 19/06/12.

⁵⁶⁰ Alina. Semi-closed, 10/06/03; 19/06/03.

about work. As a result, these stories hybridize the narrator's belonging to the spheres of work and leisure. Finally, the frames of these narratives – that is, their orientations and codas informing the readers of what happened before and after the main story – represent only pleasurable activities: going to the pool and sauna before and after work (four photographs); cooking gourmet dinners (three photographs); and preparing for Christmas (five photographs).

Thus, as can be inferred from the examples above, Alina's portrayal of her work is consistently positive, and this positivity is supported by the application of cultural scenario of representation of leisure to the representation of work. Such a focus on pleasurable and leisure-associated practices belongs to the discourse of photography. Alina's choice of material for her narratives and her resulting professional Self are, therefore, reinforced by the optimism associated with photographic representation.

Conclusion

As in any digital environment, in LiveJournal the role of technology in the evolving strategies of identity production is particularly pronounced. Here, the very act of communication is enabled by machines, and the syntax of self-presentation is determined by the website's templates. Considering LiveJournal's technological capabilities as material actors underlying the processes of identity production enables us to pay proper attention to the role of the material in such intangible phenomena as narrative self-conceptualization. Uncovering the links between the material, the cultural and the social (assigned to material, semiotic and human actors in Actor-Network Theory) enables us to reveal the complex ecology of identity production that is inherent in this transitional life writing form.

In this chapter, I have described the role of material actors involved in the production of Selves among LiveJournal users, such as the ability to create multiple daily records, to navigate and edit former entries, and to include photographs and hyperlinks. Theoretical assumptions were tested on blog data from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives. The presence of trends (such as transition to a more positive narration and editing former records) was illustrated by the results of quantitative analysis. And specific mechanisms of self-production were described through the close readings of blog narratives. In the first section of this chapter, I maintained that the possibility of creating multiple daily entries, and of interweaving stories with hyperlinks, was reminiscent of one of the historical predecessors of the diary writing – notebooks. The case of one blogger addressing different literary genres in the entries from one day, and her resulting contrasting self-presentations, illustrated how the syntax of the LiveJournal page provided the conditions for simultaneous articulation of bloggers' various Selves. I further analysed the case of

the inclusion of a hyperlink in a blogger's narrative. I argued that the possibility of giving voice to another cultural text in one's biographical narrative (as opposed to its appropriation and interiorization) conditioned the profoundly polyphonic self-presentation of the blogger.

In the second section of this chapter, I suggested that the possibility of navigating and editing their LiveJournal archives conditioned bloggers' fundamentally different relationship with their past. The interviews with three informants showed that in spite of the large size of their archives, they were strikingly aware of the contents of their former records. The analysis of one blogger's stories about her father illustrated the processes of rewriting the past. Based on these observations, I concluded that while any earlier form of life writing would produce a version of the writer's Self over which s/he would have no control once the text was published, LiveJournal users never lost touch with their formerly narrated Selves, and managing their identity archives became an inalienable part of their self-production.

Finally, in the third section of this chapter, I outlined the role of photographs in blogs' transition from the inherently melancholic tone of personal journals to the highly positive self-representations characteristic of recent online ego-texts. The results of a quantitative analysis of a sample of twenty-three blogs revealed the simultaneous increase in the number of photographs and decrease in the number of negative word units over a period of eleven years. The comparative analysis of one blogger's professional Selves, constructed with and without the inclusion of photographs, illustrated how the orders of photographic representation reinforced a more positive self-production.

Positive self-presentation, notebook-like syntax, and engagement with the past are without doubt recognizable features of today's social media. However, they are not recent inventions, but were formed during the process of the personal journal's adaptation to a new technological reality under the influence of material actors. Yet material actors, conditioning the production of bloggers' Selves, cannot be separated from semiotic and human actors. In the cases analysed in this chapter, the presence of photographs enabled the channelling of cultural scripts of happiness and leisure, while the inclusion of a hyperlink conditioned the co-presence of two emotional matrices of patriotism and stimulated interaction with readers sharing similar cultural capital. Finally, the revision of former records was accompanied by the articulation of ideas of miserable adolescence. On a larger scale, together with the descriptions of semiotic scripts articulated in LiveJournal and with the reconstruction of social factors influencing the production of narratives, the account of the role of material actors contributes to the task of discovering the complex topology of self-production in Russian LiveJournal.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to reconstruct and interpret the complex topology of identity production characteristic of the blog platform LiveJournal, which has been shown to have played a transformative role in the Russian ego-writing scene. Over the last fifteen years, blogs in general, and LiveJournal in particular, have been the object of extensive scholarly inquiry. These studies have each approached online life writing through a slightly different lens, with distinct associated conclusions. In this way, LiveJournal has been considered as a space for intimate self-inscription similar to traditional diaries, a means for creating virtual personae, a new medium for circulating information and instigating political action and a platform with a transformative impact on social relationships.⁵⁶¹ The intention of the present study was to integrate these different approaches in order to pay equal attention to cultural, social and technological dimensions of blogging. To this end, the methodological resources of Actor-Network Theory were employed.

In the three chapters of this thesis, I consecutively described the role of different groups of actors that defined the production of specific identities in Russian LiveJournal between the years 2003 and 2013. This allowed me to simultaneously interpret LiveJournal as a transitional form of self-writing succeeding the traditional diary and giving birth to new technologically-mediated models of Self; as a literary form securing the reestablishment of the high status of the writer in Russian culture; and as a space for the consolidation of a new social class following in the footsteps

⁵⁶¹ For traditional diaries, see Zaitseva, pp. 104-16; for virtual personae, see Eugene Gorny, 'The Virtual Persona As a Creative Genre on the Russian Internet', in *Control+Shift: Public and Private Usages of Russian Internet*, pp. 156-176; for information circulation and political action, see Johansson, 27-36; Asmolov and Asmolov, 3-15; Kochetkova and Tubalova, 39-52; Beisembayeva, <<http://unitec.researchbank.ac.nz/handle/10652/3660>>; Toepfl, 1435-59; Greenall, <<http://homepages.spa.umn.edu/~shifman/LJ.pdf>>; Kuntsman, 299-313; Moen-Larsen, 548-67; Grishaeva, pp. 141-61; Koltsova and Shcherbak, 1715-32; for social relationships, see McLellan, <http://www.kathrynmclellan.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/McLellan_MA.pdf>; Davis, 47-50; Merry and Simon, 241-61; Perelmutter, 74-89; Kuz'mina, 365-90.

of the Russian intelligentsia. In order to account for both general trends in identity production and subtle mechanics of self-inscription, I applied quantitative and qualitative approaches and triangulated associated findings. In order to capture the evolution of the models of Self, I compared strategies of self-writing across different periods of LiveJournal's history.

The first chapter was devoted to the study of semiotic actors habitually involved in the production of identity in LiveJournal. The reconstruction of the thematic-stylistic profile of twenty-three blogs revealed the recurrence of narrative features characteristic of the personal diary genre as well as the discourse of the Russian intelligentsia in LiveJournal texts. Simultaneously, these results signalled LiveJournal's gradual shift away from diary rhetoric. Close readings of LiveJournal narratives revealed how semiotic scripts supplied by literature shaped bloggers' production of Selves. The analysis of bloggers' indirect self-presentations demonstrated LiveJournal's transition to a new form of self-writing, skewed towards referral to external content rather than producing diary-like first-person narratives.

In the second chapter, I discussed the impact of human actors upon identity production in LiveJournal. I described how bloggers' membership of the LiveJournal community, the presence of particular individuals among their readers, as well as their real-life significant Others, influenced their self-presentations. I have also shown how two different bloggers were subject to reciprocal transformative influence and how their narrative collaboration facilitated the production of Selves in line with the preferences of their community

In the final chapter of this thesis, I focused on the agency of material non-human actors. I examined how the syntax of LiveJournal's web-page and the option of supplementing stories with hyperlinks and multimedia elements contributed to the

production of writers' polyphonic Selves. I also provided empirical evidence that blogs' archives can function as instruments of memory management. Finally, I suggested that the disappearance of melancholy from twenty-first century ego-texts was reinforced by a dramatic increase in visual self-representations with its associated bias towards positivity.

The allocation of the cases considered in this study to particular chapters does not suggest that the production of identities by bloggers was subject to greater influence of certain types of actors. In all stories analysed in this study, bloggers' Selves resulted from interrelated agencies of numerous actors of different types. To illustrate this point, I considered the same group of stories in different chapters on two occasions. The first case considered stories about the death of Tatiana's cat. These were first analysed in the first chapter to show how a semiotic script from the discourse of popular psychology steered the construction of a blogger's Self at a time of distress and grief. In the second chapter, the same group of stories was explored again, this time through the prism of their privacy settings. This approach revealed that Tatiana's suffering Self was also produced in response to the gaze of particular members of her audience. The second case considered stories where the same blogger presented herself as a victim of a tragic childhood and loveless relationship with her only parent. These stories were explored in the second and third chapters to highlight the different facets of this Self. In the second chapter, I showed how the blogger's presentation of herself as Cinderella, and of her father as cold and indifferent, stemmed from the inclusion of the blogger's step-mother in her autobiography. In the third chapter, I showed how the same Self was justified by the blogger through the curation of her old stories enabled by the architecture of LiveJournal.

In other cases described in this work, the interpretation of identity production through the prism of particular actors' influence served the purpose of highlighting the specifics of their agency, but did not imply the absence or lesser power of other actors. Thus, the Selves produced by bloggers under the influence of semiotic actors as described in the first chapter were equally affected by particular human and material actors. The popularity of a number of themes and styles identified during the reconstruction of LiveJournal's narrative profile (such as 'computers and software', 'photographs', 'hyperlinks', 'videos' and 'reposts') was without doubt caused by the influence of technology. The high frequency of such topics and styles as 'mentioning other bloggers', 'direct addresses', 'humour', 'literary works' and 'language', was caused by bloggers' need to engage with the other members of their LiveJournal community. Similarly, in the stories by my informant Pavel, the choice of the semiotic scrip of artistry and vagabondism was conditioned by the expectations of his social environment. The adoption of literary models of feeling by my informants Inna and Tatiana was not isolated from social and technological contexts either: the preservation of sentimental templates was enabled by LiveJournal's archival functions and the choice of particular models was affected by the opinions of other individuals (in Tatiana's case, her father and her boyfriend, and in Inna's case, her friend and her therapist).

The reinterpretation of bloggers' organoleptic experiences in the traditions of Proustian prose, as well as the construction of parapraxes, were also driven by bloggers' desire to present their sophisticated, sensitive, and politically and culturally aware Selves to their LiveJournal audiences. At the same time, both the presence of these audiences, and bloggers' awareness of audience reactions to their stories, were enabled by the website's features, such as the option to 'befriend' other bloggers and

comment on their stories. Finally, indirect narration through flashmobs would not be possible without other bloggers' participation in the game. The spread of this practice was related to LiveJournal's technical suitability for the quick circulation of tests and questionnaires.

The human actors described in the second chapter of this thesis also shaped bloggers' narrated identities in tandem with semiotic and material actors. Feedback from audiences was facilitated by LiveJournal's commenting feature and the possibility of tailoring narrated Selves to particular audiences through the website's differentiated access regimes. At the same time, the construction of stories for different audiences was guided by different semiotic scripts, for instance, the humorous and light-hearted tone of Inna's open-access records about her family. Similarly, the production of different systems of characters was enabled by the co-existence of parallel journals and reflected bloggers' adoption of contrasting semiotic templates when reconstructing their relationships with their fathers. Finally, the co-production of Selves was steered not only by bloggers' communication with each other but also by their self-positioning in political discourse.

The interpretation of bloggers' identities through the prism of material actors' agency also revealed traces of the simultaneous influence of the technological, the cultural, and the social. As I explained in the third chapter, the production of alternative Selves in thematically related entries joined on one 'page' was associated with the adoption of different literary genres, while the protagonist's shifting romantic position in these stories reflected uncertainties in the blogger's real-life relationship. The influence of a hyperlink posted by a blogger was inseparable from the semiotic transformations that it caused to her story, while another blogger's need to renegotiate her past by changing the access settings to her old entries resulted

from the changes in her attitude to her significant Other. Finally, the disappearance of melancholy was most likely supported not only by the introduction of the visual representation to the textual sphere but also by an overall cultural shift that made public lamentation less socially appropriate.

Overall, this study has illustrated that Actor-Network Theory can be applied to complex processes such as the production of identity. Considering the construction of Self through the prism of Actor-Network Theory aligns with similar approaches by Attila Bruni and Silvia Gherardi. However, the focus of their inquiry was restricted to the construction of a gendered professional Self and the scope of actors under study was therefore limited to those associated with the subject's workplace.⁵⁶² The results of this study show that Actor-Network Theory is equally applicable to the study of the multiplicity of Selves and that the observation of the changes in the compositions of actors at play functions to register how subjects switch between their different identities. The focus on autobiographical writing allowed me, on the one hand, to explore a variety of individuals' Selves and, on the other, to draw the borders of inquiry. While in the study of real-life communication, the application of Actor-Network Theory could be complicated by the superfluity of uncontrolled variables, the analysis of texts where the Selves of the subjects are imprinted benefits both from less elusive borders of the networks and the possibility to evaluate the role of particular actors by comparing and contrasting identities produced in different narrative contexts.

In addition, my application of Actor-Network Theory to cyberspace phenomena confirmed previous studies' proposition that technologies are actively involved in the complex interplay of ideas, humans and non-humans and should

⁵⁶² Bruni and Gherardi, pp. 174-98.

therefore be approached as material actors of the networks.⁵⁶³ At the same time, my study showed that Actor-Network Theory's interpretation of the agency of human actors needs additional methodological nuancing when studying autobiographical texts, since not only the audiences of the narratives but also their 'internal' human actors determine the vector of self-inscription.

In *Reassembling the Social*, Bruno Latour repeatedly calls upon researchers to 'follow the actors'. According to Latour, selecting data in order to support the initial hypothesis contradicts the idea of objective research and the only way of creating an unbiased description of reality consists in observing and documenting the agency of the actors.⁵⁶⁴ My study followed this principle, which resulted in partial shifts of its focus over the course of four years: from the mechanisms of readaptation of emotionally mediated memories, to newly constructed autobiographies in blogs, to the role of LiveJournal's privacy regimes in the processes of reinvention of bloggers' Selves, to the reconstruction of the ecology of LiveJournal where different practices of self-inscription take place. At every stage of data collection, new material added new angles to my hypotheses and led to broadening the scope of the analysis on some occasions, while converging onto certain phenomena on others. In particular cases, the collected data gave new directions to my work. For instance, my investigation of LiveJournal's gradual shift away from melancholia was inspired by the reflections of my informant Tatiana found in her interview, and my commentary on the compensatory function of open-access blogs in the construction of motherhood were triggered by the remarks of my informant Inna. As a result, a substantial part of the theoretical foundation and iteration of meaningful theoretical lenses coincided with the analysis of data. The cases analysed did not function as the

⁵⁶³ Luppicini, p. 38.

⁵⁶⁴ Latour, p. 12, 237.

illustrations of pre-selected theories, but rather from a grounded theory perspective served as points of departure, with ex-post theoretical sense-making emerging during the analysis of data. The very adoption of Actor-Network Theory as a theoretical backbone to my work emerged from initial analysis that highlighted the complex interrelation of socio-cultural and technological dimensions in bloggers' ego-narratives.

The corpus of empirical data used in this study was also built up gradually over the course of four years and was repeatedly subject to selection and reduction. Many materials collected, such as bloggers' paintings, or their personal narratives created for social media other than LiveJournal, were excluded from the final corpus, as they were less representative of the processes that I aimed to reconstruct in this study. At the same time, particular vectors of the analysis required additional data, which resulted in the inclusion of a quantitative dimension to my work, conducting additional interviews with the informants, as well as with the expert Roman Leibov. This quantitative dimension further inspired additional email discussions about particular aspects of blogging with the informants and the authors of the twenty-three blogs. The close readings that were described in the thesis naturally do not reflect the whole spectrum of themes and self-presentational strategies contained in bloggers' vast biographical corpora. I intentionally selected the narratives that would allow me to draw parallels between different journals and thus to point at the functioning of the actors in different biographical contexts. In addition, the selection of material was often guided by my personal research interest in the production of emotions, and particularly in the relationship between contrasting emotional models in individual narratives. This does not imply that I reduce the ego-text to its emotional modalities, but that I consider sentimental narratives particularly well-

suited for revealing more fine-grained aspects of individual's self-conceptualizations including both the adoption of the conventions of feeling and their reinterpretations in personal stories. The description of bloggers' emotional realm in terms of binary oppositions (such as optimism/melancholy, or love/resentment) also should not be taken to imply that I reduce the whole complex and heterogeneous emotional experience of the informants to unblended sentiments. The selection of cases served the purpose of highlighting contrasts, reducing the number of variables, and thus creating more sterile conditions for observing the agency of the actors under study.

My findings make a contribution to one of the core discussions in the area of media studies, that is the presentation of Self in the online world. The results of my analysis show that such features of online ego-writing as referentiality, a bias towards optimism, reorganization of memories, performativity, fragmented nature and polyphony should not be approached as idiosyncratic features of contemporary social media, but as the effects of successive transformations in the genre of personal diary. In the area of literary studies, my findings on literaturization of autobiography in online life writing, communicative aspects of literary self-expression, and the impact of the audience upon the production of stories, can be read as an account of aspects of the Russian literary process of the early twenty-first century. For biographical studies, the bridge between the traditional diary and contemporary social media suggests the option of approaching seemingly non-biographical forms as life writing documents. In addition, the explanation of how the digitization of biographical stories and the drive for efficiency affect self-inscription contributes to a more nuanced future dialogue on the link between identity and autobiography.

From the perspective of cultural history and sociology, approaching the specific social segment of Russia's post-intelligentsia is impossible without paying

attention to the period of its formation in LiveJournal. By providing a description of the evolution of the group's discourse, this work documents the shaping of the group's conventions and crystallization of its identity attributes, while my analysis of the sentimental scripts applied by bloggers offers insights into the shifts in the models of feeling associated with the arrival of the digital age.

Micro-analysis does not typically allow for making generalizations, which presents a limitation of qualitative studies. In the context of the oversupply of data, transiency, and increased detachment from the real characteristic of the digital era, the applicability of qualitative methods is called into question even in such traditionally qualitative research areas as life writing. For instance, at a seminar on digital life writing, held at the Oxford Centre for Life Writing in 2016, Max Saunders suggested that Franco Moretti's concept of distant reading, involving the use of computer software to discover regular patterns that cannot be detected by the close reading of the literary works could be productively applied to the analysis of social media data. He argued that due to the enormous amount of biographical data that each individual can potentially make accessible, close reading becomes problematic. This is why, according to Saunders, a method that allows the observer to discover regularities across large corpora of ego-narratives is more helpful for researchers trying to understand the mechanisms of online self-writing. However, this thesis shows that efforts to discover why particular practices are shaped as they are cannot be complete without drilling down as deep as possible to the level of the compositional elements of individuals' self-representations. Instead of making generalizations, this allows us to discover the background practices that determine the production of narratives and associated Selves.

Following this line of inquiry in the thesis, I accept that such an analysis lacks the descriptive power of large scale surveys or big data approaches. This limitation was partly overcome by combining close readings with the quantitative analysis of data collected from a sample of twenty-three blogs linked with the journals of my informants. The quantitative segment of the thesis, however, has its own limitations. Coding could have been carried out by two independent coders and with the current single coder approach the allocation of tags to the entries is more likely to suffer from subjective interpretation. In addition, due to the size of the composed database, only a selection of LiveJournal writing practices could be comprehensively addressed in the thesis. This limitation, however, opens up possibilities for future research, which might either develop particular ideas outlined more briefly in this work or utilize the composed database for studying other aspects of the historical development of online life writing. For instance, my findings about the shifts in the conventionality of complaints in personal narratives could be examined more closely through the prism of Nancy Ries's ideas about the functioning of this genre in Russian conversations.⁵⁶⁵ The disappearance of narratives about historical persons from LiveJournal discourse, which this analysis identifies, could also become a subject of further investigation. My data suggest that in LiveJournal, role models increasingly comprised other bloggers who could be referred to synchronically, rather than historical persons with whom the connection is established diachronically as described by Barbara Walker.⁵⁶⁶

Additional potential avenues of enquiry include closer look at other regularities identified in this study. For instance, the reconstructed evolution of the representations of pets in blogs was at odds with the intuitive perception of cats as

⁵⁶⁵ Nancy Ries, *Russian Talk: Culture and Conversation during Perestroika* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997).

⁵⁶⁶ Walker, 327-52.

omnipresent Internet memes. My data provide no evidence of the presence of this Internet trend in blogs, suggesting that scholars interested in the history of memes need to look for its roots in other forms of online writing. The exclusion of religion and infrequent attention to romance in the production of Self online, as illustrated by the trends reconstructed, also requires further theoretical conceptualization. Other phenomena identified in this work, such as the renegotiation of the status of the writer, the cultural shift towards representations of success, the construction of gender identities for socio-political self-positioning, the disappearance of the first-person ego-narrative and explorations of the soul associated with it, and the demand for a constant stream of new information, could be explored further, not necessarily with the link to the digital realm, but with a focus on new global cultural paradigms. I therefore hope that along with contributing to the scholarship on Russian life writing and digital personology inquiry, this work will serve as a valuable addition to the dialogue on the described cultural phenomena across various fields of knowledge.

Appendix 1.Sources of qualitative data

Informants	Sources	Volume (words)
Inna	Inna. Open	116, 242
	Inna. Semi-closed	63, 403
	Inna. Double-locked	13, 743
	Inna. Hand-written	6 pages
	Inna. Interview 1	20, 887
	Inna. Interview 2	8, 304
	Inna. Interview 3	6, 241
	Inna. Correspondence	705
Tatiana	Tatiana. Open	121, 895
	Tatiana. Semi-closed	37, 876
	Tatiana. Double-locked	1412
	Tatiana. Closed	11, 828
	Tatiana. Hand-written	1923
	Tatiana. Interview 1	9625
	Tatiana. Interview 2	10,077
	Tatiana. Interview 3	11, 980
Pavel.	Pavel. Open	91, 624
	Pavel. Semi-closed	1566
	Pavel. Closed	4699
	Pavel. Interview 1	8390
	Pavel. Interview 2	8478
	Pavel. Hand-written	11 pages
Alina	Alina. Semi-closed	194, 904

Biographical details of the informants.

Inna was born in 1982. She spent her childhood in Karelia. After a degree in modern languages, she worked as interpreter and fiction translator from Swedish to Russian for several years. She was married for two years and had a son. In 2008, she moved to Moscow with her son. She worked in the cultural sector for another two years and then moved to Sweden to live with her new partner. Since 2012, Inna has been working as a teacher of Swedish. In 2017 she gave birth to her second son.

Tatiana was born in 1982. She grew up in Karelia and has a degree in history. She worked as a journalist first in Karelia and then in Moscow. She then worked as a public relations officer for a theatre in Moscow. She is the author of three plays, two of which have already been staged in Moscow. She is involved in a variety of projects within the creative industry.

Alina was born in 1976. She grew up in Saint Petersburg. After working in different industries in Saint Petersburg for several years, Alina moved to Finland. She got married in Finland and received a degree in Physiotherapy. For the past several years, Alina has been working at a hospital in Finland.

Pavel was born in 1974 in Tajikistan. He moved to Moscow with his family when he was still in primary school. After receiving a degree in Oriental Studies, he worked in China for a year, then lived and worked in Sweden for seven years, where he got married and had two children. He is the head of the sales department of a large international company. He currently lives in Shanghai with his family.

Journals used for quantitative analysis

	Age in 2003	Gender	Place of residence (as indicated in LiveJournal profile)	Journal span	Number of entries (2003-2013)	Number of comments (2003-2013)
Blogger 1	20-25	female	France	2002-2013	1295	6931
Blogger 2	20-25	female	Finland	2004-2017	652	3898
Blogger 3	20-25	female	France	2005-2012	120	806
Blogger 4	20-25	female	Sweden	2003-2013	715	2817
Blogger 5	35-40	male	Russia	2006-2018	150	1499
Blogger 6	30-35	female	Singapore	2004-2010	394	10872
Blogger 7	25-30	female	Russia	2006-2015	1547	5043
Blogger 8	25-30	female	Sweden	2005-2016	334	2111
Blogger 9	20-25	female	Russia	2001-2016	949	16397
Blogger 10	25-30	female	Russia	2006-2018	1425	52906
Blogger 11	25-30	female	Ecuador	2004-2015	1305	14409
Blogger 12	unknown	female	unknown	2005-2013	245	8728
Blogger 13	unknown	female	Russia	2003-2011	282	3627
Blogger 14	unknown	female	Russia	2004-2010	351	5142
Blogger 15	20-25	female	Sweden	2004-2017	195	3397
Blogger 16	25-30	male	Israel	2003-2018	2429	unknown
Blogger 17	unknown	male	Russia	2004-2018	1491	6916
Blogger 18	30-35	male	Russia	2006-2013	243	515
Blogger 19	20-25	female	Russia	2005-2011	1008	13277
Blogger 20	25-30	female	Sweden	2002-2013	1632	unknown
Blogger 21	30-35	male	Russia	2004-	2451	39924

				2018		
Blogger 22	30-35	female	Sweden	2003-2013	197	1877
Blogger 23	25-30	female	Russia	2004-2013	1687	6382

Appendix 2. Interview with Roman Leibov.

П: Как, почему и когда Вы решили сделать первую запись в ЖЖ? Откуда у Вас появился инвайт? Кого Вы стали приглашать?

Р: Это было, когда не было инвайтов. Это была очень маленькая платформа. Не очень густо населенная. Хотя по американским меркам она была достаточно населенная. Я даже не знаю, с чего тут нужно начинать. Наверное, с того, что наша мысль тыкалась в разные направления для того, чтобы что-то такое придумать, но не было достаточно правильных придуманных архитектур для этого, поэтому мы сами придумывали с друзьями для этого велосипед какой-то. И в голове уже был образ какой-то этого велосипеда, только он не придумывался. Потом выяснилось, что вот люди уже придумали самокат, который, как выяснилось, не для этого вообще придуман совсем, или не самокат, а что-то еще, не знаю. И его можно взять и использовать как этот велосипед, он прекрасно для этого устроен. То есть, в принципе, я знал, что хочу именно этого. Слово 'блог' я не знал. Наверное, оно уже было. Но я не помню, было оно или нет. Но я точно его не знал. Когда мне показали, значит, что меня купило в этом деле. Это смешно. Я, наверное, единственный человек, которого это купило. Я не знаю ни одного, наверное, человека, который бы на это купился. Меня купило то, что там был отдельный клиент, собственно. То, что тебе не нужно было грузить браузер, который очень медленно грузился на тогдашних компьютерах, воевать с русскими кодировками. Вот эта вот вся ерунда была решена в маленькой программке, которая вообще не требовала просмотра того, что ты пишешь. Ты это куда-то отправлял, потом ты это либо смотрел, либо не смотрел, и это все выкладывалось на вебе. Строго говоря, это была совершенно техническая вещь такая, действительно не принципиальная. То есть я сейчас понимаю, что она совсем не принципиальная, хотя я сейчас все равно предпочитаю отдельные клиенты подо все, и даже почту.

Когда я узнал. Я узнал по ссылке. Это был Миша Вербицкий. Михаил Сергеевич Вербицкий. Который в промежутке между своими тогдашними идеологическими упражнениями, у него был сайт тогда, который назывался 'Lenin'. И я туда время от времени заглядывал для того, чтобы... в общем, не знаю, для чего. В общем, смотреть, что там происходит. Ну вот, в промежутке

между такими идеологическими радениями Миша написал, что есть такой сайт. Просто буквально он написал, я очень близко к тексту цитирую, что вот есть такой сайт, где, там, тысяча американских подростков выкладывают свои дневнички. Я не поленился и пошел по ссылке. Потому что это же важная такая вещь, для чего нужна была блогосфера тогда и для чего сейчас нужны социальные сети. Потому что веб уже начал переполняться всякой информацией. И тебе нужны были фильтры какие-то. Причем это явно не могли быть индивидуальные фильтры какие-то. Стало понятно, что уже бессмысленно обзирать веб-сайты, это какая-то глупость, это все равно что обзирать, не знаю, продукты из супермаркета. Но что-то нужно, чтобы тебе кто-то показывал, что есть интересные вещи. Вот у Миши была гостевая книга. Вот, собственно говоря, это то же самое, только неудобное. А тут я пошел и увидел, что есть то же самое, но удобное. Отличный клиент. Который до сих пор существует. Сильно усовершенствовался он с тех пор. Но он уже тогда был русифицирован. То есть не интерфейс, естественно, но он как-то уже нормально работал с русскими кодировками, у него не было проблем с русскими кодировками. Ну вот, и мне это понравилось. Соответственно, это был 2001 год. Не было никаких инвайтов. Инвайты появились, когда русские набежали и американцы увидели, что им тяжело стало. Но это не только русские, там разные набежали. Но им стало тяжело справляться. У них же некоммерческая была вся эта структура сначала. И сервера стали не справляться с нагрузкой и поэтому они придумали ограничивать это дело. Вот так вот.

П: Скажите, а когда Вы сказали, что долго пытались изобрести велосипед, что именно Вы искали? Какие практики Вы хотели реализовать? Для чего?

Р: Мы хотели придумать вот то, что, собственно, называется личным публичным, да? Приватным публичным. Чтобы, с одной стороны, это была среда для общения условно знакомых людей. А с другой, чтобы она была открытой, чтобы она всасывала и фильтровала новых знакомых, чтобы там осуществлялась обратная связь. Ну, то есть, собственно говоря, то, что сейчас называется web 2.0, просто тогда слова такого опять же не было. Миша Якубов, который, собственно говоря, был мотор такой всех этих размышлений, он придумывал такую среду для того, чтобы делиться ссылками, вообще говоря.

Такой коллективный менеджер закладок. Это одна из важных функций, на самом деле. Просто уже закладок не бывает сейчас как таковых. Но менеджер ссылок, да? Менеджер интересных ссылок. Ну, чтобы вот эту другую жизнь свою, чтобы ее сделать такой нормально социальной. Чтобы она не была такой совершенно приватной, чтобы это не чатики были, а все-таки какой-то ресурс, за которым можно следить, который архивируется, индексируется и все такое.

П: То есть Вы хотели именно онлайн-общение сделать более удобным, а не оффлайн перевести в онлайн?

Р: Нет, там же действовала еще эта идея (ну, она у разных людей по-разному была), такая была идея, что оффлайн - это такой пережиток прошлого, зачем нам оффлайн. То есть там не было такого разграничения онлайн/оффлайна. Но точно это не была социальная сеть, то есть это не для оффлайна было. Не из под оффлайна было придумано. Это было все-таки из-под онлайн придумано. Вот есть онлайн-овые какие-то люди...

П: Вы сказали, что это не была социальная сеть. Имели ли Вы в виду, что это был способ, скорее, поддерживать отношения, чем заводить новые отношения?

Р: Нет, не только. Там предполагалось, все-таки, что будет какое-то расширение. Что, опять же, в блогах и происходило. То, что заводились новые знакомства, все такое.

П: А когда Вы сказали, что с друзьями хотели изобрести велосипед, вот, кроме Миши Якубова, ну, не по именам, но что это были за люди? Это были люди тоже филологического профиля? Или компьютерно-ориентированные?

Р: Разные люди. Там были люди компьютерные. Ну, собственно, Миша - компьютерно-ориентированный математик, но не компьютерщик. Он этим занимается сейчас, но, в общем, он чистый математик по специальности. Женя Горный - вполне филологический человек тартуский. Это не очень много людей. Как-то мы с Якубовым, Горным на эти темы разговаривали, я даже не припомню, с кем еще.

П: То есть, это были друзья из оффлайна.

Р: Нет, это были не просто друзья из оффлайна, это были тартуские люди. Миша был биографически связан с Тарту. Жена у него тартуска.

П: Понятно. И дальше, как стала расти сеть?

Р: Сначала медленно, потом взрывообразно. Кто там был настоящим триггером, я, на самом деле, не знаю. Это хороший вопрос. То есть, кто развернул ее очень сильно в сторону вовлечения новых людей. Но я подозреваю, что какие-нибудь журналисты, на самом деле. Скорее журналисты, чем кто-нибудь еще. Потому что если бы не было какой-то более или менее какой-то пропаганды в читаемых СМИ, оно бы там тоже болталось на уровне частного общения.

П: То есть уже в 2002-2003 году?

Р: Нет, я думаю, когда инвайты появились. Я думаю, что инвайты - это такой хороший показатель.

П: Но они закончились уже в 2003. В 2004 был уже бум.

Р: В 2002, значит, они появились. В 2002 был первый взрыв. В 2001 первом там еще относительно тихонько все тянулось. Там было немного еще народу, ну, я не скажу, что я всех читал, но тогда можно было всех читать. Существовал механизм специальный, который фильтровал всех кириллических пользователей. И можно было всех читать, просто всех.

П: А подзамочивать тоже можно было?

Р: Да-да-да, там с самого начала все было довольно правильно придумано. Там ничего не менялось в этом отношении. Было два модуля подзамочных записей и не было запрета на правку комментария и не было запрета на удаление комментария. Вот это появилось позже.

П: Ага. А когда Вы сказали, что узнали, что есть такой ресурс, где подростки выкладывают свои дневнички, то есть, Вам хотелось все-таки найти какое-то место, где писать дневничок, или где общаться? Или важна именно эта комбинация?

Р: Нет, писать дневничок, конечно. Писать дневничок.

П: А у Вас с самого начала были подзамочные записи?

Р: Нет, с самого начала не было. Я не воспринимал это все-таки как пространство личного дневника. Для меня это все-таки было пространством какой-то публичной деятельности. Я, вообще, не думаю, что у меня очень много личных записей. Думаю, что совсем-совсем мало. Такие, которые изначально были непубличными, их совсем, наверное, десятки какие-то. Я не знаю, может, это много. Ну, в общем, думаю, что мало. Ну, то есть я с самого

начала понимал, что это не приватная информация. Какая, вообще, приватная информация! Оно где-то там лежит на сервере. В случае чего, все посмотрят.

П: Ну и вот, когда Вы начали писать в ЖЖ, какие были первые впечатления, почему Вы продолжали это делать.

Р: Втянулся! Нет, ну, это удобная такая вещь для человека, который живет в замкнутом социальном мире, где не очень много людей. В реальном социальном мире. Это удобный механизм поддерживать коммуникацию с разными людьми. Он очень удобный, он гораздо удобнее, чем все другие. Он в значительной степени вытеснил приватное общение.

П: А вот Вы сказали, для общения, но возможность комментирования появилась, если не ошибаюсь, только в 2002 году. Или все же в 2001?

Р: Нет, сразу была возможность комментирования. С самого начала.

П: Понятно. И Вы, соответственно, тоже комментировали чужие записи?

Р: Кажется, да. Но там было так мало народу. Все были знакомые. Там незнакомых было очень мало. Там я какое-то время отмечал появление незнакомых людей и внесение их в свои списки. Просто потому, что это было странно. Я не был готов, вообще, к тому, что это разрастется в такое.

П: Но у Вас было представление о том, что Вас там читает кто-то, возможно, кто сам не пишет, что есть какая-то еще аудитория.

Р: Да, да. Конечно. Ну, поскольку я все-таки работал в том, что можно назвать интернет-журналистикой, я понимал, что количество читающих и количество пишущих сильно отличается. И в то время, действительно, молчаливый веб был очень большой. Он сейчас, мы сейчас уже не можем оценить, насколько он большой, потому что веб уже не существует, строго говоря, как отдельное пространство. Он интегрирован во все на свете. А тогда было понятно, что это так, конечно.

П: И кто был этот воображаемый другой, кто, как Вам казалось, мог Вас читать?

Р: В самом начале?

П: Да.

Р: В самом начале я не думал, нет, в самом начале я понимал, что он возможен, но я не думал, что он есть. Я бы так сказал. Но я предполагал, что, может быть, когда-нибудь он будет. Ну, такой несуществующий человек. Не знаю. Может быть, я сам. Это не очень оправдавшийся прогноз. Хотя иногда

мне приходится туда залезать и что-то смотреть, просто для того, чтобы вспомнить, когда чего было. Но очень редко.

П: А Вы что-нибудь меняете в своих старых записях?

Р: Нет, только если по горячим следам, если там что-то случилось, какие-то пьяные дебоши. Вот это все. Но нет, сейчас нет. Сейчас это не имеет смысла уже.

П: Скажите, а вот есть в сети диссертация одной девушки, в которой онв проводит такую мысль, что первые ЖЖ-пользователи - это была такая филологически-компьютерно настроенная интеллигенция. Что можно связывать традицию русской интеллигенции с ее новым существованием в ЖЖ. Что Вы об этом думаете?

Р: Я думаю, что все это очень случайно сложилось на самом деле. Что просто была определенная культурная ситуация в тогда еще русском интернете. Все-таки вот этот взрыв в ЖЖ совпал с очень сильным увеличением количества пользователей. Если посмотреть на графики (есть прекрасный график увеличения количества пользователей, но я не помню только, какого он года; он занятный, на самом деле), там был очень сильный скачок. Именно где-то в ранние двухтысячные. В нефтяные двухтысячные. До этого там было молчащих уже довольно много, а говорящих было немного. И я был среди этих говорящих. Это просто исторически так сложилось. Могло повернуться по-другому. Кто-нибудь, там, какой-нибудь более любопытный человек из читателей Миши Вербицкого мог бы прийти туда раньше меня и собрать там вокруг себя какое-то ядро. Так получилось, что оно собралось, в общем, вокруг меня, действительно. Первоначально оно собиралось просто за счет личных связей. Но это довольно быстро, там, понятно, что другие люди стали центром, вроде Атона Носика. Но, в принципе, их было очень немного тогда. Вот оно такое было. Весь русский интернет такой был: журнал.ру такой был, русский журнал такой был, это была небольшая тусовка каких-то, да, более или менее интеллигентных детей, то есть детей советской интеллигенции. Могло получиться по-другому, но оно вряд ли бы получилось по-другому по понятной причине. Потому что тогда все-таки чатики появились. И те люди, которые не очень любят оставлять тексты, а больше любят просто общаться, они в значительной степени уходили в чатики. Для них это была слишком громоздкая, не слишком удобная система. Для их целей это не слишком удобно

было. Потом, когда стало это модным, эти люди пришли и туда тоже. И тоже из этого велосипеда сделали какой-то свой скейтборд. Но, в общем, девушка права, которая написала диссертацию, там действительно была довольно специфическая публика, она так исторически просто получилась, это не, не было в этом никакой предначертанности, я бы сказал. Но просто действительно люди, которые больше любят писать тексты, они в эту сторону чуть-чуть. Которые любили погорячее, у них были места погорячее, на самом деле.

П: Понятно. А там с самого начала существовала система зафренживания, да?

Р: Да, с самого начала вся структура была такая же, как сейчас. Почти такая же, как сейчас.

П: И вот Вы френдили незнакомых людей?

Р: Если мне нравилось, как они пишут. Скорее как, чем что.

П: А, может быть, Вы скажете что-нибудь об этом символическом статусе для такого человека. Вот он пришел в ЖЖ, Вас не знает, никого из этой тусовки не знает. Он, конечно, будет хотеть оказаться в друзьях. Вот об этой динамике приобретения социального статуса, принадлежности к группе. Насколько это было важно? Или не так важно?

Р: Да нет, на самом деле, дело в том, что я не отношусь слишком серьезно к этой части своей деятельности. Поэтому я об этом особенно не думал. Было ли важно, как много... ну, в какой-то момент, действительно, вот когда все поперло...

П: Ну, вот Вас хотели добавлять, часто ли Вас беспокоили?

Р: Да-да, вот когда оно все поперло вверх, это было достаточно занятно, я бы сказал. Это было занятно. Это было такое воплощение такой онлайн-утопии, когда ты понимаешь, что вот ты оказался в нужное время в нужном месте совершенно случайно, но именно это понадобилось людям. Это страшно занятно, на самом деле. Это, ну, всегда приятно, на самом деле. Даже если ты особо никаких усилий для этого не приложил, ничего такого не сделал. Но все равно, ты вот что-то такое разглядел, что людям тоже понравилось. Это были какие-то 2003-2004-2005 годы. Потом оно все так потихоньку забродило и превратилось в такое болото, а потом ушло в более удобные среды.

П: Вот Вы сказали, что Вы френдили тех людей, тексты которых Вам нравились. Но я могу предположить, что, если человек хочет добавить Вас в

друзья, значит ему нравятся Ваши тексты. Если ему нравятся Ваши тексты, значит есть какая-то близость. А были ли какие-то люди, которые, Вам казалось, ну, вообще, вот этот блоггер, он, вообще, ни о чем. Почему он пытается меня добавить? Или в большинстве случаев...

Р: Ой, ну, Вы знаете, я перестал следить в какое-то время. Вот когда попер вот этот самый бум, я понял, что я не буду смотреть, кто вносит меня в друзья, потому что, ну, как-то очень много людей. А есть люди, которые вообще не заводили ЖЖ и при этом читали меня регулярно, я это знаю. Есть люди, которые заводили пустые ЖЖ и читали ЖЖ. О чем он или ни о чем? Он ни о чем. Он завел для того, чтобы читать было удобнее. Нет, не были какие-то очень неприятные люди, которые это читали. Это правда.

П: Неприятные, в смысле, они что-то неприятное писали? Или комментировали?

Р: Они что-то неприятное писали, они неприятно вели себя в комментариях. Чем ЖЖ отличается от фейсбука, ты не можешь заблокировать пользователя. Ты не можешь сделать вот такой индивидуальный подзамок, такой подзамок для одного человека. Понятно, что это тоже довольно условная вещь, но психологически это работает. Тебя перестает это раздражать. Возможность, что Сидоров или Петров тебя читает. На самом деле, в фейсбуке тоже любой разумный человек знает, что Петров или Сидоров тебя прочитает, если захочет. Но ты думаешь, что все – ты убил Петрова, расстрелял Сидорова и больше ты никогда их не увидишь. В этом смысле, кстати, фейсбук более правильный с точки зрения социального мира. Как я относился к людям, которые меня читают? Да я хорошо, вообще, к людям отношусь. Чего, если они тихо себя ведут, не буянят, все такое.

П: Ну, вот у Вас ЖЖ уже 17 лет.

Р: Да.

П: Почему Вы его пишете до сих пор?

Р: Я его сейчас уже не очень пишу как раз. То есть, скорее, нет, чем да. Почему? По инерции. Потому что я знаю, что какие-то люди за этим следят. Но это знакомые. Если они когда-то были заочно знакомые, то те, которые меня сейчас читают, они уже давно перешли в разряд личных знакомых, я думаю.

П: И какие-то тесные дружбы у Вас завязались в ЖЖ, которые вышли в оффлайн?

Р: Именно в ЖЖ, нет. Сейчас, я должен сначала подумать. Так, чтобы тесная дружба. Ну нет, по-настоящему тесных нет.

П: Хорошо, допустим в оффлайн они не вышли, но, скажем так, близкие отношения онлайнные.

Р: Близкие отношения онлайнные. Сейчас задумаюсь. Ну, это зависит от того, как мы определим близкие отношения онлайнные.

П: То же самое, но без тела.

Р: Никогда не видел?

П: Ну, может, на фотографиях.

Р: Никогда не встречался.

П и Р: [не развиртуализировались]

Р: Это слово исчезло, кстати. Станным образом, его почти не употребляют. Оно было, когда были блоги, а когда появились социальные сети, его как бы уже нету.

П: Ну, потому что виртуальность стала слишком условной.

Р: Да, слово устар. устар.

П: Когда ты видишь фотографии, видео, это другая виртуальность. Нету этой анонимности, ты знаешь имя.

Р: Да-да, я думал об этом. Что нету анонимности. Нету нужды, нет, ну, на самом деле, Вы знаете, значительное число людей, с которыми я общался в ЖЖ, я с ними так или иначе пересекался. То есть мы где-нибудь пересекались в реальности. Это могло быть несколько пересечений, буквально несколько пересечений. Но таких людей, с которыми я бы близко общался, но вообще никогда не виделся, таких людей, я боюсь, очень мало. Есть такие старые виртуальные дружбы, они, скорее, с такими людьми, которые, там, в Америке живут. То есть в Америке, в Израиле, где-то, где меня не бывало. И то. Надо сказать, что была такая традиция, действительно, встречаться. Поэтому, скажем, с нью-йоркскими какими-то людьми я просто пересекался, мы специально договаривались, что мы познакомимся и чаю выпьем. Но не со всеми, с калифорнийскими, допустим, нет. Вот, да, в Калифорнии есть какие-то люди, с которыми я никогда не встречался. Но, в принципе, на самом деле, это смешно, но, Вы заставили меня об этом подумать. В общем, действительно в значительной степени, я думаю, больше 50% точно людей, которые там бывали постоянными собеседниками в ЖЖ, я пересекался в жизни. Хотя бы один раз.

И были люди, для которых дружба онлайн была достаточно крепкой. И, конечно, она поддерживалась именно онлайн. Я пересекался пару раз в жизни. Но при этом ощущаю, то это для меня гораздо более сильная связь, чем со многими людьми, с которыми я пересекаюсь все время.

П: А вот вопрос чуть в сторону от темы, но просто интересно. Вот, если Вы долго общаетесь с кем-то онлайн, а потом встречаетесь. Ну, впечатление от текста и от живого общения может быть очень разным. Или нет?

Р: По-разному, на самом деле. Это очень, это странная такая история. Это от стиля очень сильно зависит. Гм...

П: Ну, если все пишут так старательно литературно, эдак, с изыском и с юмором, говорят же люди часто не так, да и вообще, письменный и устный текст...

Р: Не знаю, меня на самом деле как раз поражает насколько хорошо иногда люди стилистически опознаются по письменным текстам. У меня было несколько ярких в этом смысле случаев, когда я понимал, в общем, как этот человек разговаривает. Потому что это был написанный текст, более или менее профессионально написанный, там журналисты были. Но я понимал, что... ну, это, скорее, когда у меня идиосинкразия. Когда мне не нравится. Когда что-то, я понимаю, что мне что-то не нравится, и я даже с трудом могу это сформулировать, но это вот какие-то интонации. Письмо передает же интонации, на самом деле. Там есть пунктуация. Есть длина предложения. Есть синтагматическая разбивка. Есть много штук, которые довольно живо соответствуют интонации. Такого, чтобы сильное разочарование, чтобы мне очень нравился какой-то человек, как он пишет, и очень не нравилось, какой он есть. Да?

П: Да, или наоборот. Очень нравился человек, но вот он завел ЖЖ и что-то совсем не нравится.

Р: Нет. Более или менее. Я филолог и литературовед. Я привык медленно читать тексты. Поэтому я даже если быстро их читаю, я все равно медленно их читаю. Поэтому, наверное, это не личное хвастовство, а профессиональное. Мы все-таки что-то такое умеем. Поэтому не было такого сильного несовпадения. Не было. Чтобы человек был скучный в разговоре, ну, совсем скучный. Ну, бывает такое, проблемы с коммуникацией, неврозы разного рода и так далее. Да, такое бывает, действительно. Но это в личном общении ты не ощущаешь

все-таки, что человек скучный. Ты понимаешь, что у него невроз. Ему трудно разговаривать. Да, таких людей я знаю, на самом деле. Но они не неинтересные, они адекватные тоже, просто им трудно общаться. Им удобнее письменно. Но это не несоответствие. На самом деле, я бы сказал, что люди, вообще, очень сильно соответствуют себе в текстах. Ну, может, это иллюзия, мы же любим, литературоведы очень любят устранять вопросы о психологизме. Устранение вопроса о психологизме - это один из путей сказать, что какой Пушкин на письме, такой он и был на самом деле. Вот, я так себя утешаю тем, то все люди, которые меня окружают, они какие на письме, такие и на самом деле. И значит, мы можем вообще про Пушкинскую психологию ничего не думать и делать как филологи, то есть работать с текстами, потому что Пушкин такой же и был. На самом деле, конечно, может, и не такой был. Нет, это слишком хитрая конструкция.

П: То есть Вам кажется, что, вот, пишет человек в ЖЖ, и у Вас было впечатление, что он из записи в запись пишет похожим образом? Что он одинаковый? Не важно, такой ли он на самом деле. Или он тут такой, а тут другой?

Р: Конечно, у всех есть разные жанры. Конечно, у всех есть разные жанры. И, конечно, они довольно хорошо опознаются. Но при этом, эти жанры образуют некоторую систему. Все равно. Там, не знаю, если блоггер некоторый, не будем называть его имени, ориентирован на приобретение максимального количества подписчиков и реакций, то он равен себе и в самой короткой записи, она будет все равно так сделана, и в самой длинной записи. А что там у него еще есть, это у него вне сферы блогов находится, все остальное. На самом деле, все-таки, чтобы такой нечеловеческий разброс жанровый, я не помню таких людей, чтобы сильно так разбрасывались они. Все более или менее, у всех жанровый диапазон узкий.

П: Ну вот Евгений Горный про Вас написал, что Вы сразу вошли и 17 жанров попробовали.

Р: Ну, я люблю, потому что, мне это интересно. Я, вообще, ну, я же пытаюсь теоретизировать еще немножко. Да, я попробовал 17 жанров.

П: Скажите, а Вы в ЖЖ видите, когда Вас кто-то упоминает в своей записи?

Р: Ой, я не помню, я не подписан, кажется, на это дело.

П: Но, вообще, это технически возможно?

Р: Да, это возможно. Когда тебя упоминают, можно увидеть, на это можно подписаться. И если на конкретную запись ссылаются, подписаться, да.

П: Ага. Так, ну, вот Вы сказали, что есть диапазон жанров, что есть определенный стиль, который узнаваем. Вот у меня такое впечатление по тем блогам, которые я прочитала, что они очень такие литературные, литературоцентричные. Огромное количество цитат из книг, прямых и косвенных.

Р: Может, Вы не те блоги читали...

П: Может быть, конечно, может быть. Их только 24. И что, вообще, люди стараются писать очень красиво. Вот Вы сказали, что блоги велись для коммуникации. Не могли бы Вы порассуждать, насколько важна литературность в ЖЖ, и важна ли?

Р: Важна, конечно. А как нет? Да, с другой стороны, ты же общаешься не с человеком, ты общаешься с текстами, которые человек производит. Ты через них общаешься с человеком.

П: Ну, в телеграме она не важна уже сейчас.

Р: В телеграме она не важна. Но телеграм не ориентирован... во-первых, разный телеграм по-разному. Подозреваю, что есть каналы, где она важна, где текстовость важна. То есть, есть каналы авторские, которые предназначены для презентации коротких текстов, хотя вообще, телеграм не очень для текстов. Это правда. Но телеграм, это другая штука все-таки. Это все-таки даже не социальная сеть, это все-таки мессенджер. Мессенджер, конечно, не для этого. Мессенджер для простых эмоций, а не для текстов. Ну, и для простой информации, для короткой информации. А в блогах, конечно, да. Да и в фейсбуке русском это очень важно. Русские вообще, в этом смысле, да, русские отличаются. Это правда.

П: Вы имеете в виду, во всех русских блогах, или в каком-то сегменте?

Р: В том сегменте, о котором Вы говорите. И до сих пор, это достаточно важный сегмент. Представить себе, что русский блоггер ограничится очень короткими записями, ну, твитами, грубо говоря, но твиттера еще не было тогда; представить себе, что кто-то пишет, исходя из стандартов твиттера, и приобретет какую-то популярность, довольно трудно. Только если это

специальный прием, который строится как минус-прием. Как такой день, да? Отказ от... знаете про такой день?

П: А, Вы... я подумала, Вы просто говорите, вот, такой день.

Р: Это был такой персонаж раннего ЖЖ, который был по легенде совершенно, не знаю, как-то я давно уже за этим не следил и не знаю, чем это закончилось. По легенде, это был человек с ограниченными возможностями в ментальной сфере. Который, значит, время от времени записывал, там, ел сегодня борщ-котлету, такой день. Со временем эти записи были чуть больше. Значит, там, какие-то сюжеты выстраивались. Но они были такие, скучные сюжеты. Сюжеты такие в духе, ну, такой, что ли, Петрушевской немного.

П: То есть неизвестно, был ли это на самом деле...

Р: Неизвестно. Мне это не известно. Я думаю, это кому-то известно. Но понятно, что если это и был настоящий человек, то он все равно воспринимался как проект, как некоторое произведение искусства. То есть, опять же, как литература.

П: Как арт-брют.

Р: Да, как арт-брют, именно. И были еще какие-то такие же арт-брютные проекты, которые на топики определенные строились. То есть не на стилистике, а на топике. Был, кажется, какой-то дневник проститутки, который потом оказался-таки, кажется, фиктивным.

П: Он и сейчас, по-моему, еще популярен, проститутка кэт.

Р: Да, именно.

П: Там очень много рекламы, поэтому похоже что...

Р: Да, именно. Хотя, с другой стороны, одно другому не мешает. Да...

П: И был, кажется, милиционера какого-то блог, который...

Р: Да, мент какой-то был, да...

П: Который сначала писал про свою работу, и всем было интересно, а потом начал писать литературу и резко потерял...

Р: Ага.

П: А какие топики, были ли табуированные топики в ЖЖ?

Р: Нет, никаких табуированных топиков не было.

П: А сейчас?

Р: Вы имеете в виду в практиках просто? В личных практиках? Табуированные не извне, а внутренне табуированные?

П: Да, просто вот на эту тему не пишут, как-то не ком-иль-фо.

Р: По сравнению с чем?

П: По сравнению с личным дневником и по сравнению с перепиской.

Р: Личные дневники очень разные и у нас нету корпуса дневников.

П: Ну, скажем так, традиционный личный дневник в понимании Лежена. Дневник барышни до 25 лет, сфокусированный в основном на сентиментальных переживаниях. Как правило, человек, который пишет дневник, не очень счастливый или совсем не счастливый. И когда он становится счастливым, что очень часто означает семейным, дневник уже не пишется. Вот такие же литдыбры они же тоже есть. Они как-то вот не в Вашей тусовке...

Р: Есть-есть. Скорее, это не ЖЖ, скорее, это diary.ru, что-то такое. Они, скорее, там с самого начала в русском секторе собирались. И это не было табу, нет, потом на самом деле, это нормально переместилось куда-то на периферию ЖЖ, но просто не всплывало высоко. Но этот стиль с многоточиями, короткие записи с многоточиями, мы его так можем определить, девичьи дневники с многоточиями, он был, да. Есть ли сейчас, не знаю. Я просто не слежу за этим сейчас вообще. Но думаю, что есть. А куда оно денется? Я думаю, что все эти практики, они переместились совершенно нормально туда. Существуют ли они закрыто, полузакрыто, или открыто, я не знаю. Понимаете, в этом смысле я плохой реципиент, потому что я не знаю, что у людей в головах. Я представляю себе примерно, что довольно большое количество людей до сих пор полагают, что их дневники и блоги - это их личное пространство, оно закрыто, поэтому они могут себе позволить там вполне традиционные вещи, которые все позволяют. Но мы-то, которые вот это все, в тусовке крутились, мы-то уже привыкли быть публичными и понимали, как можно в этой сфере работать. Да, там можно было намного больше, чем в официальной, даже сетевой, журналистике. В том числе, там, про личные обстоятельства. Это все там было. Счастливый/несчастный. То есть, Вы спрашиваете, есть ли соответствие между драматизмом личных обстоятельств, переживаемых самим человеком, и жанрами в дневниках. Наверное, где-то есть, но не у Антона Носика. Вот у Антона Носика я как-то не наблюдал никогда. Он все-таки довольно известный блоггер. Он сам так представляется, представлялся, поэтому можно его, наверное, так называть. Он вытеснил личные записи.

П: То есть как? В смысле, у себя?

Р: У себя, да, они на периферию ушли.

П: Вот я кодирую эту свою выборку и вижу, что, вот, писать о трагическом не принято. Можно упомянуть, что кто-то и знакомых умер, но о своих переживаниях, нет. Если женщины начинают как-то склоняться в сторону сентиментализма, они сразу начинают за это извиняться и какие-нибудь такие комментарии добавлять, мол, 'а с другой стороны, это мой блог, вот захочу - и буду здесь плакать'. У меня возникает чувство, что, видимо, это как-то не ком-иль-фо писать о своей романтике. Почему-то абсолютно отсутствуют записи о сексе, буквально раз-два. Почему-то очень много записей об алкоголе, но совершенно нету записей о наркотиках, даже о марихуане. На всей выборке одна запись. Из 22.000. Как-то я чувствую, что есть дисбаланс. И непонятно, как эти конвенции формируются.

Р: Значит так. Что касается наркотиков, я бы, вообще, это дело вычеркнул, потому что есть уголовные статьи, они совершенно какие-то зверские в России, насколько я понимаю...

П: Нет, ну, если можно ругаться на Путина...

Р: Нет, ругаться на Путина уголовной статьи нету. А про наркотики довольно жесткая статья, там же у них криминализовано, насколько я понимаю, хранение.

П: Да.

Р: Обладание криминализовано. И соответственно, ну, это все, просто вычеркиваем. Кстати, в раннем, я думаю, что-то такое можно найти. Хотя тоже, в общем, все осторожные. Что касается секса. Вот я помню, у меня дома лежит дневник молодого человека начала 20 века, случайно попавший ко мне, где, значит, специальным образом кодированы его... там трудно даже понять, что кодировано, но понятно, что это имеет отношение к сексу.

П: Кодировано, в смысле, он сам в своем дневнике вуалирует...

Р: Именно, в своем закрытом дневнике. И он не просто вуалирует, он пишет 'за ночь три раза' и дальше палочки какие-то стоят, закорючки. То есть, это вообще, видимо, вне традиции русской в дневнике. Но я не знаю, конечно, на самом деле, это плохой прием – говорить про один дневник. Но можно предположить, что это была какая-то такая, что где-то он научился, кто-то его тоже научил, что нельзя про это писать в дневнике. При этом, ну, я не знаю, он

сохранил свои дневники. Он вырвал там, там трагическим образом вырваны страницы начиная с октября 17 года, то есть он вот доведен до октября 17 года, а дальше начинается самое интересное – и все, привет! А вот про секс там... причем, я боюсь сейчас соврать, нужно будет откопать его и посмотреть, там, кажется, до своих реальных контактов с женщинами он какие-то одни закорючки ставит, а потом какие-то уже другие. То есть у него тоже есть какая-то своя система кодировки. Наверное, индивидуальная. Но откуда-то он взял идею, что нельзя про это писать. То есть я не думаю, короче говоря, я не думаю, что это сетевая такая штука. Но с другой стороны, в общем, люди понимают. Так они, вроде, забывают, что это публичное пространство.

П: Ну, хорошая тема, чтобы привлечь-то аудиторию.

Р: Чтобы привлечь аудиторию, да, вот проститутка кэт, она привлекает аудиторию. А, так, привлечь аудиторию, ну, зачем, собственно говоря. Тут нужна какая-то конвенция все-таки. Между привлечением аудитории и возможностью различных сложностей. Ну и, собственно говоря, писать о сексе, это дело такое. Тебе нужно согласие твоего партнера, чтобы написать. Если этого согласия нет, то это нарушение всех конвенций, а представить себе, что кто-нибудь к кому-нибудь приходит и говорит: ‘давай, я вот сегодня напишу у себя в ЖЖ’. Слишком много социальных неудобств, короче говоря. Я уже не говорю про личные, там, возможности, адюльтер и так далее.

П: Но при этом можно писать про особенности отношений, выражать всякие обиды на партнера?

Р: Да-да. Это можно. Про эмоции можно, про секс нельзя [...] Про сильные эмоции нельзя, Вы правы, про сильные эмоции там тоже есть запрет. Потому что, ну, по той же причине, по которой на выражение сильных эмоций общество вообще накладывает запрет. Я думаю, что тут тоже ничего специфически сетевого нету.

П: Но именно на выражение отрицательных эмоций? Положительные можно.

Р: Да, можно, да, но это может быть фигура речи. Да, положительные можно.

П: А теперь о Вашем опыте, у Вас было впечатление, что какие-то топики лучше комментируются?

Р: Наверное, было, но я уже забыл. Ну, да, там что-нибудь такое. Пока политика была, про политику. Ну, были горячие общественно интересные темы. Которые горячо комментировались. Или же это, действительно, какие-то такие споры о вкусах. Споры о вкусах - это прекрасная тема, это всегда. Но есть безошибочные какие-то холивары, которые просто неминуемо вызывают...

П: Это, например...

Р: Это, например, буква ё, конечно. Буква ё, запрет на курение, ну, буквой ё смешно на самом деле. С запретом на курение не очень смешно, потому что, действительно, все это в реальности работает. А вот буква ё - это смешно. Орфография вообще. И стилистика.

П: Вообще, я была поражена, насколько много дебатов о том, как писать стилистически, как переводить, как ставить запятые. И сколько извинений от самих блоггеров, ах, извините, знаю, что я сделал ошибки в прошлой записи, ну, вы меня читаете, вы знаете, что у меня бывают ошибки, мне об этом говорили. То есть, может, люди пишут и безупречно, но вот этот диктат безупречного письма очень действует.

Р: Есть, да. Но это такая большая русская тенденция. Это такая, ну, уж там не знаю, логоцентризм, не логоцентризм, но такая специальная повернутость на правильности. Причем ни в каких областях этого нету. Конечно, споры о том, могут ли мужики надевать носки с сандалиями, это тоже такая, горячая тема. Она, пожалуй, соизмерима. Но таких точек в одежде все-таки не очень много. Это какие-то очень избранные вещи. А про орфографию и пунктуацию, вот, практически по любому поводу. Но это свойство, вообще, такого русского перекоса. Такого не культурного даже, а культурно-языкового. Перекоса в сторону прескриптивизма школьного образования, которое все-таки в значительной степени бессмысленными вещами занимается в этом отношении. Вместо того, чтобы историю грамматики учить, учат тому, чтобы, расстановке запятых, которые действительно замысловаты в русском языке. И очень нормативированы в русском языке, сверх-упорядочены. И из-за этого все спорят. Все страшно любят спорить. Причем там же споры удивительные. Где надо – призывают Розенталя, где надо – отрицают Розенталя. Один крупный экономист, специалист всемирного банка, значит, долго со мной спорил, что слово тартуский НУЖНО писать с двумя с.

П: Да, и меня тоже так учили...

Р: Причем, поскольку это никаким Розенталем не объясняется, вот, просто нет такого Розенталя на свете, то он придумывал такие хитрые казуистические ходы по этому поводу... Когда я, значит, последовательно разбил все его доводы, он прибег к поддержке одного коллеги, который, будучи добрым человеком, в отличие от меня, ну, как-то ему разрешил, в общем, писать с двумя с. И он: 'Знаете, вот этот мне разрешил писать с двумя с'. Ну, тут уж, действительно, ничего не скажешь, разрешил - так разрешил. Да, удивительные люди, действительно. Но я и сам такой, конечно.

П: Вам не кажется, что все эти обсуждения чистоты языка, это еще и способ демонстрировать свою экспертность и показывать свое интеллектуальное превосходство?

Р: Ну, интеллигентность, да-да-да, конечно. Я очень вежливый. Ты, скотина, не умеешь букву В большую писать в слове Вы, иди к черту, мы тебя расстреляем и все такое. Да. Да, есть такое.

П: Я очень много таких тестов вижу. Которые очень вежливые, но в которых подтекстом идет (и это не только про язык) некоторое превосходство над людьми вокруг, некоторые зарисовки о...

Р: Вы имеете в виду, не диалогический жанр, а обсуждения.

П: Да, даже в постах. Очень часто у записи такая окраска. То есть не просто показать, что я умею литературно писать, но еще и что я обладаю определенным интеллектуальным статусом.

Р: Ну, это статус повествователя. Значит так, Вы говорите, о нарративных записях?

П: Да.

Р: Но нарративный жанр, все-таки, русский, он очень сильно исходит из такого, ну, Толстовского повествователя, условно говоря. Который все-таки, ну, Лев Толстой, конечно, главнее всех остальных в романе, да. И Достоевский главнее всех остальных в своем романе. Да и как иначе? Лирическая прививка, да, немножко смешно получается. Потому что, когда лирический герой, у него все так хорошо, это не очень хорошая лирика все-таки, наверное. Но если сдвинуто это в сторону наррации, то тогда ничего. Тогда просто автор смотрит иронически на все, на всех окружающих. Он умнее всех, да. Как у Толстого. Он один знает правду, или не знает.

П: И вот этот стилистический нюанс, он определяется все-таки тем, что есть аудитория?

Р: Да-да, конечно. В личном дневнике ты не будешь наррацию выстраивать, настоящих нарративных фрагментов. Ну, личный дневник нормального человека, вот, лежит у меня дома. Он совершенно нормальный человек. Там никакой наррации нет. 'Вставши утром и напившись чаю', - начинается каждая запись, 'пошел туда-то и туда-то'. Ну, это не наррация в строгом смысле, там нет сюжета. Там есть течение времени. И фиксация событий внутри дня. А чтобы наррацию построить, тебе нужно уже какое-то насилие над материалом. Ты не будешь это для себя делать. Зачем, собственно. Зачем мне придумывать рассказ. Я напишу 'Проснувшись утром и напившись чаю, пошел в университет. До трех работал и пошел в кинотеатр, смотрел картину такую-то. Затем вернулся. Вечером (далее четыре закорючки и это самое) и лег спать'. Это да. Но все жанры, на самом деле, этих самых блогов, они, конечно, очень сильно сдвинуты литературой. Тут даже если это одно восклицание, это все же, конечно, я не фиксирую для себя свое нынешнее психологическое или эмоциональное состояние, а я говорю о том, что так сильно переживаю, что я не могу даже долго об этом рассказывать, а просто, как жалко что Спартак проиграл. Опять проиграли! А вообще-то, это, конечно, равно моей реальной реплике, там, если я смотрю телевизор и они опять проиграли. Но внутри блога, конечно, не равно моей реальной реплике. Это равно тому, что у меня нет слов, я даже не буду это описывать, все это видели. Конечно, это литература. Нет, вообще, это литература, конечно. Но она плохая, как бы, но какая есть.

П: Ну, коль уж это литература, то, вот, есть записи однозначно литературные. Очень много стихов. Почему у них нет комментариев?

Р: Стихов? А как комментировать стихи?

П: А зачем тогда выкладывать?

Р: Нет, ну, на самом деле, у некоторых стихов есть комментарии. Но очень часто это просто плюсики, или восклицательный знак, или 'утащу к себе', или, там, еще какие-то мои любимые есть. Это, строго говоря, недостаток лайков, отсутствие лайков. Если бы были лайки, то было бы много лайков под стихами. Причем их бы тоже не читали. Просто за то, что ты такой, еще и стишки сочиняешь, мы тебе поставим лайк. Но а как их комментировать? Я не

знаю, как комментировать стихи. Это что... но иногда вопросы, кстати, задают. Почему ударение не то...

П: Хороший вопрос. Но я об этом не думала, кстати, действительно, как их комментировать.

Р: Нет, иногда, бывает, на самом деле, задают вопросы. Иногда приходят к поэтам и обличают их грамотность, а иногда, наоборот, обнаруживают, что они обнаружили какие-то подтексты, которые там есть. Ну, в общем, там что-то бывает. Но вообще-то, конечно, лирика, она вообще нигде не живет. Я не знаю. Если я записываю в свой личный дневник лирическое стихотворение, я на самом деле хочу использовать дневник как рабочую тетрадь и оно все равно выпадает из дневниковости моей. Оно где-то в другом месте должно находиться. Лирика, вообще, мне кажется, не очень хорошо живет в дневниковом пространстве. Чужая – да. Но цитатами. Или выписками. Сегодня, там, вспомнил стихотворение Тютчева ‘Люблю грозу в начале мая...’ Кстати, такие, elaborated такая проза, заданная как фикшн, ну, рассказы, условно говоря, не рассказы о жизни, а рассказы, они тоже комментируются таким образом, ‘утащу к себе’ и так далее. То есть, там, где эта литература переползает, пересекает черту с нормальными конвенциональными жанрами, она выключается из дневникового ряда. ‘Иванов написал сегодня такой рассказ’ - вот, собственно говоря, дневниковый формат. А сама запись – это рассказ, это результат работы его.

- Да. То есть получается, что вот это коммуникативное пространство, оно смещается в сторону биографики.

- Да, конечно. Но она не должна уходить в чистую лирику. Понятно, что чистая лирика – это тоже похожая очень вещь на дневник. Может быть похожая на дневник. Но она должна быть еще немножко не только нон-фикшн, но и не носить следов большой литературности.

П: А, вот, Вы знаете, есть много записей о снах. И они вполне себе такие литературные. И они пользуются вниманием, почему? Потому что у этого текста есть такая рамка, что его можно интерпретировать, говорить что-то о внутреннем мире человека, деконструировать?

Р: Да. Но я не уверен, кстати, что они пользуются успехом. Я не помню, пользуются сны успехом, или нет. Нет, наверное, да. Потому что непонятно, что это такое. Вот, кстати, Женька Горный, он - наш главный идеолог этого

дела, потому что он когда-то защищал работу Ремизова про сны. Я не помню, как называлась книжка.

П: Я не знаю.

Р: Забыл. Вспомню - скажу. Вот, собственно, Ремизов Алексей Михайлович, он был такой канонизатор этого жанра в русской литературе. То есть, он придумал, что сны можно не просто делать частью литературного произведения. А можно записывать, литературно обрабатывать, ну, или не записывать, а придумывать, не важно, и издавать как отдельную книжку. У него есть такая книжка, которая вся состоит из снов. И Горный как-то очень увлеченно этим занимался, а потом он, значит, такой сервер сделал, ну, сайт, который назывался 'Онейрократия', где все желающие присылали сны. Ну, все желающие, человек 5. Это очень давно было, это был один из первых проектов в русском вебе. В девяностые годы, в общем. В поздние 90-е. Вот. И все научились у Горного, что интернет и сны – это хорошая пара. Что, наверное, правда. Сны – это, вообще, прекрасная тема. Она не имеет прямого отношения к блогам, но ты можешь, с одной стороны, вписать легко это в блог, потому что вот сегодня я увидел сон, вот, проснулся и расскажу вам свой сон. А с другой стороны, ты можешь там врать сколько угодно. Никто тебя не уличит. НИКТО НИКОГДА тебя не уличит. Никто не знает меры фикциональности твоего повествования. И все на самом деле знают, что сны не очень отчетливы. Когда их вот так подробно с деталями рассказывают, скорее всего, там что-то как-то обработано. Это хорошая тема на самом деле. Я даже вот как-то... Я ленивый просто. Я этой цели не ставил. Но сны я, кстати, с удовольствием свои перечитываю. У меня совсем придуманных нету. Но вот интересно, что некоторые я вспоминаю, а некоторые абсолютно не вспоминаю. Я просто их забыл совершенно, что они были. Но когда я их перечитываю, вот то, что там правда, это, скорее всего, то, что я запомнил. Это удивительно, насколько старые сны вспоминаются.

П: [мой комментарий про технику транскрибирования сна]

Р: [ответ про связь образа и текста в записях снов]

П: так, ну, вернемся, к ЖЖ. Почему ЖЖ умер?

Р: А он не умер, он ЖЖ-ит, там какая-то активность есть. Целая организация на нем паразитирует и, видимо, зарабатывает деньги. Он умер по

нескольким причинам. Потому что социальные сети удобнее во многих отношениях.

П: Удобнее для чего?

Р: Удобнее именно для общения. Для моментального общения. Он умер так же, как умер немобильный интернет. Он умер? Нет, почему же, мы все пользуемся немобильным интернетом. Но, понятно, что новая реальность, она связана именно с постоянным подключением. С тем, что у меня там что-то время от времени звякает и я на него смотрю. Вот я сейчас не смотрю, я не то чтобы горд этим, но это стоит мне каких-то усилий, не смотреть. Но не очень больших. Я думаю, это именно переход в новое качество. Для постоянного подключения блог неудобен, он громоздок. Для постоянного подключения нужны микро-блоги. И социальная сеть, которая какими-то постоянными пикипикациями тебя вытаскивает оттуда. Заставляет тебя входить в виртуальную реальность.

П: А что социальные сети не позволяют делать, то, что позволял ЖЖ, какие практики?

Р: Ну, очень многие. Они не годятся в качестве дневников. То есть, если ты хочешь узнать, что ты делал в какой-то день. Ну, ты можешь, конечно, пойти, скачать архив своего фейсбука. И дальше пытаться с этим ужасом что-то делать. Это не очень страшно, но вряд ли кто-то будет пытаться это делать. Они неудобны в качестве разоблачительных документов. Там архивов нет, нету поиска. Ты не можешь сказать, что вот такой-то человек писал 20 лет назад на фейсбуке то-то. С блогами все-таки не так. Там до недавнего времени были архивы всего на свете, пока яндекс их не отключил. И можно было любую запись найти, строго говоря. Ну, и как средство самопубликации блог, конечно, гораздо более похож на традиционное средство. На веб-сайт похож. А социальная сеть – это не веб-сайт, это такое колесо сансары, которое перед тобой крутится. Оно, собственно говоря, для того и сделано, чтобы все время крутиться. Не для того, чтобы ты возвращался и перечитывал, а для того, чтобы через тебя все время прогонялся новый поток информации с этими колбасными вкраплениями рекламы.

П: А вот эти несколько тысяч людей, которые стали в 2004 году вести ЖЖ. Мы не знаем, вели ли они рукописный дневник. Но ЖЖ вели очень

активно. И что они – перестают вести дневник вообще, когда они уходят в социальные сети. Им больше не нужен дневник вообще?

Р: Ну, а хотели ли они вести дневник с самого начала? Вообще говоря, я бы несколько гипотез высказал по этому поводу. Может быть, они не хотели вести дневник. Просто у них не было возможности сделать ничего для социальной интеракции, кроме как вот в этом жанре, который предполагал дневниковость. Он был устроен, структурирован как дневник. А когда выяснилось, то это необязательно, они спокойно и отказались от этого. Много ли людей ведет дневники бумажные? Я думаю, что не очень много. Я не знаю таких опросников.

П: Среди взрослых предположительно немного.

Р: Среди подростков, я думаю, тоже немного. Можно предположить, что есть субкультуры, где это модно. Ведут ли школьники, ну, не знаю.

П: Те, кого я интервьюировала, вели. Но, конечно, это люди, которые активно пишут в ЖЖ.

Р: В детстве вели?

П: В детстве, в юности. Но опять-таки, это люди, склонные писать.

Р: Ну, не знаю, на самом деле, это хорошо было бы изучить. Я хочу сделать такой сервис, чтобы любой исследователь мог задать любые вопросы про культуру и получить репрезентативный подтвержденный социологами ответ.

[обсуждение сервиса]

[обсуждение истории дневника]

П: У меня еще есть один вопрос. Вот мы с Вами обсуждали качества этого нарратора, его литаратуроцентризм, его такая дидактическая позиция, а еще какие-нибудь Вам приходят на ум? Какой он, этот рассказчик?

Р: Русский нарратор?

П: В ЖЖ. По крайней мере в этом сегменте жж, о котором мы говорим.

Р: Он принципиально полижанровый. Это вот то, чему всех научил Достоевский ‘Дневником писателя’. Только Достоевский там, конечно, себя сдерживал и, там, про секс не писал. А ученик Достоевского Розанов уже все это делал. Достоевский ориентировался на монументальные жанры, он все-таки романист. И ‘Дневники писателя’ это, несомненно, много букоф каждый раз. Подвал газетный, я думаю, по объему. Он как учился на ‘Петербургской

летописи' в свое время, на фельетонах, вот такой у него объем, это он имел в виду каждый раз. А у Розанова такие, действительно, записные книжки /дневники. Но и ЖЖ – это тоже записные книжки. Там, скорее, этот объем - меньше экрана. Скорее Розанов, чем Достоевский. И полижанровость - вот, что важно. Потому что совсем об одном и том же, там есть такие, но их всегда подозревают в виртуальности. Потому что настоящий человек, он всегда должен о разном говорить. О разном и немножко по-разному. Если он все время об одном и том же, значит он ненастоящий, виртуальная личность. Там есть такие замечательные проекты, которые все выстроены вокруг одной темы. Там есть попытки работать в разных жанрах, но все вокруг одной темы. И это художественный проект. То есть, есть вот такой человек, как же он, Семен Бей Баб. Это кажется тот же Костя Крылов, который, вместо того, чтобы в разнообразии своем представлять перед зрителями, он как Кьеркегор, множил маски. И у него одна из масок была, это берется любой ксенофобский дискурс и пародируется как дискурс феминофобский. То есть, действительно, не мизогиния, а феминофобия. То есть, бабы во всем виноваты. Ужасно смешно, да. Притом, Костя сам немножко ксенофоб. И он сам над собой таким образом немножко издевается.

[обсуждение условности и игры в жж и фейсбуке]

Р: Все-таки ты должен о разном писать. Ты должен быть живым человеком, ты должен испытывать по разным поводам живые эмоции, уметь говорить в разных регистрах стилистических. Отчасти, на самом деле, такое вымирание связано с тем, что такие дневники просто сужались до какой-то одной темы. Просто превращались, например, в трансляцию публицистических текстов, или что-нибудь такое. Специфически ЖЖ-шным было и большое количество виртуальных людей. Вот, если сравнивать с фейсбуком, который это пресекает, как известно. Не знаю, как они это устраивают, но это более или менее работает.

П: А виртуальная личность – это всегда арт-проект, или это может быть дневник?

Р: Нет, не всегда, это может быть личный дневник. Псевдонимный, точнее сказать, дневник. Но я все-таки не называл бы виртуальными личностями псевдоним. Это все-таки разные вещи. Когда Костя под псевдонимом пишет стихи – это арт-проект. А если бы он вместо Крылов писал

бы, там, Хвостов, то это был бы не арт-проект, это был бы просто, он бы скрывал свое лицо. Оно же выясняется довольно легко. Если это настоящий интересный дневник, то выясняется довольно легко.

[обсуждение специфики персон в традиционном дневнике]

П: Как можно назвать эту группу, которая консолидировалась в ЖЖ? Все-таки интеллигенцией называть в 21 веке как-то не очень удачно. Можно ли говорить, что это креативный класс, интеллектуалы больших городов? Как определить эту группу?

Р: Первоначальную?

П: Первоначальную, но я считаю, что те блоги, которые я анализирую, поддерживают те жанры, которые были заданы сначала.

Р: Ну, я не знаю, как ее назвать. Вообще-то, конечно, это интеллигенция, просто в период, когда этого слова стеснялись. Сейчас уже перестают опять, как известно. Ну, пост-интеллигенция. Понятно, о чем идет речь. Вообще-то, в принципе, конечно, это интеллигенция, которая не успела постареть. Я бы сказал, дети из интеллигентных семей.

П: А наличие ЖЖ в этой группе является атрибутом идентичности?

Р: В какое-то время да, в значительной степени. Но именно в то время, о котором мы говорили.

П: А сейчас какие атрибуты у этой группы?

Р: В России?

П: Да.

Р: Фейсбук.

П: Фейсбук? Да у кого нет фейсбука? А, в смысле, есть те, у кого вконтакте.

Р: Да. Фейсбук, но не вконтакте, я бы так сказал. Ой, это очень занятная тема, как они распределены сейчас по социальным стратам. На вскидку, это не так, как это было лет 5 назад. Ну, во-первых, уже повзрослели люди, которые тогда были школьниками, когда заводили вконтакттик. А во-вторых, какие-то люди из фейсбука завели вконтакттик, которые раньше туда ни ногой не ходили. Это занятно, как это коррелирует с национализацией вконтакттика. В общем, непонятно. Но скорее фейсбук, на самом деле. Если у людей есть вконтакте, они могут быть интеллигенцией, но тогда у них, скорее всего, есть фейсбук. А если у них нет фейсбука, но есть вконтакте, то тогда это какие-то

другие люди. [загрузка фотографий в первые годы жж (в Эстонии было проще, скорости выше); изучение html]

П: Двигаясь от стереотипов, можно так подумать, что гуманитарий не будет заморачиваться [с кодом]. Это Вы – исключение, или стереотип врет?

Р: Не знаю, нас было так мало. Может, я один там был. Мы с Горным были единственные гуманитарии, может, в это время. Поэтому, поди знай, мы исключение или нет. Может, если бы там какие-нибудь другие люди были, может, они бы то же самое сделали. Просто в Эстонии хорошая связь была. И, вообще, был интернет, когда в России его еще не было. Потом... Да нет, я знаю филологов, но все-таки тартуские филологи это специальные люди, у них в голове немножко теория информации, всякие такие штуки. Им все это интересно. Выучить его не очень сложно, это очень логический язык [продолжение о html; о добровольном отказе от социальных сетей] От жж отказаться легче. От фейсбука сложнее, потому что фейсбук - это в значительной степени поставщик информации. Но, в принципе, мне все рассказывают люди, которые живут в фейсбуке. По ним все эти волны проходят. Я знаю, какие темы там обсуждаются, не читая их. То есть, в принципе, ты живешь в социальных сетях, не живя в социальных сетях. [...] Фейсбук устроен так: для фейсбука не существует человека. Ему интересны большие кластеры социальных сетей, через которые можно прогонять рекламу и которые должны быть неконфликтны. Дальше ты придумываешь совсем простые правила для модерации, которую может делать совсем любой человек. Это стоп-слова. [...] мертвый ЖЖ – это плохой эпитет. Какая-то жизнь там теплится, какие-то битвы там происходят. Они (SUP, SixApart) его, конечно, разрушили фундаментально, ну, и последний переезд в русскую юрисдикцию – это совсем печально. [статистика, стихи.ру: люди в России пишут намного больше стихов].

Appendix 3.1

List of most frequent topics.

Abbreviations:

O- observations;
 C – celebrities;
 T- travelling;
 F&D – food&drinks;
 Rec – recollections of childhood;
 Ref – reflections;
 CS – computers and software;
 LJ – LiveJournal;
 LC – living conditions.

most frequent: largest to smallest	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1	O	C	Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture	Culture	Family	Culture	Culture	Culture
2	Culture	Culture	Rec	T	O	Leisure	T	Culture	Family	Leisure	Family
3	Dreams	O	Family	O	Leisure	T	O	Weather	Politics	Family	Leisure
4	Work	Leisure	O	Leisure	Family	Family	Leisure	Leisure	Leisure	CS	Living abroad
5	Leisure	Work	T	Family	T	O	Family	Overview	Social activism	T	O
6	T	T	Leisure	Rec	F&D	Work	Work	T	F&D	O	Overview
7	Image	LJ	Ref	Work	Work	Ref	F&D	O	O	Politics	Rec
8	Language	Politics	F&D	Ref	LC	Politics	Ref	Animals	T	F&D	T
9	Ref	F&D	Work	F&D	Ref	Living abroad	Living abroad	Politics	Work	Ref	Politics
10	LJ	dreams	LC	Weather	Rec	F&D	Animals	Ref	Living abroad	Work	LJ

Appendix 3.2

List of absent topics.

2003	Aromas, historical persons, religion, unusual events, awkward situations, esotericism, social activism, subcultures, advertisement, celebrities.
2004	Unusual events, aromas, awkward situations, esotericism, social activism, subcultures, sex, advertisement.
2005	Unusual events, awkward situations, esotericism, subcultures, advertisement
2006	Awkward situations, esotericism, advertisement.
2007	Subcultures, advertisement.
2008	Unusual events, esotericism, subcultures, sex.
2009	Unusual events, aromas, awkward situations, esotericism, subcultures.
2010	Unusual events, stress, finances, esotericism, depression, subcultures, sex.
2011	Esotericism, depression, subcultures.
2012	Unusual events, awkward situations, stress, esotericism, subcultures.
2013	Unusual events, aromas, awkward situations, stress, esotericism, depression, subcultures, advertisement.

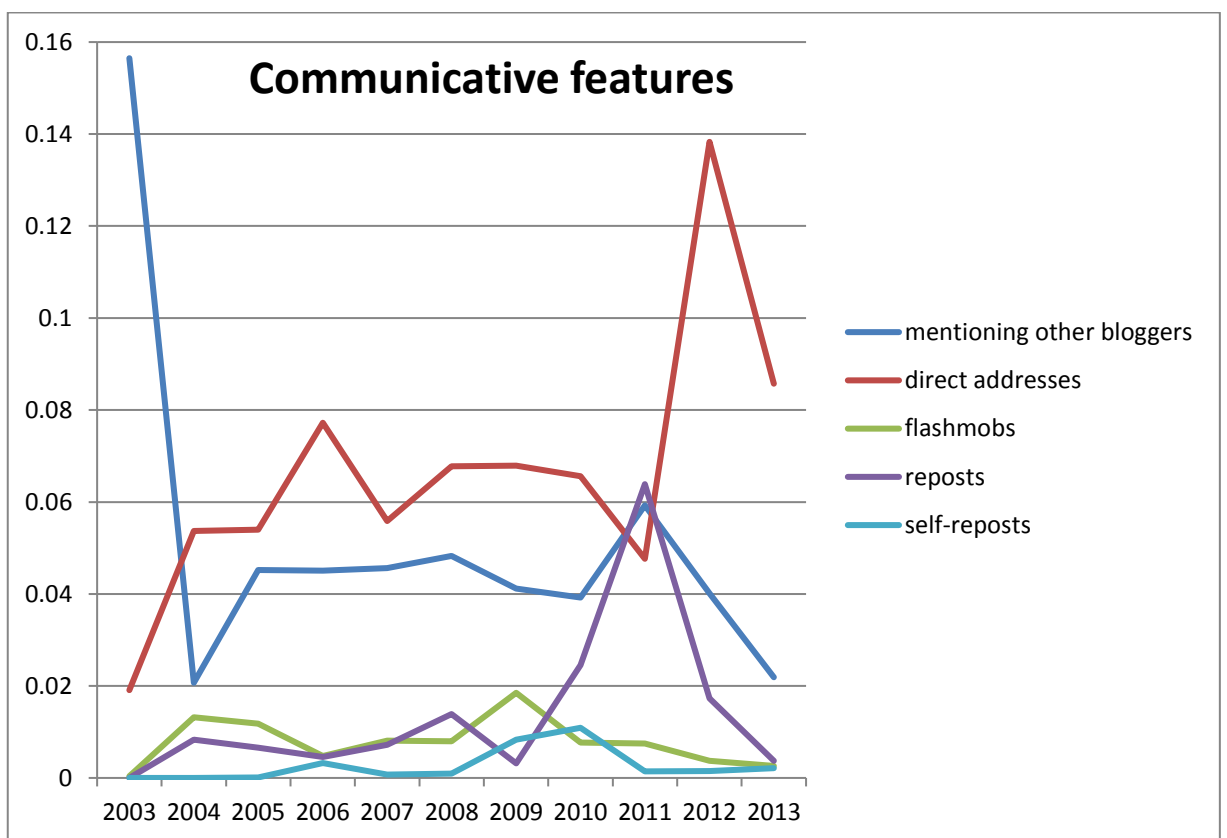
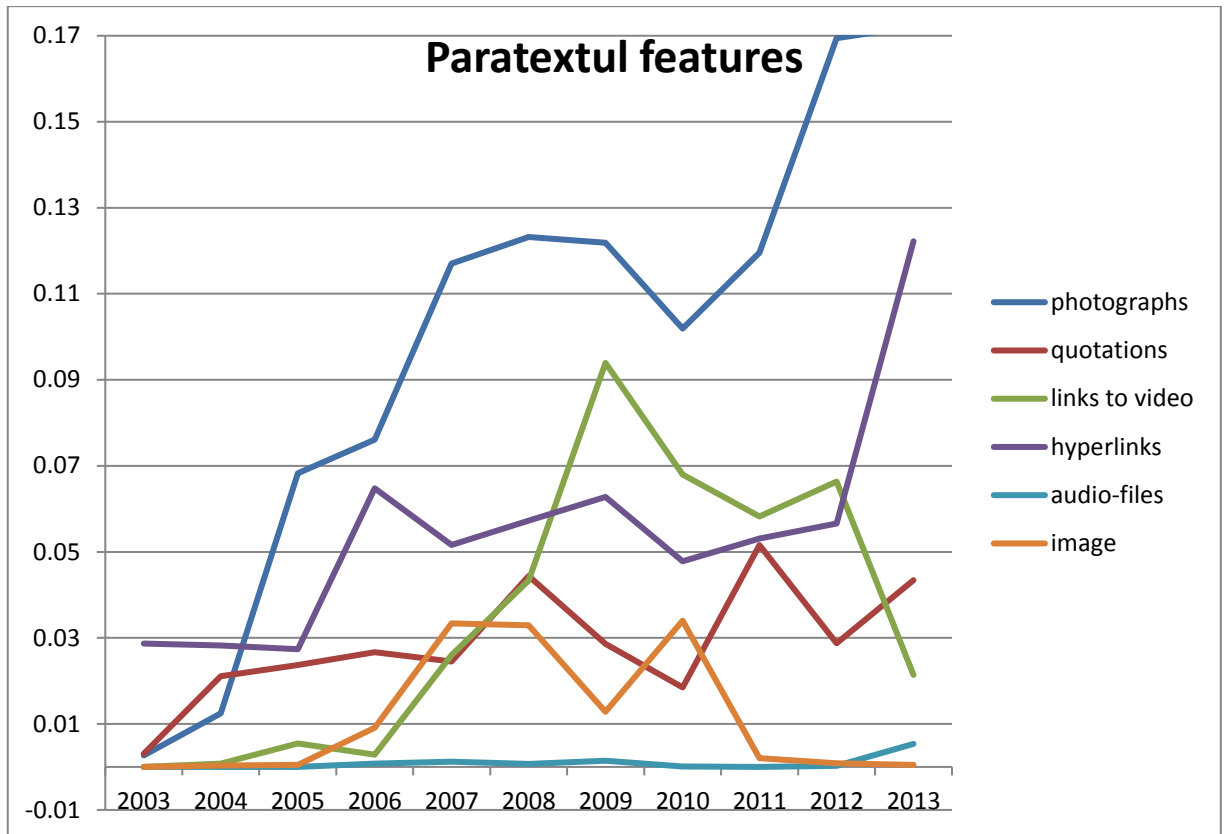
Appendix 3.3

List of least frequent topics.

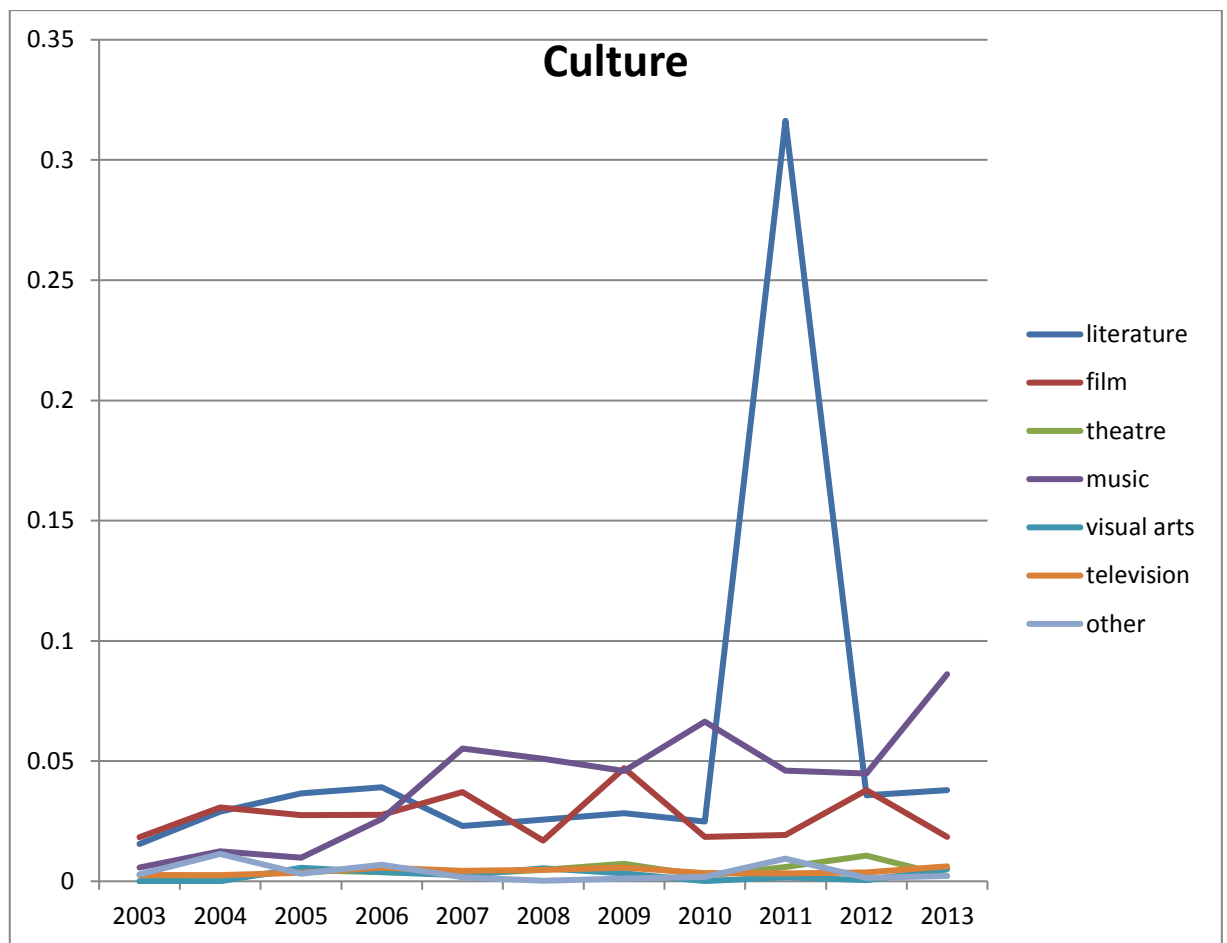
Abbreviations:

C – celebrities;
 CS – computers and software;
 LJ – LiveJournal;
 HP – historical persons;
 PS – psychological characteristics;
 B – bureaucracy;
 D – depression;
 S – shopping.

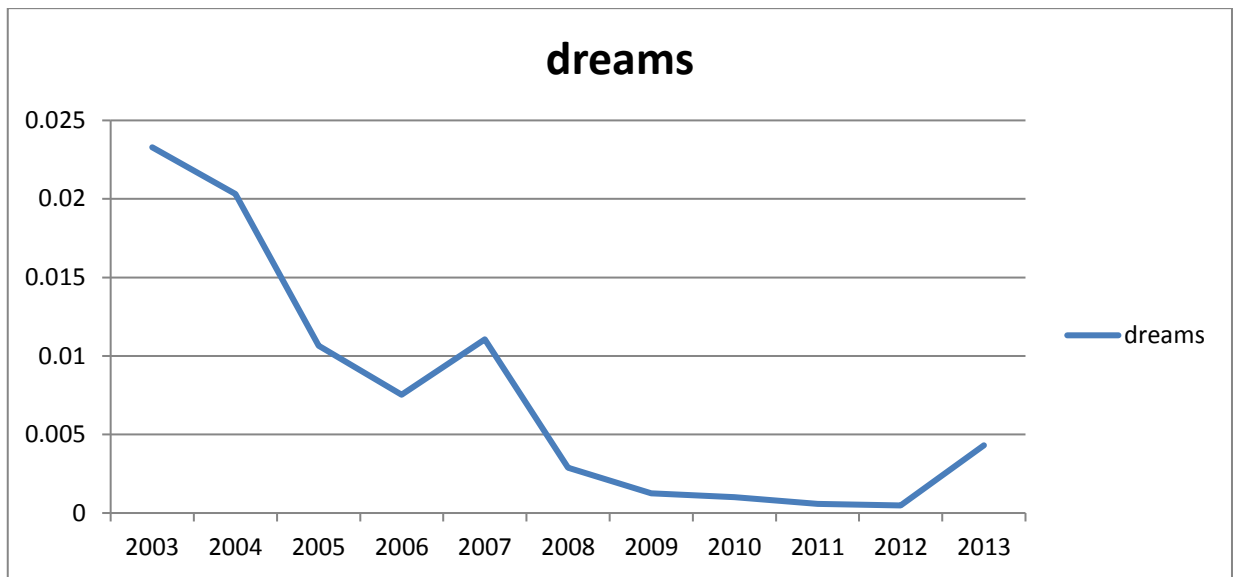
Least frequent: smallest to largest	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
1	Sex	Finances	HP	Finances	Finances	Finances	Stress	Aromas	Sex	Aromas	Religion
2	Finances	Religion	C	Sex	Stress	Aromas	Sex	Religion	B	B	Friends
3	S	HP	Religion	Religion	D	PS	Finances	Romance	Stress	Religion	HP
4	B	B	Finances	D	Sex	Overview	B	B	Religion	Sex	Finances
5	Animals	PS	B	Stress	B	Stress	Religion	Dreams	Romance	S	S
6	Politics	Overview	Stress	Activism	Romance	D	S	Image	Dreams	PS	Studies
7	Stress	D	Aromas	CS	Religion	Dreams	PS	Studies	LJ	Finances	PS
8	Illness	Living abroad	Activism	Aromas	CS	B	Dreams	PS	S	Romance	Sex
9	CS	stress	D	S	HP	Image	Studies	HP	Finances	C	Dreams
10	D	S	S	Romance	PS	Religion	HP	LJ	Weather	Dreams	Living conditions



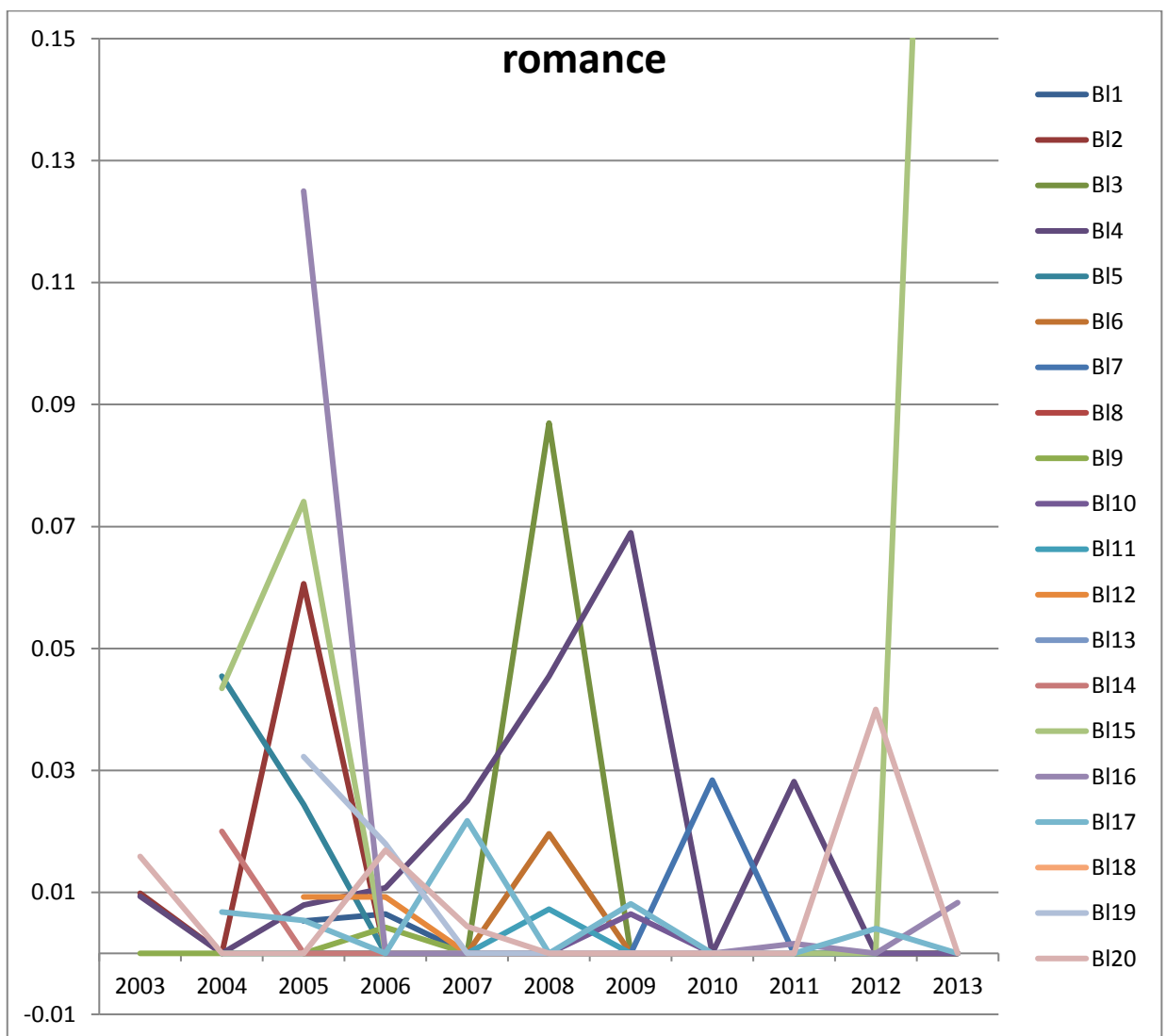
Appendix 3.6



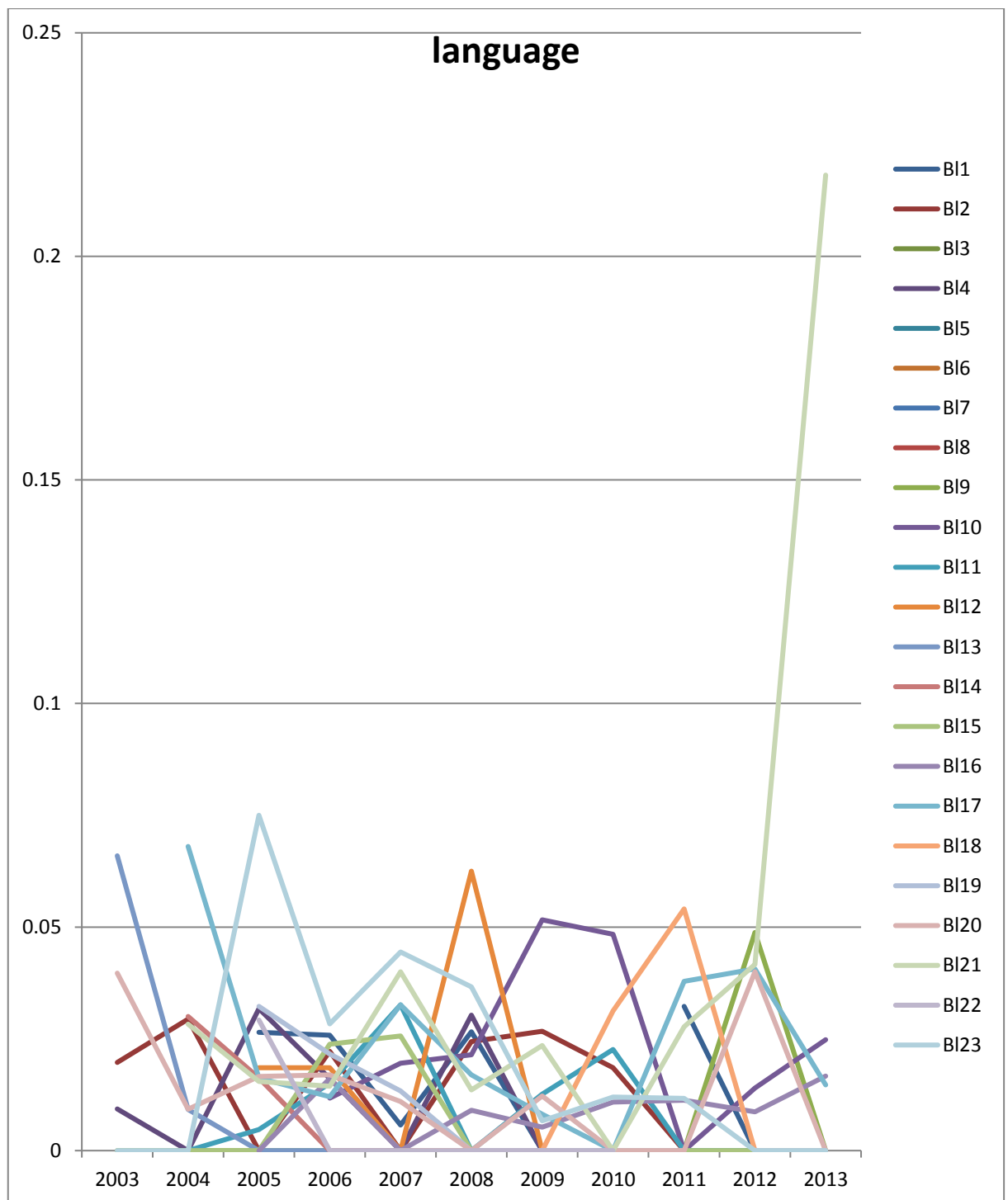
Appendix 3.8



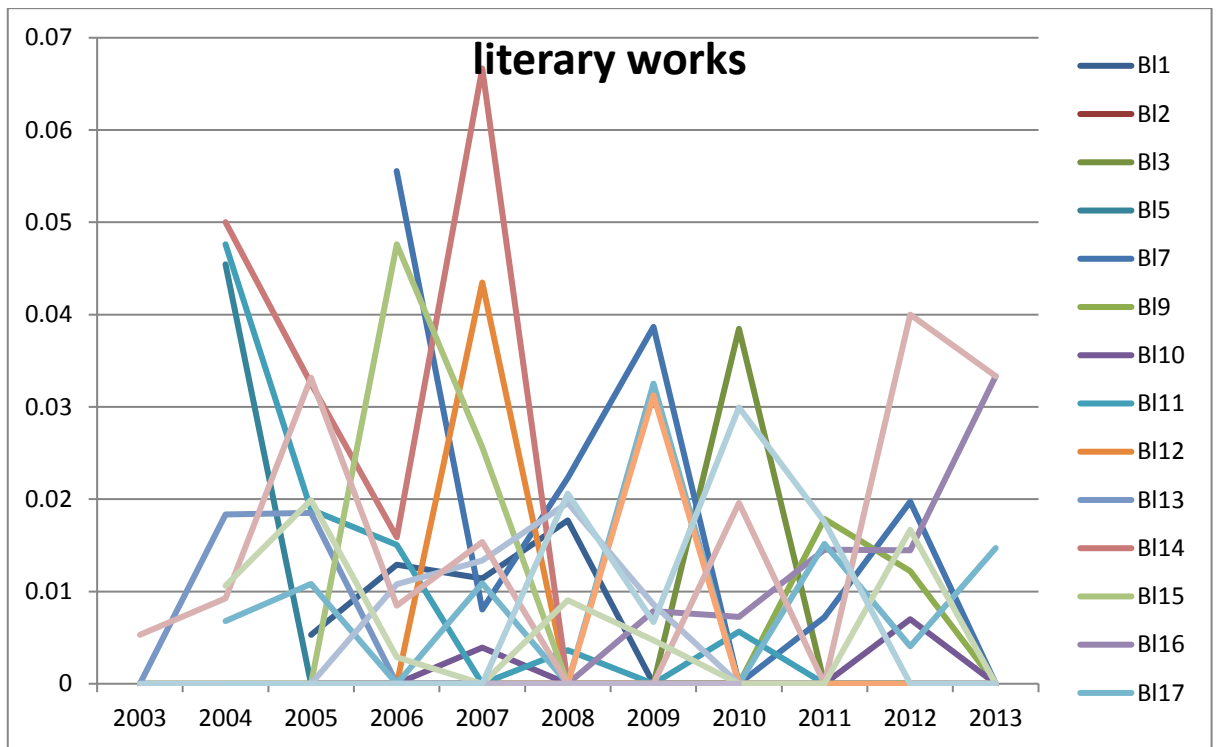
Appendix 3.9

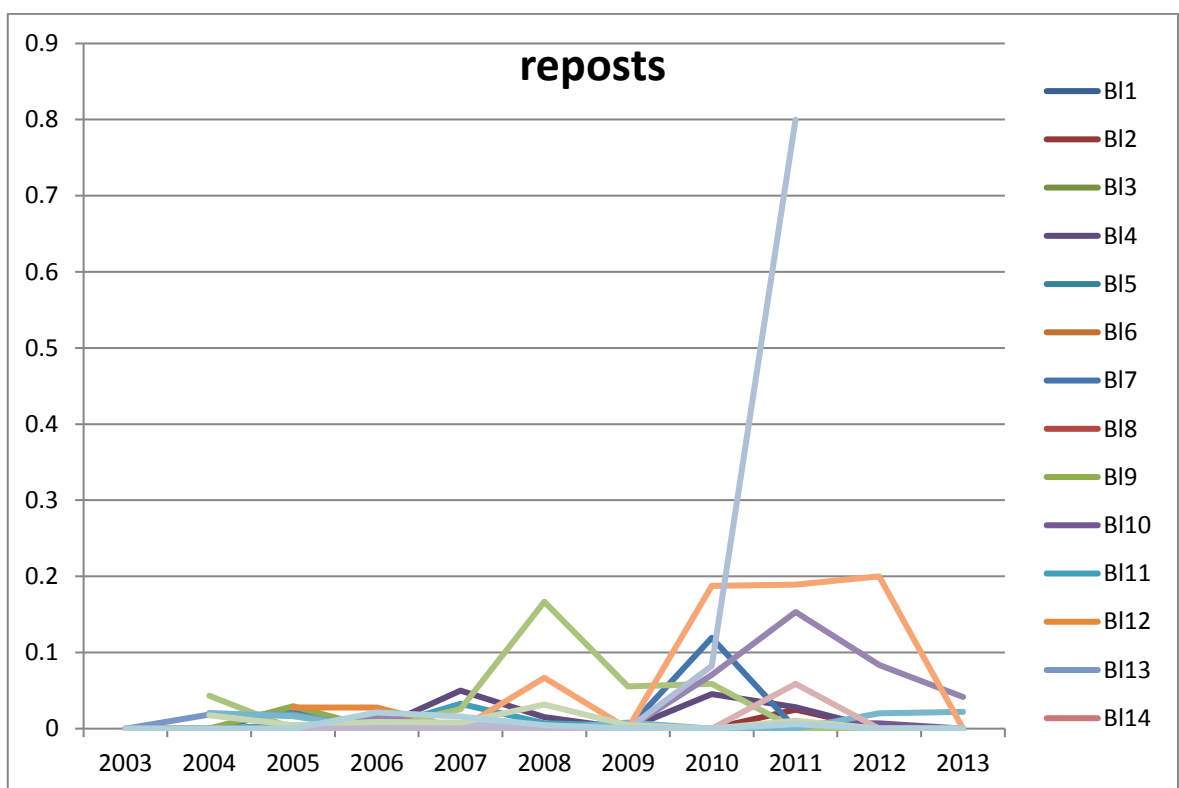
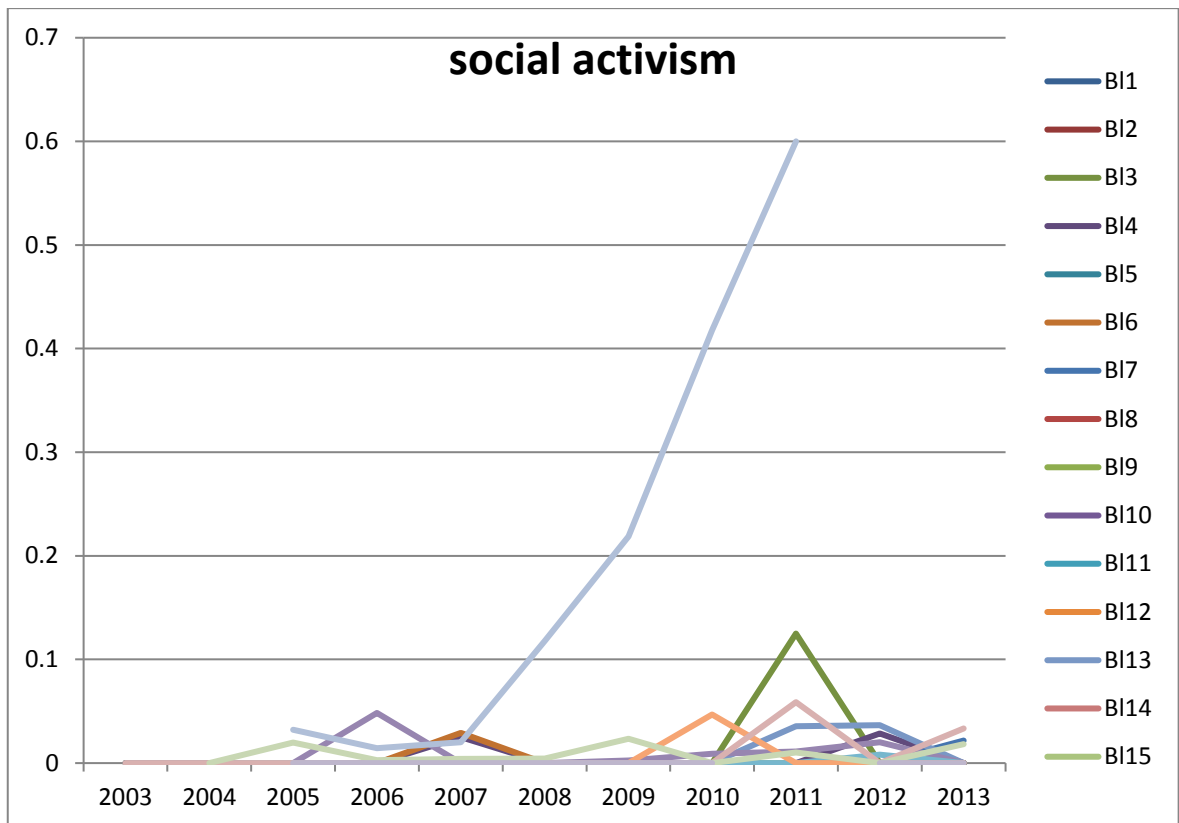


Appendix 3.11



Appendix 3.12





Advertisement																							
STYLES																							
	Literary works	2	41	14	250	26	433	28	230	6	95	2	337	11	116	22	305			6	50	9	77
	Announcement																	7	55	7	51	3	8
	Aphorism					3	35	20	160	3	10	1	4	3	6	8	79	8	51	1	12		
	Humour					25	195	27	289	10	99	4	36	12	11	5	41	5	36	1	17	2	20
	Tragic																						
	Parapraxes									4	19	1	4									1	7
	Untold stories																						
	Complaints																						
	Criticism							2	44	4	133	2	33			5	91						
	Obscene language																						
	Superiority																						
	Sentimental																						
PARATEXT																							
	Photograph					4	49	9	197	1	1	2	239	15	358	23	583	6	149	23	530	17	190
	Quotation									2	11			3	60			2	18	1	7		

Appendix 4.2. The ranking of most commented features

Abbreviations:

Rec- recollections;

Ref – reflections;

LJ – LiveJournal;

Obs – observations;

PS – psychological characteristics;

Quot – quotations;

Overview – overview of multiple events;

Friends – mentioning other bloggers;

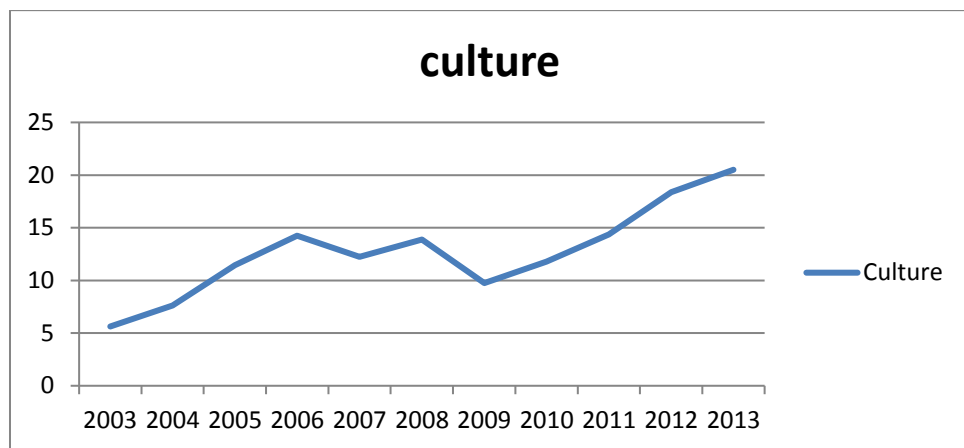
Ann – announcements.

2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Family	LJ	LJ	LJ	Flashmobs	Language	Rec	Rec	Rec	Rec
Direct addresses	Shopping	Flashmobs	Overview	Literary works	Direct addresses	Tragic	Criticism	Friends	Food and drinks
Rec	Direct addresses	Politics	Direct addresses	Ann	Historical persons	Friends	Ref	Work	Image
Ref	Romance	Aromas	Literary works	Direct addresses	Friends	Obs	Work	Direct addresses	Direct addresses
Politics	Tragic	Criticism	Flashmobs	Complaints	Flashmobs	Criticism	Image	Obs	Friends
Literary works	Flashmobs	Direct addresses	Travelling	Romance	Family	Travelling	Culture	Culture	Culture
LJ	Politics	PS	PS	Friends	Travelling	family	Obs	Language	Ann
Illness	Language	Literary works	Friends	Culture	Obs	Language	Animals	Ref	Video
Work	Obs	Rec	Politics	Rec	LJ	Work	Direct addresses	Complaints	Work
Obs	Illness	Quot	Rec	Travelling	Food and drinks	Culture	Flashmobs	Family	Obs

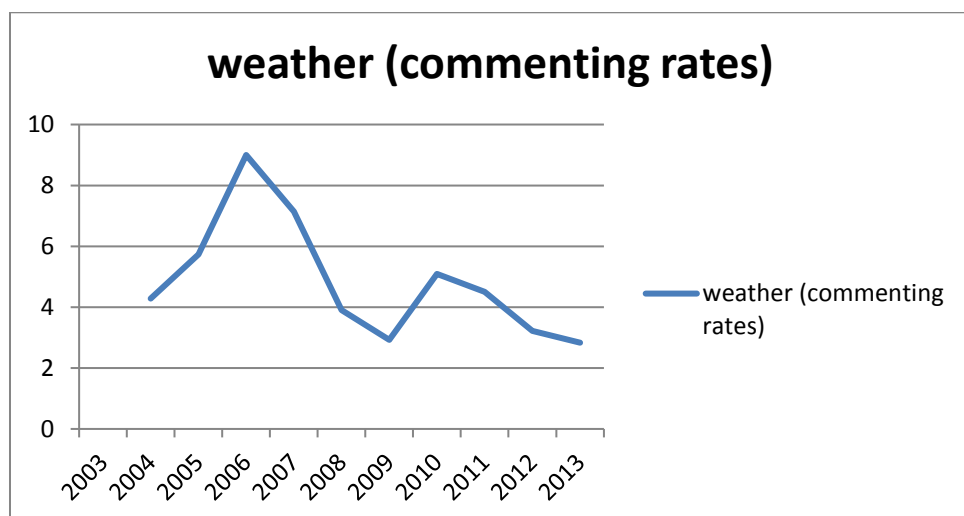
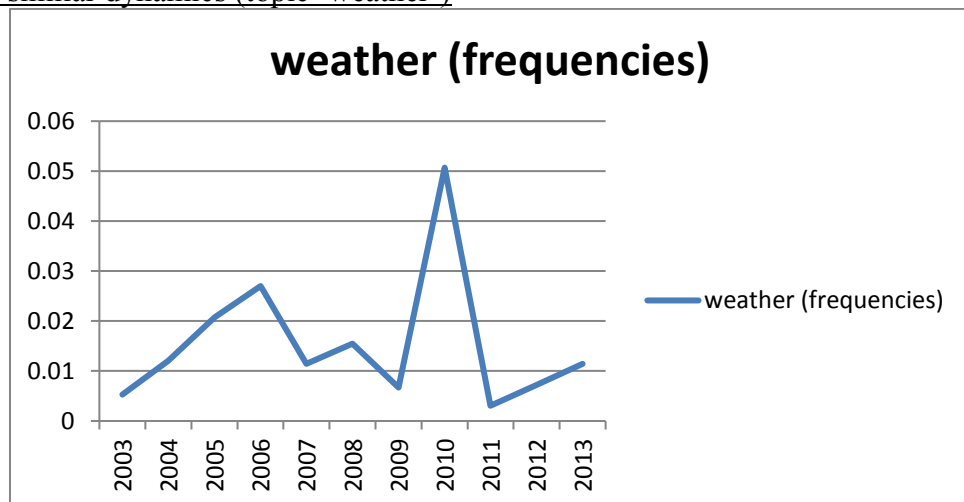
Appendix 4.3. The list of features with zero comments

2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Reflections	-	-	-	awkward situations; bureaucracy ; obscene language	religion , tragic tone	-	religion	self-reposts	self-reposts; audio-files; psychological characteristics	psychological characteristics ; illustrations

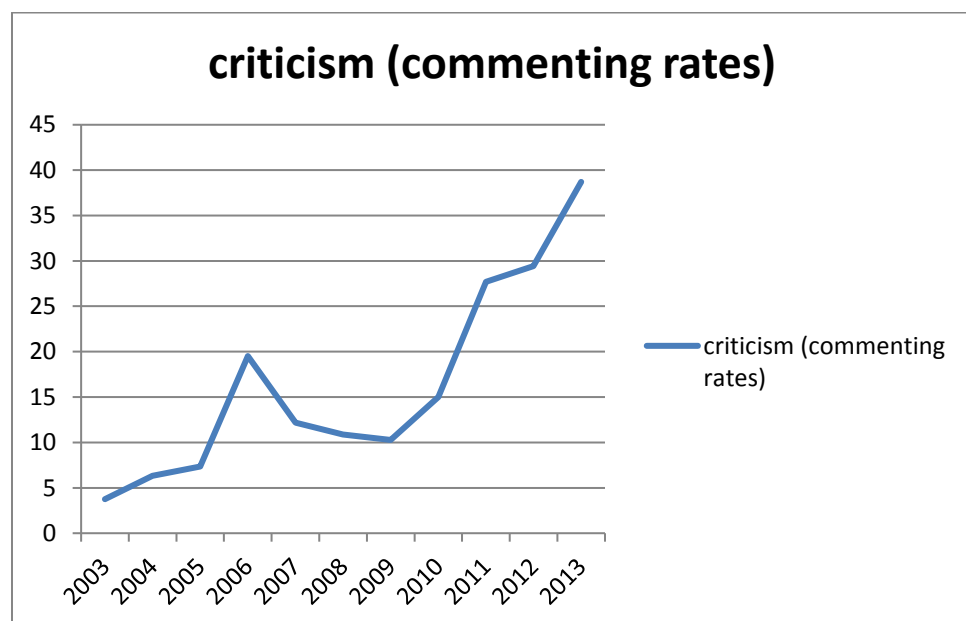
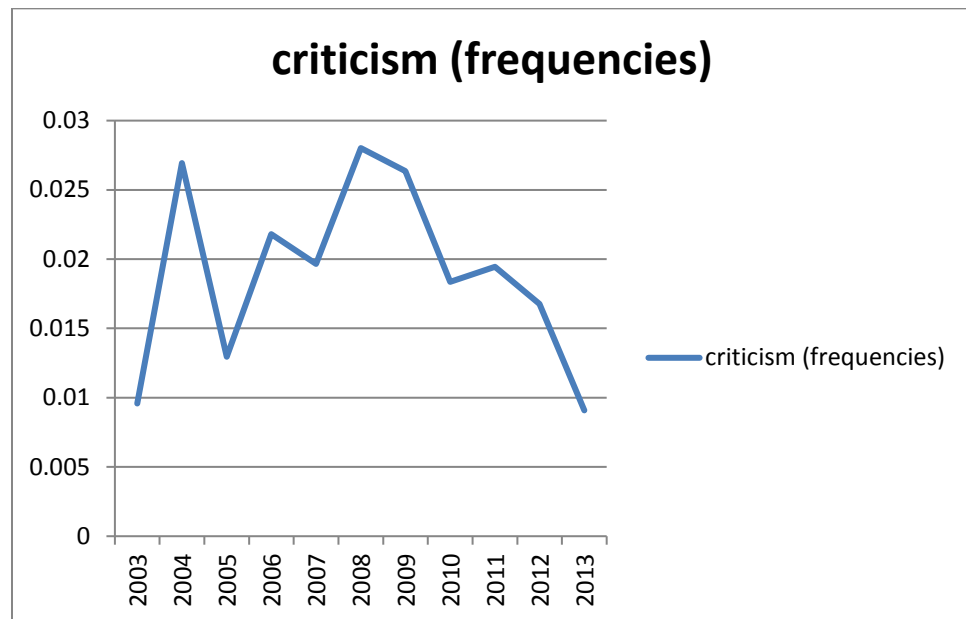
Appendix 4.4. Example of the evolution of commenting rates (topic 'culture')



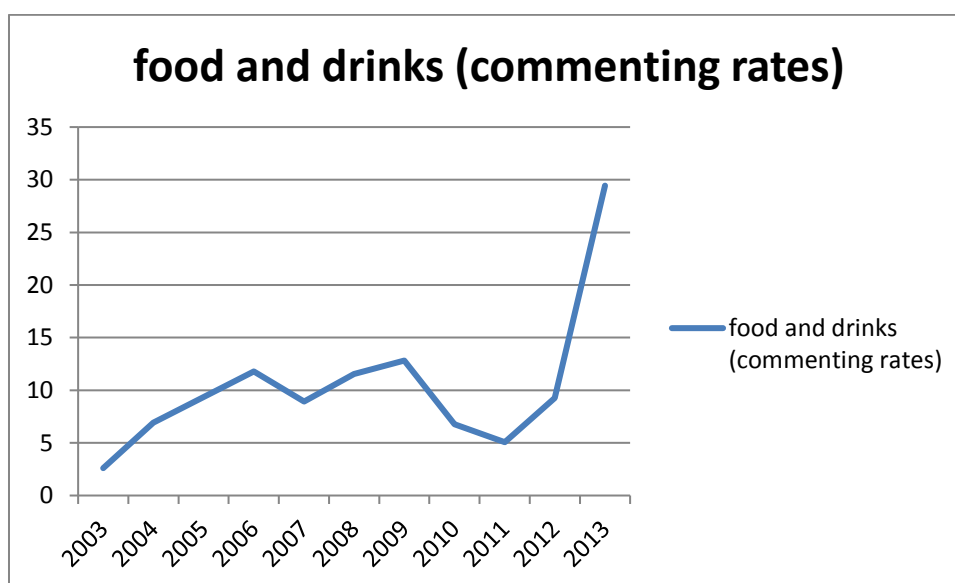
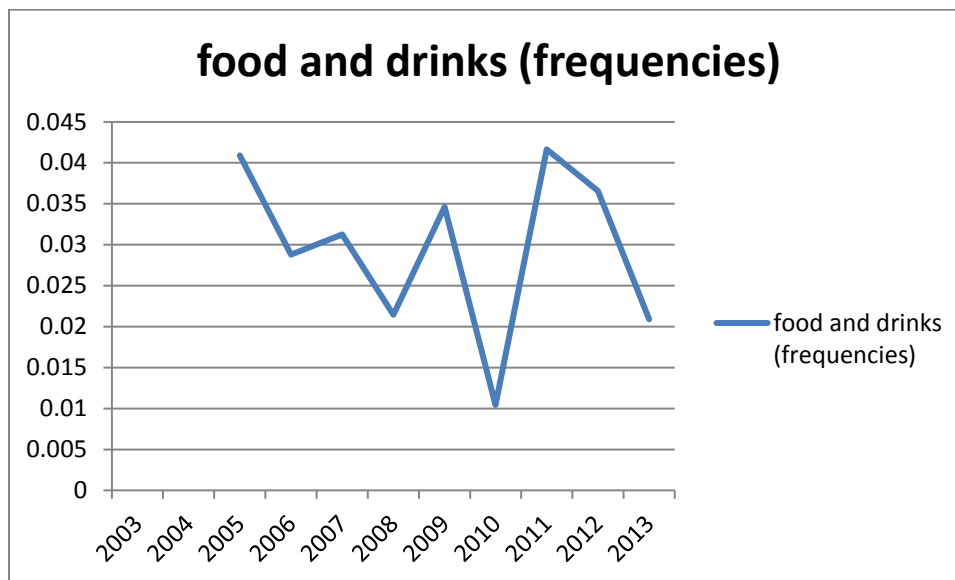
Appendix 4.5. Comparing the evolutions of commenting rates and frequency rates: similar dynamics (topic 'weather')



Appendix 4.6. Comparing the evolutions of commenting rates and frequency rates: opposite dynamics (stylistic feature ‘criticism’)



Appendix 4.7. Comparing the evolutions of commenting rates and frequency rates: contrasting dynamics in particular years (topic 'food and drinks', years 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013)



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