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Representation of Self and Others in a Russian Blog

by

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ABSTRACT

Representation of Self and Others is a wide-spread focus of research among scholars from many disciplines. This study approaches the phenomenon of Self and Other from a linguistic standpoint. The main goal is to reveal methods of creating images of Self and Others in the context of blogs and link the analysis to the reflection of contemporary Russian society at large. The thesis applies the following methodologies: Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) framework of social discrimination and Issers's (1996) approach to political roles in post-Soviet Russia.

The corpus of the study is formed by 300 entries from Bozhena Rynska's blog, becky-sharpe.livejournal.com. A system of dominants, which are used for the creation of images of Self and Others, is developed. The analysis reveals that the representation of Self and Others in the blog is ambiguous in both form and meaning and provides additional insight into societies in transition.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview of the Study

The present study investigates the representation of Self and Others in the context of Russian-speaking blogs. Specifically, the Live Journal of a Russian top-blogger, journalist and writer, Bozhena Rynska, is analyzed. The goal of the present thesis is to contribute to the study of Russian-language blogs, which have only rarely been approached from the linguistic standpoint. Blogs are a new form of mass media that is different from Internet newspapers and magazines. Only one author produces the content of the entire blog and decides on the discussed topics. While some blogs have a declared general theme (such as design or culinary), there are no restrictions as to which topics are raised by the author. The topics can include personal life, political situation, social events etc. The audience of Russian-speaking Live Journal top-bloggers accounts for approximately 60 to 70 thousand readers a day, based on the statistics provided by *Blogs.Yandex*. According to *Blogs.Yandex*, Rynska's blog, which is analyzed in the current study, is among the top 50 blogs of Russian language Live Journal.

The main focus of this study is the creation of the image of Self and Others in a blog. This study uses theoretical frameworks by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and Issers (1996) as its foundation. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) focus their research on forms of social discrimination, such as racism, ethnicism and anti-Semitism, in Austria in 1986, 1992-93, and 1997-98. Issers (1996) concentrates on the formation of political roles in Post-Soviet Russia. The current study applies

the frameworks of Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and Issers (1996) to the new media of the Internet and the new context of a blog, which is not concerned strictly with politics and discrimination. The thesis aims at answering the following research questions: 1) What image of Self does the author create in the blog and through which means? 2) What different Others does the author represent and through which means? 3) How is the choice of means of representation of Self and Others influenced by the general thematic sphere of the blog entry? 4) What image of contemporary Russian society does the author construct in the blog? For the purposes of the study the data is approached qualitatively.

1.2 Role of the Internet in Social and Political Life in Russia

The Internet is an important player in today's social and political life in Russia. As Lonkila (2008) stresses in his study of the importance of the Internet to anti-military activism in Russia, "the tightening state control of the Russian national media has offered fewer opportunities for alternative views, thus emphasizing the role of the internet for critical public debate" (1130). The *Law of the Russian Federation On Mass Media*, first adopted a day after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in December 1991, has been amended twenty-three times since. Despite these amendments, many of which dealt with media control and ownership, online communication through a blog still falls into the category of "other messages and materials" (Media Law, Ch. 1, Art. 2). As a result, the Internet remains the only major medium falling outside of the direct government's control. Importantly, Morozov (2011) stresses that such direct control is unnecessary, as "the most

effective system of Internet control is not the one that has the most sophisticated and draconian censorship, but the one that has no need for censorship whatsoever” (20). What Morozov (2011) implies is that the Kremlin can provide funding for low-scale entertainment websites that would sometimes replace adequate news sources. However, in spite of this scholar’s sentiment, the role of the Internet in the socio-political life in Russia cannot be underestimated, as it provides valuable opportunities for sharing ideas and organizing groups that are unavailable elsewhere.

The Internet’s indispensability is noted by prominent opposition figure Kasparov (2007) and O’Lear (1999) researching the use of online communication by environmental activists for “finding support, information, ideas for activist strategies, and even partners for collaborative projects and protests” (176). Importantly, in recent years the Russian authorities have declared interest in reforming the media law in regards to the Internet (see Trofimenko 2004 for details), while one of the most popular online information sources in Russia, LiveJournal, discussed further, has become a target of coordinated cyber attacks (Schwartz 2011).

When looking at the Russian Internet as an important phenomenon in the lives of millions of people, it is necessary to acknowledge the high profile of blogging in general and LiveJournal in particular in this cyberspace segment. Kasparov (2007) estimates the number of weekly readers of the most popular Russian LiveJournal blogs at 2.2 million (112), while Lonkila (2008) points out that “LiveJournal was among the two most popular blogging platforms in Russia

in early 2008” (1140). Lonkila (2008) discusses in length the way LiveJournal has become important to the speakers of Russian both in Russia and abroad, stressing the fact that its architecture is built around “the linking of individual blogs, [...] encouraging contacts and interactive communication and networking between the authors and the readers” (1141). All of this explains the choice of a LiveJournal blog as data for this thesis.

1.3 Bozhena Rynska and Her Blog

Bozhena Rynska is a popular Russian high-society¹ columnist, writer and top-blogger of Russian Internet. Rynska has been writing a weekly column in an online newspaper, *Gazeta.Ru*, since November 2009. Previously, she had a similar column in a popular Russian newspaper *Izvestia* ‘News’. Rynska is a frequent guest on talk shows on different Russian television channels. She started her blog, becky-sharpe.livejournal.com, on June 22, 2006. In 2008, Rynska published a part of the blog as a book entitled *Slava Bogu, Ia VIP* ‘Thank God, I am a VIP’. In 2010, the book was reprinted, which may signal the book’s popularity among readers.

As of September 1st 2011, the journal contains 4,136 entries. According to information provided by *LiveJournal.Com*, 4,111,219 unique visitors have come to the blog since Sept 9th 2010. The top ten countries from which the viewers come include Russia (2,802,900 visitors), Ukraine (260,268 visitors), the United

¹ High society, as defined by the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2011), is “the fashionable group of people who are rich and powerful.”

States of America (220,980 visitors), Germany (137,160 visitors), the United Kingdom (79,480 visitors), France (51,000 visitors), Belarus (49,900 visitors), Israel (49,420 visitors), Canada (48,240 visitors), and Latvia (38,200 visitors). The geographic coverage of the analyzed blog is, therefore, very broad. This list demonstrates that readers from Russia constitute more than half of the audience. However, representatives of Russian-speaking population from former Soviet Republics and representatives of the Russian Diasporas abroad are also visible among the readers. There is no reliable method to find out more demographic details about the readership of the blog. While the number of non-public posts is unknown, the data in the thesis is formed only by publicly available posts that can be read by all but commented on only by a limited group of ‘friends’ chosen by Rynska.

According to statistics provided by *LiveJournal.Com* and *Yandex.Ru*, Rynska’s blog is on the list of the top 50 blogs of Russian Internet, based on two criteria used by these statistics engines: authoritativeness and the number of readers. Authoritativeness is an integrated factor based on frequency of reference to the blog by other bloggers, the rating of popularity of the bloggers, number of comments in the blog, and the number of readers of the blog. The number of readers is also used as a separate criterion of popularity.

The status of a top blog is one of the reasons Rynska’s Live Journal is chosen for analysis in this study. Another reason is the fact that the blog does not

have a declared general theme, such as culinary, politics, handcraft etc. Therefore, the topics covered by the author are diverse and do not follow any specific trend.

While blogs are frequently approached with focus on blogger anonymity and alter-identity construction, Rynska's blog is not anonymous. The author cannot completely hide or modify her identity, as information about her race, gender, appearance and approximate age is available to readers. This blog provides an insider perspective of the contemporary Russian elite, specifically bureaucratic, political, financial and cultural. The author is not a born member of the elite and has experience in two basic social strata (that is, 'upper' class and 'lower' class) which creates a dual image of society in the blog. Therefore, as opposed to traditional Russian media, Rynska's blog does not have a set perspective and touches upon a wide variety of everyday life topics, as well as political, social and cultural events and problems. Rynska's popularity as a media figure and writer also serves as one of the reasons for this blog being selected for the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The first Internet page was launched twenty years ago. The Internet today is a communication medium that is, if no longer groundbreaking, extremely important to the lives of millions of people throughout the world. Braga (2011) in her study of online communication practices notes that “the introduction of the Internet into a culture promotes great changes in social life” (22) and as a result, the Internet attracts scholars of various fields interested in the analysis of these changes. Given the extended timeline of online communication research, the prior studies review is not meant to be exhaustive but concentrates on the most recent approaches to the Internet from the point of view of various disciplines. The review concludes with a brief discussion of this thesis’ interplay with existing studies in the field.

2.1. Approaches to Online Communication

Intercultural communication and the influence of language codes onto each other constitute the topic of Gao’s (2006) study into the extensive contact between Chinese and English through the Internet medium. The scholar underlines that due to the spread of online communication technology, languages that would have had most interrelation through business and the flow of migration are now in constant contact. As per Gao’s (2006) findings, in the case of Chinese, a new linguistic entity, ‘Chinese Internet Language’ has come to life that differs from its offline counterpart on the lexical, grammatical and stylistic levels. Language change caused by inter-language contact is not to be confused with

intra-language mutation. Dunn (2006), for example, discusses a peculiar online form of Russian that does not follow grammar standards.

Further spread of the Internet into world classrooms directs the efforts of teachers and pedagogy scholars striving to incorporate the positive features of online communication into the curriculum while finding ways of reducing those effects that may be harmful to learning: “the challenge for parents and schools alike is to eliminate the negative uses of electronic media while preserving their significant contributions to education and social connection” (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008, 120). The Talkback Project in the United States, for example, makes use of the teenagers’ extensive use of blogging as a medium of expression by bringing the blogs into the English literature curriculum (Witte 2007). The perceived ease of collaboration through the Internet is manifested in the spread of online learning communities and discussion groups, as described by Yeh (2010), who notes that unique social entities of students and teachers are formed in the process. In a study that underlines that online communication and cooperation comes in many forms, Jones (2009) analyzes from the perspective of sociolinguistics the fascination of German teenagers with hip-hop culture and the Internet. The subject of Jones’ (2009) study is the new discursive phenomenon of ‘textbattle’, in which participants compete in improvisation while being watched and commented on online.

The immediate availability and anonymity of online communication makes it indispensable to social support groups. As Aakhus and Rumsey (2010) state, “online support communities provide a place where members can express

feelings and examine experiences to meet members' emotional and problem-solving needs. Online forums are appealing because time and geographic barriers to participation are diminished and participants have control over their contributions, identity, privacy, and engagement with others" (65). While the scholars note that this mode of communication, as any other, has inherent problems and the potential for cooperation breakdown and community collapse, they stress that online forums have given thousands of groups, including cancer-patient family members, incurable patients, and war veterans, additional opportunity to express their feelings and comfort each other. Coming from the field of psychology, Bruss and Hill (2010) also stress the importance of the Internet in resolving psychological issues and approaching those that may be reluctant to communicate their fears or unable to overcome their anxiety in face-to-face communication. Their study has found that while "the use of electronic forms of communication, such as text-messaging or online interaction, is rapidly becoming a primary tool for many people to form and maintain many of their relationships" (3), "the phenomenon of reciprocity may occur to a greater degree online than face-to-face" (6). In other words, people may be turning to online communication to a greater extent as they expect their communication partners to disclose more about themselves, which makes it easier to be open in return.

The alluring nature of online communication also has its dangers, a point stressed by Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) in their study on the influence of the Internet onto adolescent relationships. As the scholars note, "the ease of electronic communication may be making teens less interested in face-to-face

communication with their friends” (127), while increasing the possibility of extended interaction with strangers. Such interaction, in turn, underlines the threats of online predators making use of the special nature of identity on the Internet, the discussion of which follows.

2.2. Online Identity

While no studies that deal with the issue of Self- and Other-representation in blogs from the same angle as the current thesis are found, the phenomenon of online identity occupies a visible place in research. The reason for this fascination with online identity lies in that the Internet, as opposed to offline communication, presents an unusual field of identity creation, co-construction and manipulation.

The differences between online and offline identities are aptly summed up by Kim et al. (2011) in that while “the development of an offline identity requires considerable time and effort since a person has to build relationships and friendships that portray his or her identity [,] the development of an online identity is relatively fast because a person exhibits the identity he or she wishes” (1762). This group of scholars also discusses how such constraints as one’s family, age, class, and physical appearance play a smaller role or even have no significance in the formation of an online identity, while the co-existence of several online identities is made much easier than a similar arrangement offline.

Given the collaborative nature of many interaction platforms online, such as forums, chat rooms and blogs, a set of formal or informal rules is often considered necessary in order to avoid communication breakdown. As Braga (2011) notes, “the freedom created by anonymity – the absence of physical

presence that would expose ethnic, gender or class attributes – can serve either to foster friendship and intimacy or to spark aggression and disrespect towards others” (219).

Working with others online also aims at creating a group of like-minded individuals around oneself, such as the readers of a particular blog. Tara Chittenden (2010), working through the prism of the Social Capital theory, indicates that teenage female bloggers may feel the need “to attract followers who reflect or validate their cultural capital” (514). Chittenden (ibid) notes that those that come to the blog with offensive or contradictory statements are thus immediately excluded from the group, as they do not cooperate towards a mutual group identity that others are working on.

Myers’ (2009) broad study on online discourse underlines the importance of Others to an online author. Rhetorical questions, elements borrowed from dialogues inserted into blog monologues, and the persistent encouragement of comments and feedback from the readers create an atmosphere of close friendship even when the blog is the only medium of interaction between the participants. As a result, blogs serve as “a group that seems to know each other and share a lot already. One sinks into a blog as one sinks into the sofa in a friend’s living room” (93).

As well, Others are indispensable to the representation of the Self online. This is especially so when the person’s self-perception is in a state of transition, as it would be with adolescents, new parents or individuals going through a psychological crisis. The blog serves as a mediator that is also a distance between

the blogger and the reader. This unifying medium helps build confidence and allows for self-exploration, especially when people are particularly shy, unsure of themselves or have problems in building lasting relationships offline. Importantly, while a person may allow for the Others to play a role in identity-formation in blogs, he or she also controls the extent of this involvement: “By controlling their information disclosure, bloggers are able to decide where to draw the boundary between themselves and others, gatekeeping access to their personal field of identity formation. Thus, managing the shifting public/private continuum is also an important part of a blogger’s experience” (Chittenden 2010, 513).

Discussion of identity formation online links directly to the issue of the creation of ‘edited’ identity, up to and including impersonation of others. The reasons for such modifications may be diverse. In Chittenden’s (2010) study, for example, some teens alter their identities “due to parental restrictions” (513) offline. Similar cases are mentioned by Gomez (2010) in regards to blogs as a platform where anyone can “give free reign to their fantasies and portray their reality as they want it to be. Therefore, online weblog writing becomes the means whereby people [...] can self-express and discursively construct their self” (29). The possibility of easy and frequently unverifiable misinformation about one’s daily activities, whereabouts or social circle is thus brought to a new level in the medium of blogs, resulting in alternative lifestyles and imaginary conversations presented as fact. Further adding to the complexity of the online identity transformation is the fact that in a blog “one can portray his or her identity selectively and differently to different groups of people” (Kim et al. 2011, 1762).

While slight modifications of one's identity online may not affect the overall flow of communication, more serious changes or even the adoption of a different identity altogether present a complex phenomenon that is potentially harmful to social structure and relations between people. As Wood (2005) states, "[computer-mediated communication] contexts, like no other person-to-person media before them, offer communicators the ability to manipulate their personal identities in ways that call into question assumptions about what is possible and what is appropriate in the presentation of self" (51).

The fact that the Internet offers a practically infinite field of possible identities already leads people communicating online to a search for "an intricate system of signals and behaviours that aid in establishing identity and in controlling identity deception" as "new ways of establishing and of hiding identity are evolving in the virtual world" (Donath 1999, 56). In a more thematically-limited area of online dating portals, as researched by O'Brien (1999), 'gender sleuthing' becomes increasingly important to avoid embarrassing situations and to save time by simply not engaging in lengthy conversations with people of the 'wrong' gender. The relevance of O'Brien's (1999) findings is further underlined by Wood (2005) who writes about a middle-aged Euro-American man who, in the offline world, "can adopt a limited number of roles, given that one's gender, race, age, accent, and other nonverbal determinants influence people's perceptions of how well one functions in a given role", but online "can more readily adopt and enact a change in his gender, race, or any other characteristic he chooses" (59).

The aforementioned studies of online communication demonstrate the versatility of this phenomenon and the fact that it can be approached from a wide range of disciplines. The current thesis relies on the foundation of prior research for guidance on the ways the writer-reader interaction and Self and Others representation can be carried out online. An overview of Internet communication as part of the larger socio-political process continues the discussion.

2.3. Online Communication as a Socio-Political Phenomenon

Kampmark (2007), in his analysis of the influence of the offline and online worlds onto each other, talks of “cyber social disobedience” (290). Pole (2010) compares the democratizing power of political blogging to that of the penny press. According to her, as “blogs create an opportunity for average citizens – who traditionally have limited access to the media – to publish ideas without editorial constraints” (Pole 2010, 127). Lovink (2005) notes that the opportunity of greater access to the new medium of the Internet may also lead to manifestations of racism and intolerance, as “the Net is as racist as the societies that it stems from” (60). Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) note that while race and ethnicity appear important online, they do not influence communication in the same manner: “although chat participants frequently use race to identify themselves and other in-group members, they nonetheless stay in the chat room with everyone, rather than self-segregating, as in school lunchrooms” (133). Inter-ethnic tensions offline may lead to outright electronic warfare that underlines the importance of technical infrastructure to the maintenance of online communication (see Kampmark 2007 for details). While most of the studies discussed above relate to

online communication as a whole or in relation to Western Europe and North America, the current thesis's focus on a popular Russian blog makes it necessary to discuss several important approaches to Russian Internet per se.

2.4. Russian Online Communication Studies

While Pole (2010), mentioned above, continues the tradition of what may be called cyber-optimism in relation to the Internet's potential in transforming society and strengthening democracy, Morozov (2011) names this line of thinking "cyber-utopianism: a naïve belief in the emancipatory nature of online communication" (19). Morozov (2011) stresses that bringing the Internet to an authoritarian or totalitarian society does not, in itself, make a difference, nor does freer access to information immediately spur apparent interest in overthrowing the government or engaging in social protest: "While civic activism — raising money for sick children and campaigning to curb police corruption — is highly visible on the Russian Internet, it's still entertainment and social media that dominate. [...] The most popular Internet searches on Russian search engines are not for 'What is Democracy?' or 'how to protect human rights,' but for 'What is love?' and 'how to lose weight'" (20). A prominent Russian political opposition figure, Garry Kasparov (2007), who laments the apparent lack of interest in the materials his supporters publish online, and Lonkila (2008), who points out that "Runet users critical of the current government form a minority within a minority" (1145), share in this frustration.

No studies are found that would refute the increased importance of the Internet in contemporary Russia due to state control over traditional media. Zuev (2010) and O'Lear (1999) add the sheer geographical size of the country and the need to escape isolation from like-minded individuals to the list of reasons for the prominence of online communication to socio-political work. Zuev (2010) also stresses the peculiarly high number of blog users in Russia that makes blogs “the ultimate communication device in the election campaign” (263). Taking the importance of blogging beyond the electoral cycle, Konradova and Kaluzhskij (2010) even go as far as call the blogosphere a “surrogate public sphere” (152).

2.5 The Thesis in Its Interplay with Prior Studies

In relation to the aforementioned studies into the socio-political importance of the Russian Internet, the political aspects of Rynska's blog constitute only a part of the thesis' focus. However, the described perception of the peculiar function of the blogosphere should be kept in mind as one analyzes the author's references to those in power as well as her attempts at using the blog to enact changes in the world around her. As the object of the current study is constituted by a top blog, its analysis provides a unique view of the social structure and interrelations in contemporary Russia.

The other described studies, especially those relating to the topic of the representation of Self online, working together with the thesis's theoretical framework, assist in the construction of the project's analytical system. Importantly, no prior studies have focused on different approaches to Self-representation as opposed to the opposition between online and offline identities.

Furthermore, Others' contribution to the construction of the image of Self appears to be an understudied topic. This thesis aims at filling the gap in attention to this subject and revealing more about deeper online communication patterns, the writer-reader dichotomy, and the workings of representation online.

It also aims at a more comprehensive understanding of the role of blogging in the context of societies in transition. Prior studies tend to view online communication as a special phenomenon that is loosely related to and influenced by offline social relations. The analysis points to the possibility of looking at new media data as one reflection of social structure. Blogs are a medium that is only controlled by one individual whose opinions are then validated by the readership. This makes it possible for research into blogging to go beyond linguistics and towards wider study of contemporary society. This thesis thus uses the research completed earlier to contribute to the understanding of post-Soviet transition in Russia.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a description of the methodology of the thesis. Firstly, it illustrates the theoretical framework, which forms the foundation of the study. Secondly, it presents the details including description of data and explanation of terminology, framework and its specific elements, and mechanics of analysis.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The methodological framework of this thesis is informed by Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak's (2001) study on such forms of social discrimination as racism, anti-Semitism and ethnicism. In their work, the authors employ a discourse-analytical approach to the data. Reisigl and Wodak present the results of three case studies that are focused on instances of racism in Austria. The context of the cases these scholars analyze is quite diverse. Reisigl and Wodak include in their research excerpts from conversations on the streets of Vienna, commentaries from Austrian newspapers with different political orientations, and official notifications of rejection of a residence permit application. In their study, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) focus on five questions they consider important for analysis of forms of social discrimination:

How are persons named and referred to linguistically? What traits and characteristics are attributed to them? By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimise the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others? From what perspective or

point of view are these namings, attributions and arguments expressed? Are the respective discriminating utterances articulated overtly, are they even intensified or are they mitigated? (44)

Based on these questions, the authors single out five types of strategies that they define as “a more or less accurate and more or less intentional plan of practices adopted to achieve a particular social, political, psychological or linguistic aim” (Reisigl and Wodak, 44). These strategies include referential, predicational, argumentation, perspectivisation, and intensifying. Referential strategies are used for constructing or identifying social actors through such membership collectivisation devices as synecdoches, tropes, metonymies and metaphors. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) adapt and redefine Theo van Leeuwen’s (1993 and 1996) system of representation of social actors and focus on the categories that are of specific interest for the analysis of discrimination discourse and are realised through the use of several linguistic means. These categories include collectivisation (realised through deictics and collectives), spatialisation (toponyms used as metonyms or personifications and anthroponyms), de-spatialisation (de-toponymic and de-adverbial anthroponyms), explicit dissimilation (xenonyms), originalisations (origonyms), actionalisation/professionalisation (actionyms and professionyms), somatisation (somatonyms including racionyms, genderonyms, gerontonyms and others), culturalisation (realised through the use of ethnonyms, linguonyms, religionyms, synecdochising or metonymic anthroponyms), economisation (economyms such as professionyms, ideologonyms and others), politicisation (realised through the use

of politonyms such as nationyms, classonyms, party names and different types of anthroponyms), militarisation (militarionyms), social problematisation (negationyms, criminonyms, victimonyms and others), and relationalisation/sociativisation (relationyms and sociatives) (Reisigl and Wodak, 48-52). The scholars note that many specific linguistic means in their system overlap and are used to realise different categories (for instance, professionyms are employed for economisation and politicisation). Predicational strategies evaluate social actors and ascribe certain qualities or features to them, which is achieved through negative or positive evaluative attributions. With respect to predications, Reisigl and Wodak (2001) analyse the use of references, attributes, predicates and predicative nouns, adjectives and pronouns, explicit comparisons, metaphors and other rhetorical figures, as well as allusions, evocations and implications (54-55). Argumentation strategies justify positive and negative attributions. In the context of Reisigl and Wodak's study, analysis of argumentation focuses on usage of fallacies and topoi (71-80) for legitimisation of discrimination. Perspectivation or framing strategies show the involvement of the speakers into the represented process of discrimination or their point of view. Reisigl and Wodak adopt Goffman's concepts of 'participation framework', 'frame' and 'footing' for their analysis of involvement and detachment strategies in discrimination discourse (qtd. in Reisigl and Wodak, 81). Intensification or mitigation strategies influence the degree of illocutionary power of utterances used in discourse. The scholars adopt the system of macro and micro mitigation strategies from Wodak et al. (1997). Overall, Reisigl and Wodak state that the five

discursive strategies, referential, predicational, argumentation, pespectivation, and intensifying, which form the basis of their study, are commonly used in racial, national, and ethnic discourses for “the positive self- and negative other-presentation” (Reisigl and Wodak, 44).

3.2 Research in the Current Study

While racism and anti-Semitism, which lead to discrimination, are the main focuses of the Reisigl and Wodak study (2001), their framework is flexible and may be applied to studying a new context with respect to both form and meaning. The current thesis aims at analyzing the representation of Self and Others in a Live Journal blog without concentrating on discrimination. This section provides the details of the data and definitions important for the current thesis, such as division of blog posts into Political and Non-Political and the differentiation between Self and Others. It also describes the framework of this study and modifications that are made to adapt Reisigl and Wodak’s (2001) framework for the new purposes, and includes a description of analysis mechanics.

3.2.1. Data Description. Explanation of Terminology. Research Questions.

The data of this study consists of the first fifty entries in each year the blog has existed: from 2006 to 2011. The study of blog posts from over six years time allows for providing an extensive view of the data. The development of the author’s style or changes of her attitudes over the years are not the focus of this

study. The corpus amounts to 300 blog posts. The length of the posts is quite diverse: they range from sentence-long notes to two thousand word essays. Only the titles of the entries and the body text are included in the analysis. The comments of other users and Rynska's responses to these comments are excluded from this study to concentrate on the author's initial point of view on a topic, before Live Journal users discuss her ideas. It is worth mentioning that the format of the Live Journal allows editing the entries after they are published. Therefore, Rynska could have changed some parts of her posts analyzed in the project after reading comments. Normally the author marks the updates she makes due to the new information from the comments or writes a new entry referring to this information. The updated posts are not found in the corpus under analysis. Only verbal texts are analyzed in this study. Images are excluded from the analysis due to technical difficulties: most of the images from the first three years were not available for viewing at the time of data collection due to the Internet hosting regulations.

Two main objects of representation of persons are singled out in Rynska's blog: Self and Others. The category of 'Self' includes all references the author of the blog makes to herself. The category of Others is split into two groups: Opponents and Supporters. In the thesis, an 'Other-Opponent' is defined as someone in opposition to the author's views and beliefs and/or an actual or potential competitor, either in the private or the professional sphere. An 'Other-Supporter' is described as someone who shares the author's understanding of what is right and what is wrong, supports the author in any form, whether moral

or financial, or is supported by her. The Others who do not fall into any of these categories are defined as Neutral and are not analyzed here.

Based on the focus of Reisigl and Wodak's study (2001) on political issues of racism and anti-Semitism, the blog posts under analysis in this thesis are divided into Political and Non-Political. This division is of a particular interest here, as it adapts the methodology of Reisigl and Wodak's work (2001) to a new context, which is not limited to issues connected with discrimination. Political posts are defined as those concerned with political or social activism matters. These posts are fairly frequent in the blog in general, but do not constitute the majority of the data for this specific project.² The Non-Political posts include entries that discuss the following topics: personal life, fashion, travel, acquaintances, gossip, books, and movie premieres. Interestingly, there are no cases of mixed posts in the blog; that is, references to politics never interfere with everyday life descriptions.³

The focus of this study is on trends in representation of Self and Others. The goal of this study is to identify: 1) What image of Self does the author create in the blog and through which means? 2) What different Others does the author

² 58 out of 300 entries are identified as Political in the corpus.

³ Starting from the end of 2010, the blog has several commercial partners, which leads to the appearance of advertisement posts where the author shares her experiences with different products and services. However, no such posts are found in the time period from which the data for this project is collected. Thus, an additional group for commercial entries is not singled out.

construct and through which means? 3) How is the choice of means of representation of Self and Others influenced by the general thematic sphere of the blog entry? 4) What image of contemporary Russian society does the author construct?

To answer the research questions, a qualitative analysis of the data is conducted. The examples used in the analysis are either typical in the present corpus, or interesting for answering the proposed research questions.

3.2.2 Methodological Framework

To answer the research questions of the study, the methodology suggested by Reisigl and Wodak (2001) is modified. Firstly, only two strategies out of the five employed by the scholars are selected here: referential and predicational. The three remaining strategies deal exclusively with discrimination and thus do not fall within this thesis' focus. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) note that it is not always possible to separate these two strategies. Furthermore, these strategies often work together to represent social actors. Therefore, as the main focus of the thesis is the representation of Self and Others, it seems necessary to analyze referential and predicational strategies in a system to provide a comprehensive view of the data.

Secondly, Reisigl's and Wodak's adaptation of van Leeuwen's network of representation of social actors is not used in this study, as it is strongly connected to such forms of social discrimination as racism, anti-Semitism and ethnicism. The current study focuses on how Self and Others are represented with respect to what image the author of the blog constructs for persons discussed in the blog. To

this end, a concept of ‘dominant’ is adapted from Issers’ study (1996) on political image, its structure and creation methods. In this project, Issers employs a psychological approach and discusses the roles politicians take on to promote themselves. Issers (1996) states that the dominant defines the components of the image constructed by a politician. Each dominant possesses *slova-markery* ‘tags’ that incorporate categories, which are important for the system of values that a politician should have. For instance, the dominant of Patriot consists of such tags as *vozhrozhdenie Rodiny* ‘revival of the Motherland’, *liubov' k Otechestvu* ‘love for the Fatherland’, and *natsional'naia ideia* ‘national idea’ (Issers, 1996).

3.2.3 Dominants

For the purposes of the current study, the system of dominants is devised taking into consideration the nature of the present corpus. A dominant is defined as the prevailing category of meaning that is employed by the author for representation of Self or Others. The level of analysis is lexical and includes the study of words and expressions in a particular context. Specifically, the tags of each dominant are identified among such linguistic means as nouns, including proper names, adjectives and adverbs. The dominant set is data-driven.

The following dominants are singled out in the corpus: Age, Fauna, Geographic Units, Gender, Character and Intellectual Features, Myth, Personal Names, Generalized Names, Nationality and Ethnicity, Status, Relationships, and Appearance.

The dominant of Age consists of references to age. These may be overt and specific references, such as ‘a twenty year old girl’. In addition, words that ascribe people to a certain age group, such as ‘old man’, ‘young lady’, or ‘boy’ are also considered to be tags of this dominant. There is a potential overlap of the dominant of Age with the dominant of Gender. Consider examples (1) and (2):

- (1) A ona – malen’kaia, khрупkaia, dobraia, tēplaia i do konchika khvosta zhenshchina.

She is little, fragile, kind, warm-hearted, a woman to the tip of her tail. (January 31, 2009, 11:28 pm)

- (2) Prichēm zhena – boevaia podругa, takaia plotnaia 45-letniaia zhenshchina.

‘While the wife is a fighting companion, such a thickset 45-year old woman.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:27 pm)

Examples (1) and (2) use the same word, *zhenshchina* ‘woman’, to refer to a female person. *Zhenshchina* ‘woman’ in example (1) is identified as a tag of the dominant of Gender, as the context of the example does not focus on the age of the represented person. On the contrary, example (2) contains the same word *zhenshchina* ‘woman’ in an age-specific context, which is provided by the direct reference to the age of represented woman, *45-letniaia* ‘45 years old’. Therefore, *zhenshchina* ‘woman’ from example (2) is analyzed within the dominant of Age.⁴

The Fauna dominant incorporates all references to people through representatives of the animal kingdom. These references include mammals,

⁴ Many data units are attributed to multiple dominants simultaneously. However, in line with this study's focus, the interplay of dominants within the same units is not analyzed. Examples are discussed through the prism of one dominant deemed most important within the given context.

insects, reptiles and the like (such as *barsuk* ‘badger’, *koloradskii zhuk* ‘potato beetle’, *gadiuchka* ‘viper’, *zhaba* ‘toad’), as well as generic words for animals, birds and insects (for instance, *zhivotnoe* ‘animal’, *ptichki* ‘birdies’, *nasekomye* ‘insects’) and words used to refer to groups of animals (*stado* ‘flock’).

The dominant of Geographic Units consists of instances where people are described through references to either cities or settlements that are less than a city.⁵ This dominant incorporates references to real Russian and foreign cities, such as St. Petersburg (*piterskaia* ‘of St. Petersburg’, *devushka iz Peterburga* ‘girl from St. Petersburg’), Moscow (*moskovskaia* ‘Muscovite’ and *moskvichka* ‘female resident of Moscow’), London (*londonskiĭ* ‘of London’) and the suburbs of Moscow, as well as references to non-existent places invented by the author (for instance, *miss Ust’-Uzhopinsk* ‘miss Ust’-Uzhopinsk’⁶).

The Gender dominant incorporates instances of representation of people through their gender. These references consist of generic words for man and woman, including literary and colloquial equivalents of these generic words. For instance, the author employs literary equivalents *muzhchina* ‘man’ and *devushka* ‘young woman’ and colloquial *patsan* ‘lad’ and *tětki* ‘old bags’.

⁵ According to the laws of the Russian Federation, to receive the status of a city, a settlement’s population should be more than 12 thousand people, of whom at least 85% should be professionally occupied in spheres other than agriculture. Some cities, however, can receive this status based on their history or cultural importance.

⁶ In this example Rynska combines a particle *Ust’*, which is seen frequently in the names of Russian provincial cities, with a non-existent second part of a city name that follows a frequent pattern for naming cities in Russian with respect to form.

The dominant of Character and Intellectual Features is composed of references to people where their intellectual abilities (such as *umnaia* ‘smart’ or *tupoĭ* ‘stupid’), temper (*umpriamyĭ* ‘stubborn’ or *akkuratnaia* ‘tidy’) and moral make-up (*chestnaia* ‘honest’ or *obmanshchik* ‘liar’) are used as a way to describe or represent them.

The Myth dominant consists of references to people as mythological, non-existent or rarely seen unusual creatures. Two general trends of this dominant are found in the data. The first one can be described as General as it includes such references as *upyr* ‘vampire’ or *zombi* ‘zombie’. The second trend can be called Nymph as it mainly consists of references to this creature, such as *nimfa* ‘nymph’ or *Verkhovnaia Nimfa* ‘Supreme Nymph’. The peculiarities of this trend are discussed further in the Analysis chapter. It is worth mentioning that the popularity of this trend is explained by specific gender-related discourse that exists in the blog. References to nymphs are considered tags of the dominant of Myth based on the lexical choice that the author makes to represent the particular type of women.

The dominant of Personal Names incorporates cases where people are referred to or addressed using their actual names in different forms. These forms include full or short forms of the first name only, first name only in a diminutive or colloquial form,⁷ first and patronymic name, last name only and last name and first name in either full, short, colloquial or diminutive form.

⁷ For instance, *Mariia* is the full form of a first name. *Masha* or *Marusia* are the short, *Mashka* or *Marus'ka* are the colloquial, and *Mashen'ka* or *Marusen'ka* are the diminutive.

The dominant of Generalized Names is constituted by references to people through the names other than their own. The following are considered under this category: literary characters (such as *Tom Soer* ‘Tom Sawyer’), celebrities (such as *Britni Spirs* ‘Britney Spears’), politicians (for instance, *Barak Obama* ‘Barack Obama’) and the generic or stereotypical names for abstract people (such as *Frits* ‘Fritz’ for Germans).

The dominant of Nationality and Ethnicity incorporates references to people’s heritage, ethnicity or citizenship. Examples of this dominant include *frantsuzy* ‘French people’, *russkiĭ kaban* ‘Russian boar’⁸ and *gally* ‘the Gauls’.

The Status dominant incorporates the representation of people through references to status. This includes the referents’ occupation, education, social and financial status, and position in a hierarchy. Examples of the tags of this dominant are *oligarkh* ‘oligarch’, *professor* ‘professor’, *pogranichnik* ‘border guard’, *bednye* ‘poor’ and *pervoklassnye* ‘first-rate’.

The dominant of Relationships consists of references to people using their relationship status. These references incorporate ties of blood (*deti* ‘children’), marital or dating status (*zhena* ‘wife’ or *sponsor* ‘sponsor’⁹), friendship or

⁸ *Russkiĭ kaban* ‘Russian boar’ is an example of overlap of two dominants, Nationality and Ethnicity and Fauna.

⁹ In the blog, boyfriends, lovers and other male partners are often referred to as sponsors or financial resources, based on financial support the men provide to their female partners.

acquaintance (such as *drug* ‘friend’ or *znakomaia devushka* ‘a female acquaintance’), and professional relationships (*kollegi* ‘colleagues’).

The Appearance dominant includes the representation of persons in the blog through describing their visual features. These references include weight and body type (such as *tolstaia* ‘fat’ or *sutulaia* ‘stooping’), hair colour (for instance, *blonda* ‘blonde’ or *s ryzhimi volosami* ‘red-haired’), general beauty or plainness (such as *krasavitsa* ‘beauty’ or *strashnaia* ‘ugly’), and style of clothing (*v atlasnom plat’e* ‘wearing a satin dress’).

The analysis in the following chapter is structured around the 12 categories of dominants discussed above.

3.2.4. Mechanics of the Analysis

The corpus is studied through the means of MAXQDA 10 qualitative data analysis software, which allows for the collection of data and the creation of a data-driven coding and classification system. Each blog post is copied into a group of files. The collection of data includes the following steps. Each blog entry is copied from the Live Journal and pasted into a file, which is named based on the date on which the specific blog entry is made. If there are several blog posts from the same date, they are united into a group of files that is titled as the date. The files inside the group are differentiated through the time of publishing in their titles.

The analysis includes creating a system of codes and assigning these codes to specific instances in the text of blog posts. In the thesis, the system of codes

includes four levels: Political or Non-Political; Self, Supporter, Opponent or Unclear; Predicational or Referential; Dominant (all 12 dominants discussed above are coded separately). After assigning the codes, MAXQDA 10 creates a table where these codes are arranged according to the specific level of analysis. Basic quantitative information relating to the number of coded items is provided by the system but falls outside of the scope of analysis here.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS¹⁰

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the data. The grammar, spelling and punctuation of the author are not changed in the examples. The examples are arranged in accordance with the dominants they were ascribed to. As mentioned in the previous chapter, referential and predicational strategies present a unity and thus discussed together in the examples. However, the categories of Self, Other-Opponents and Other-Supporters are specifically singled out, as they are important for answering the proposed research questions. If an example comes from the entry that is identified as Political, it is specifically mentioned in the text. All other examples are Non-Political. The elements in the examples that are of specific interest and are under discussion are underlined. Direct speech, quotes, words and utterances that are in quotation marks in the original are set off in italics. Bold print is used to mark words that are in Latin script in the original.

¹⁰ The peculiar character of blogs lies in the high degree of dependence on one individual. They are not used in the same way as traditional media for gathering factual information, but constitute a joint narrative. In this connection, understanding the blogger's point of view relies on the reader's familiarity with the previous narrative, the system of images constructed in the blog, and the author's personal style. This is particularly true in the case of Rynska's blog. Therefore, the analysis of data in this chapter is based on the general context of the blog as well as the specific posts from which the quoted excerpts are taken. As spatial limits render the reproduction of each post in full impossible, I provide the contextual information in regards to specific references made in the examples that may not be included in the provided quotation.

4.1 Age

This dominant incorporates all references to age including the mentioning of the specific or approximate age group or using words that presuppose a certain age, such as ‘boy’, ‘girl’, ‘old lady’ etc. The possible overlap of dominants that was mentioned in the chapter on methodology is relevant here, as most cases of referential strategy are also strongly connected with the Gender dominant discussed below. Nevertheless, this overlap does not belittle the importance of age. The following examples mainly show age-related context, where the combination of referential and predicational strategies allows for identifying the main dominant as age. The author uses this dominant to represent Opponents and Supporters including women, men and children.

As one of the main topics discussed in the blog in question is the relationship between men and women, the representation of other women with respect to their age is responsible for a large number of examples. Interestingly, female Supporters and female Opponents are represented similarly. The same words, such as *zhenshchina* ‘woman’, *devushka* ‘young woman’, *devochka* ‘girl’ and *molodaia* ‘young’ are used in reference to both types of Others. Examples (3) and (4) show two instances of such typical uses:

- (3) Esli moskovskaia devushka s utra ne zalēzhivaetsia, - molodye mureny ne dremlit, nekogda valiat’sia, i – priamikom v fitness, pilates i ōogu, to v Pitere utro nachinaetsia s valianiĭ do chasa.
 ‘While a young woman from Moscow does not stay in bed for long in the morning – the young moray eels don’t dally, they have no time to loll

about, and so they go straight to fitness, Pilates and yoga, in St. Petersburg the morning starts with staying in bed till 1 pm.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

- (4) A seïchas voobshche narod poshël – pogovorit’ ne s kem, vsë tol’ko o sebe, a èti devochki molodye – slushat’-to slushaiut, da v kazhdom glazu po komp’iuteru.

‘And now the people are generally so – no one to talk to, everyone only wants to talk about themselves, while these young girls do listen, but in each eye they have a computer.’ (June 22, 2006, 05:21)

In example (3), *moskovskaia devushka* ‘the Moscow young woman’ is presented as a Supporter in this specific context. Even though the author herself comes from St. Petersburg, she shares Moscow values and lifestyle and discourages her readers from following the routine of St. Petersburg girls presented as Opponents. The *molodye mureny* ‘young moray eels’ in the same example are the competitors of young Moscow women whom Rynska supports. *Molodye mureny* ‘young moray eels’ are the Opponents, because, thanks to their youth, they are of high value on the relationships market. In example (4) *devochki molodye* ‘young girls’ are represented as Opponents. There are two reasons for this interpretation. First, *devochki molodye* ‘young girls’ are Rynska’s competitors on the relationship or marriage market as they are younger but are interested in the same men as the author of the blog. Second, the girls are too young, which leads to their inappropriate behaviour with men as the girls value only money and do not pay attention to men’s thoughts and feelings. That goes against Rynska’s image of a ‘right’ woman who is supposed to be a devoted friend to her man. Thus, in examples (3) and (4) the readers are introduced to a peculiar age system created in

the blog, where Rynska and her Supporters are ‘adequately’ or ‘appropriately’ young, while the Opponents are either too young or too old. While age is certainly an important quality in the world of the blog’s author, there is no consistency found in references to age. Examples (5) and (6) illustrate the representation of two older ladies who belong to different Other camps:

- (5) Prikhodit debelaia blonda. Let piatidesiati.
 ‘There comes a buxom blond, about 50 years old.’ (January 3, 2011, 02:09 am)
- (6) No ochen’ zamechatel’naia i Iuliia Gippenreiter (takaia umnaia vesēlaia babulia, myslitel’, professor, psikholog s mirovym imenem i master NLP do kuchi), i VSE eē knigi.
 ‘But Julia Gippenreiter (this clever fun granny, a thinker, a professor, a world-known psychologist and a master of NLP, to top it off) is wonderful, and so are ALL of her books.’ (July 6, 2006, 02:10 pm)

In example (5), Rynska talks about a female airport official who was not doing a very good job in handling a difficult situation that was provoked by the faulty management at a Moscow airport. The *blonda* ‘blonde’ in (5) can be interpreted as an Opponent as she does not excel in her profession, which is one of the important aspects in Rynska’s value system. The fact that the author mentions the blonde’s age in work-related context diminishes this lady’s professional competence even further. This approach used here by Rynska indicates that the blonde belongs to the Opponents camp, as she is not only incompetent in her job, but also too old. On the contrary, example (6) shows that even the most advanced years, complemented by certain intellectual and moral features, as well as professional excellence, can be referred to by the author in a very positive way.

Rynska chooses the diminutive form *babulia* ‘granny’ to refer to the lady in (6) and supplements the representation with a description of the many talents and degrees the represented ‘granny’ has. This signals that *babulia* ‘granny’ here is a Supporter despite her age. Interestingly, no instances of representation of the Self through the dominant of age are found in the corpus, even though it contains references to five consecutive birthdays of the author.

The representation of male Others does not account for many examples of the age dominant, which can be explained by the fact that in the world the author describes, age is mainly important for women. The approach to the representation of male Supporters and Opponents is quite similar to the representation of female Others with respect to age. The most popular way to refer to male Others are *muzhchina* ‘man’ and *mal’chik* ‘boy’. While *muzhchina* ‘man’ can refer to a broad age group, *mal’chik* ‘boy’ is associated with younger males. Consider example (7) where the author uses both references:

- (7) Vot muzhchina v moëm vkuse, - khochu zamuzh za takogo mal’chika, khoroshen’kogo, polozhitel’nen’kogo, ne opasnen’kogo...
 ‘Here is a man to my liking – I want to marry such a boy, pretty, positive, non-dangerous...’ (January 2, 2010, 01:23 am)

The man represented in (7) is Rynska’s conception of an ideal partner. It signals that this man is a Supporter as he complies with the author’s standards for men. This ideal partner is represented through the use of both *muzhchina* ‘man’ and *mal’chik* ‘boy’. Even though Rynska does not consider age to be important for men, she describes her ideal through the use of diminutive forms *khoroshen’kogo*

'pretty', *polozhitel'nen'kogo* 'positive' and *ne opasnen'kogo* 'non-dangerous'. Together with the use of *mal'chik* 'boy', this lexical choice creates an even younger image of this Supporter. Such ambiguity further contributes to the general instability and inconsistency in the representation of age in the blog.

The last group of examples of references to age consists of instances where Rynska talks about children. The general attitude towards children in the journal is negative, especially if children annoy or disturb the author or behave in a way that is not appropriate in her understanding. However, the author stays mainly indifferent or even becomes very friendly if she talks about situations when children behave in a non-disturbing way or are related to her good acquaintances. In the latter case, the main reference to these children is simply *rebënok* 'child' or *deti* 'children', as it can be seen in the example (8):

- (8) Da, deti v ètoï sem'e doliublennye, uravnoveshennye, ne pristavuchie. Zdorovye khoroshie deti so svoimi interesami.
 'Yes, the children in this family get enough love, they are balanced, they aren't annoying. Healthy good children with their own interests.'
 (January 31, 2009, 11:28 pm)

Here, Rynska talks about the family of her close friend with whom she was spending her vacation. During that time, she was amazed by how well and maturely the children in this family behaved as compared to others living at the same resort. Thus, the children in (8) are Supporters.

The same word, *deti* 'children', was used in many instances while talking about children-Opponents. However, the palette for references to the Opponents is far more diverse. Consider (9) – (11):

- (9) Eë poseshchali oligarkhicheskie otpryski sosedeï, tozhe pokinutye svoimi roditeliami.
 ‘She was visited by the descendants of oligarch neighbours who were also abandoned by their parents.’ (January 14, 2007, 11:29 pm)
- (10) Prishlos’ doprashivat’ iunuiu ledi, no i ona stoiala nasmert’, kak port’e.
 ‘They had to question the juvenile lady, but she also stood to the bitter end, like the porter.’ (January 14, 2007, 11:29 pm)
- (11) Interesno, kogda rydaet bolonk, ia brosaus’ ego uteshat’, tiskaiu, tseluiu borodatuiu mordu. No kogda merzko kaniuchit maloletniï oparysh iz sosednego nomera, ia khuiariu sosediam v stenu i oru: *Shatap ë fakin bastard!*
 ‘It’s interesting: when the Maltese dog weeps, I rush to console him, fondle him, kiss the bearded muzzle. But when the infant larva from the adjacent room disgustingly moans and groans, I hammer away on the neighbours’ wall and shout: *Shut your f*ing bastard up!*’ (January 3, 2007, 03:50 pm)

In examples (9) and (10), Rynska refers to the children using higher-style words such as *otpryski* ‘descendants’ and *iunuiu* ‘juvenile’. It is possible to suggest that these references are used as irony or to show the social status of the children in (9) and (10) as they are members of certain oligarch families. However, their status does not bring them into the circle of the author’s Supporters, as their behaviour does not comply with her requirements. That allows for interpreting *otpryski* ‘descendants’ and *iunuiu ledi* ‘juvenile lady’ as Opponents. In example (11), Rynska refers to her neighbours’ child as *maloletniï oparysh* ‘infant larva’, stressing the dominant of age in this particular example. The author not only mentions the age group of the child (*maloletniï* ‘infant’), but also describes the child as *oparysh* ‘larva’, which is a young insect. The general tone of the example is very negative with respect to the child as it disturbs the author’s activities and

thus does not follow Rynska's expectations for a child's behaviour. The lexical choice for representation of a child in (11) and the context in which it is used signals that this child belongs to Rynska's Opponents.

The dominant of Age includes references to both types of Others. The main object of representation through this dominant are women, both younger and older. Despite the importance of being young in Rynska's value system, younger female competitors are represented as Opponents, while older Others who do not pose any danger and possess qualities the author respects can be referred to as Supporters. Rynska does not consider age being of great importance in men, which explains the rarity of references to men through the dominant of Age. Children form a separate group of Opponents in the blog, as the author mainly sees them as dangerous and annoying. However, there are several exceptions the author makes for the children of her friends.

4.2 Fauna

The Fauna dominant consists of cases when people are referred to as representatives of the animal kingdom. This is one of the most numerous and diverse categories in the corpus. Several trends are singled out during analysis, including references through the use of generic words for animals, describing groups of people as flocks or herds, and referring to people as mammals, birds and insects. A unique approach is found in the corpus where a Supporter is represented as *kenguriatina* 'kangaroo meat'.

The first trend includes references to people using generic words for animals like *zver'* 'beast' and *zhivotnoe* 'animal' in different forms and contexts.

Consider (12) – (14):

- (12) Kak v nego pronikli zverushki – uma ne prilozhu. Ia nikogo ne frendila.
 'How the little animals made it inside it – I have no idea. I didn't friend anyone.' (June 22, 2006, 04:25 am)
- (13) Sobstvenno, vsia moia zhizn', vse moi *étapy bol'shogo puti*, tol'ko dlia togo, chtoby ne videt' i ne slyshat' takikh vot zhivotnykh.
 'Actually, all of my life, all of my *stages of the big path*, are all with the purpose of not seeing and hearing such animals as these. '(June 22, 2006, 04:25 am)
- (14) Ot sebia skazhu, chto imela delo tut nedavno s tamozhennikami Sheremet'evo. Chut' bylo ne peregryzla ètim tvariam gorlo.
 'I'll add from myself that I was recently in contact with the Sheremetievo airport customs workers. I almost ended up gnawing at these creatures' throats. '(January 8, 2010, 08:15 pm)

In the corpus the trend of using generic words for animals is employed only for representing Opponents. In examples (12) and (13) above, Rynska uses generic words *zverushki* 'little animals' and *zhivotnye* 'animals' to refer to people who are leaving extremely negative and offensive comments in her blog. The choice of generic words can possibly be explained by the desire to unite a certain group of people and place them into the Opponents category. These are the individuals whom the author is trying to avoid online and offline. They do not display overt gender, age, social status or any other variables that could single them out of a crowd. Their acts and thoughts are thus similar and directed by the group instincts. Example (14) illustrates an instance where a generic word *tvari*

‘creatures’ is used to refer to the authorities of a Moscow airport who were causing people to be late for their flights and yet were reluctant to improve their attitude towards their work and the passengers. One of the main topics of Rynska’s blog is the perpetual fight with those who do not carry out their duties in an appropriate way. This focus and the lexical choice the author makes indicate that the referents from (14) belong to the Opponents camp. The generic form *tvari* ‘creatures’ also hides any additional information, such as gender, age etc., although the profession of the ‘creatures’ is mentioned in this particular example.

In the analysed portion of the blog certain examples contain generic words for animals that allow for more detailed interpretation, as in (15) and (16):

- (15) Chelovecheskiĭ muzh, zhivotnoe muzhskogo pola, predast ni za grosh, ni za poniushku tabaka.

‘A human husband, an animal of the masculine gender, will betray for less than a penny, for less than a pinch of tobacco.’ (January 1, 2007, 02:52 pm)

- (16) Voobshche, korennye piterskie pypsy razvrashcheny obiliem samok i ne vydressirovany, - net tam nastoiashchikh shchuk, vot karas’ i dremlet.

‘In general, the indigenous cutie pies of St. Petersburg are corrupted by the abundance of bitches and are thus not trained – there are no real pikes here, and that’s why the carp can doze off.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

Example (15) contains a reference to a husband as a generic animal, with gender specified as masculine. The context allows for interpreting this hypothetical husband as an Opponent, as he is described as a likely traitor. In example (16), the women that are referred to as female animals are also a faceless mass that has no particular features, except for gender. They are considered Opponents for two

reasons. Firstly, they live in St. Petersburg, while Rynska is now a resident of Moscow. Secondly, the entire blog entry is about the superiority of Muscovite women over those of St. Petersburg. Therefore, the representatives of the latter city, if no additional context is provided, are those who do not share the system of norms and values or the lifestyle of the author of the blog and are interpreted as Opponents.

The loss of individuality that was described in the examples above can also be found in the second trend that is found in the data. This trend incorporates references to a group of people as a flock of some kind, as illustrated in (17) and (18):

(17) Itak, stai soobrazitel'nykh krasavits migriruiut v Moskvu, v Moskvu: vse tozhe samoe, tol'lo dorozhe.

So, flocks of quick-witted beauties migrate to Moscow, because in Moscow it's all the same, only more expensive. (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

(18) Ia togda mnogo do chego dogovorilas'. *U tebia dazhe ne garem, u tebia – matochnoe stado.*

I ended up saying a lot of things then. *What you have is not even a harem. What you have is a dam herd.* (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)

In example (17), the beautiful women that move to Moscow from St. Petersburg in search of a better life are referred to as *stai* 'flocks'. The blog post from which this example is taken focuses on the description of diverse opportunities Moscow offers to active and beautiful women. It also contains the author's comments on how the newcomers compete with women who are originally from Moscow or have lived there for a long time, as Rynska herself has. The lexical choice of *stai*

‘flocks’ that denies individuality of the represented women and the context of the entire entry indicate that *stai soobrazitel’nykh krasavits* ‘flocks of quick-witted beauties’ are Opponents for the author. Example (18) contains a reference to *matochnoe stado* ‘dam herd’. Through this phrase Rynska represents the ex-lovers of her partner. She sees these women as insignificant and worthless, as they do not comply with the requirements Rynska has for women. Therefore, the *stado* ‘herd’ is included into the sphere of the Opponents.

The next trend that is present in the corpus incorporates references to specific types of mammals. This strategy is used to represent all types of Others, in both non-political and political contexts, as well as the Self. Examples (19) – (21) show instances where Opponents are represented through several different animals:

- (19) Poëtomu kormiashchee derevo ne sbrasyvaet zverushku-lenivtsa dazhe v buriu ili v grozu.
 ‘That is why the nursing tree does not shrug off the sloth-animal even in a storm or a thundershower.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)
- (20) Ubogo vygliadit ofisnaia krysa, glumiashchaisia nad blondinkami s sis’kami.
 ‘The office rat, deriding blondes with boobs, looks miserable.’ (July 6, 2006, 02:10 pm)
- (21) Vnimanie vsem mysham: tuningiruïtes’, kak trebuet korpuskula: nemedlenno stanete krasavitsami!
 ‘Attention all mice: fine-tune yourselves, as korpuskula demands, and you’ll immediately become beauties!’ (July 6, 2006, 02:10 pm)

In examples (20) and (21) Rynska refers to women as *krysa* ‘rat’ and *myshi* ‘mice’. The references are based on the unattractive appearance of the ladies.

According to the values that Rynska promotes in the blog, being beautiful is one of the key duties a woman has in life. *Krysa* ‘rat’ and *myshi* ‘mice’ do not follow this system of values, which allows for placing them among Rynska’s Opponents. The author’s lexical choice further supports this interpretation. The instances described in (20) and (21) are very typical of the dominant of Fauna. Interestingly, example (19) is quite complex in its representation of a woman as *zverushka-lenivets* ‘sloth-animal’. The sloth mentioned in (19) refers to a typical St. Petersburg girl who does not lead an active life and prefers a lazy day to improving her appearance. Rynska herself is from St. Petersburg, but she constantly mentions that she is a former St. Petersburg girl, as she has moved to Moscow and changed her system of beliefs and lifestyle. Such statements allow for interpreting this particular example as an Opponent reference.

Using animals as a way of representing people is also found in the representation of Supporters and Self, as can be seen in (22) and (23) below:

- (22) Brattsy-kroliki, èto zhurnal Sashi Arkhangel’skogo.
 ‘Brothers Rabbits, it’s the journal of Sasha Arkhangel’skii.’ (January 26, 2008, 06:21 pm)
- (23) Sizhu, kak krot v nore i duius’ na ves’ svet.
 ‘I sit like a mole in a hole and sulk at the whole world.’ (January 31, 2009, 11:29 pm)

In example (22), Rynska refers to her readers as *brattsy-kroliki* ‘brothers rabbits’. This example is a merger of two dominants, *brattsy* ‘brothers’ serving as a reference to people holding the same views and *kroliki* ‘rabbits’ referring to harmless creatures. This word choice indicates the author’s positive and friendly

attitude towards her audience. The readers, whom the author addresses, share her fascination for another LiveJournal user. Therefore, the referents from (22) can be interpreted as Supporters. In (23), Rynska refers to Self as *krot* ‘mole’ and discusses her current mood and activities into which she was forced by some unfortunate turn of events. The word choice here can be explained by the similarity of the author’s lifestyle with the animal mentioned.

The trend of representing people through specific types of mammals incorporates a large group of examples that include references to Rynska’s partner. The author hides her partner’s identity by giving him a pseudonym *barsuk* ‘badger’. The set of examples with references to *barsuk* ‘badger’ is especially interesting, as it vividly illustrates the variability in assigning Others to Supporters or Opponents. As Rynska and her significant other go through different stages of their relationship, *barsuk* ‘badger’ moves from being a Supporter to being an Opponent. Consider (24)-(26):

- (24) Barsuk obidelsia: ne sprosil s utra, chto emu odet’. Sam nariadilsia, prichëm pravil’no.
 ‘The badger took offence: didn’t ask what he should put on in the morning. He dressed up himself, and correctly at that.’ (January 2, 2008)
- (25) Barsuk tozhe sobiralsia uezzhat’, i kakova tam sud’ba khimchistki, ia ne znala, potomu chto ne bylo nikakikh ob’’iasneniï na dveriakh.
 ‘The badger also planned to go, and I didn’t know the fate of dry-cleaning there, because there were no explanations on the doors.’ (January 29, 2008, 09:29 pm)
- (26) Koketnichat’ ne khochetsia, a khochetsia dat’ v tablo pape, barsuku i novoznakomomu alligatoru (emu-to sovsem nezasluzhenno).

‘I don’t feel like flirting, I feel like punching the face of my dad, the badger and the new acquaintance, the alligator (the latter not deserving it at all).’ (February 14, 2009, 09:12 pm)

Examples (24) and (25) are taken from the entries written during peaceful and happy periods of the relationship. The *barsuk* ‘badger’ is represented as a Supporter as he complies with Rynska’s requirements for an ideal partner and shares her values and dreams. However, in example (26) *barsuk* ‘badger’ is already an Opponent, as he is one among others responsible for psychological issues that, in Rynska’s opinion, are in the way of her happiness.

An example from one of the Political entries in the corpus shows another interesting approach to representing people through animals. In (27) Rynska uses the names of specific breeds of dogs while contrasting the power of two conflicting sides:

- (27) Khodorkovskiĭ – zhertva svoikh ambitsiĭ, velikiĭ biznesmen, on sil’nyi. Sil’nyi na sil’nogo, stenka na stenku, draka pitbulia s rotveĭlerom... plokho ěto, vozmutil’no, no voĭna Aloĭ Rozy s Beloĭ Rozoĭ gadlivosti ne vyzyvaet. Protivniki ravny.
 ‘Khodorkovsky is the victim of his own ambitions, a great businessman, he is strong. A strong against a strong, face-off, a fight of a pit bull terrier and a Rottweiler... it’s bad, it’s outrageous, but the war of the Red and the White Roses does not rouse loathing. The opponents are equal.’ (January 22, 2008, 05:51 pm)

Here, Mikhail Khodorkovsky,¹¹ whom Rynska supports, and Vladimir Putin, the President of Russia from January 2000 till May 2008, whom she criticizes frequently in her blog, are referred to as two equally powerful breeds of dogs. While images of Khodorkovsky and Putin in the blog share the same representational strategy, they are interpreted as different types of Others. Rynska sees Khodorkovsky's conviction as politically motivated. The author frequently states that she knows more about the confrontation between Putin and Khodorkovsky than she can tell her audience in the blog. Rynska participated in several social movements, both online and offline, in support of Khodorkovsky. This context indicates that Khodorkovsky can be considered a Supporter. Rynska's attitude towards Putin and his government is highly critical and often aggressive. In the context of Khodorkovsky's Affair, Rynska states on several occasions that the real criminals here are Putin and his followers. Considering this information, it is possible to state that Putin is represented as an Opponent. The author's choice to refer to both Others through specific breeds of dogs such as *pitbul* 'pit bull' and *rotweiler* 'Rottweiler' in (27) demonstrates the flexibility of approaches the author employs to represent different types of Others.

Another trend seen in the data is representing people through references to birds, both specific and generic. This approach is used to refer to both Opponents and Supporters, but not to Self. Consider (28) - (30):

¹¹ Mikhail Borisovich Khodorkovsky is a former Russian oligarch and a former head of a petroleum holding *Yukos*. He was found guilty of financial crimes and sentenced to 14 years in prison.

- (28) Togda ia i predstavleniia ne imela, kakie orly vodiatsia v Moskve, i poetomu moï myshinyï zhrebchik kazalsia mne nevyrazimo shikarnym.
‘At that time I had no idea of what kind of eagles live in Moscow, and thus my mouse-stallion seemed to me to be chic beyond expression.’
(June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)
- (29) Rodnye tupiki, uzh esli uzh okhota chitat’ ves’ moï *vypendrëzh*, tak khot’ chitaïte verno, moi ptichki.
‘Dear puffins, if you feel like reading all of my *big talk*, then at least read correctly, my birdies.’ (January 6, 2007, 07:28 pm)
- (30) Ia vseгда govorila, chto truzhenniki kapitala – samye glavnye solov’i, - est’ kontent, bol’, drama i prochee pev. obespechenie.
‘I’ve always said that the slaves of capital are the most important nightingales – they have content, pain, drama and the rest of singing support.’ (January 06, 2009)

Examples (28) and (30) are vivid representations of Supporters. In (28), Rynska uses the word *orly* ‘eagles’ in reference to men that are as close to her ideal partner as possible and thus are part of her circle. The lexical choice the author makes and the compliance of the referents to her standards allow for interpreting *orly* ‘eagles’ as Supporters. In (30) Rynska talks about her acquaintances who share her hobby and passion of singing traditional Russian and Soviet love songs. The shared interests with the author and excellence in singing of the mentioned *solov’i* ‘nightingales’ signals that they can be included in the circle of Rynska’s Supporters, as they value similar things. In example (29) Rynska refers to her readers as *tupiki* ‘puffins’ and *ptichki* ‘birdies’. The readers of her blog from this example do not pay enough attention to what is written and make quick judgements unsupported by the actual facts. The word choice is of a peculiar interest. Rynska describes *tupiki* ‘puffins’ as birds that like to fly but are really

bad at it. Furthermore, the name of this bird type is consonant with the Russian word *tupoĭ* ‘stupid’. Based on this information, it can be suggested that *tupiki* ‘puffins’ from (29) are Opponents. In the second reference to the same readers, Rynska uses a diminutive form *ptichki* ‘birdies’ to represent her Opponents. It is unclear why she makes this choice, but it can be speculated that through the diminutive form she underlines the insignificance of this segment of the readers of her blog.

The author uses references to exotic creatures, such as toads, leeches, and vipers, to represent Opponents and Self. Consider (31) – (33):

- (31) Tak vot, kak-to raz privezia letuchiĭ ěskadron v Severnuiu Pal'miru, piiavitsy nedr, povodiv zhalom i prokumekav polianu, otkazalis' ot zatratnoĭ istorii privozit' sobstvennye samovary.

‘And so, one day, having brought their [she-leeches'] flying squadron to the Northern Palmira, the mineral resources she-leeches, having browsed around with their stings and analyzed the environment, gave up on the costly operation of bringing their own coal.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

- (32) Vstretila znakomogo. Poprosil napisat' emu ěsse o zhabakh. A poskol'ku mne prispichilo ne tol'ko novoe okno, no i novyi kondiuk, idu chestno pisat'. Ia, vidite li, reshila perestat' byt' zhaboi i zhit' ne dlia radosti, a dlia sovesti.

‘I met an acquaintance. He asked me to write him an essay about toads. And because I just have to have not only a new window but also a new air conditioner, I'm starting eagerly to write. You see, I have decided to stop being a toad and to live not for joy, but for my conscience.’ (June 29, 2006, 09:48 pm)

- (33) Moĭ nechistyĭ na ruku pusik, Vy menia uslyshali? Ėto ia, v sushchnosti, lichno Vam pisala. Vasha Bekki-gadiuchka.

‘My light-fingered sweetie, did you hear me? I wrote this for you personally, in fact. Your Becky-viper.’ (June 30, 2006, 05:13 pm)

In example (31), Rynska talks about her potential competitors, the women who come to St. Petersburg from the periphery to find rich sponsors. The author represents the women as *piiavitsy* ‘she-leeches’ underlining their desire to find a financial resource. The combination of the context and the lexical choice indicates that the ladies are Opponents. Examples (32) and (33) represent Rynska herself through references to her as *zhaba* ‘toad’ and *gadiuchka* ‘viper’. In (32) *zhaby* ‘toads’ are also mentioned at the beginning of the quote. In this context, *zhaby* ‘toads’ are the women who spend their money not on what they want, but on what they or their relatives need. Rynska considers the ability to indulge herself very important in a woman. On several occasions the author of the blog mentions that she is not accustomed to spoiling herself. She sees it as an obstacle on her way to being an ideal woman and works hard to overcome it. Therefore, in this context *zhaby* ‘toads’ can be identified as Opponents despite the fact that Rynska still categorises herself as a ‘toad’. She does not share or at least tries not to share the values that *zhaby* ‘toads’ have, which makes the latter to be moved to the camp of Opponents. Example (33) shows Rynska represented as *gadiuchka* ‘viper’. In the entry from which example (33) is taken, the author addresses the journalists who copy her posts from the blog and publish them as articles without acknowledging Rynska’s effort. The lexical choice for the representation of Self can be explained by Rynska’s desire to warn or even threaten the dishonourable journalists and make them refrain from further plagiarism.

Representation of people as insects is used only with respect to Opponents and Self, similarly to references to exotic creatures. Consider (34) – (37):

- (34) Trěm nasekomym sud'ba ne prosto ulybnulas', a prosypala bozh'i milosti: ikh uvoziat v Poebushkovo.
 'Fate didn't just smile at three insects, it spilled divine favour: they are being taken to F***ville.' (June 30, 2006, 06:11 pm)
- (35) No esli moskovskie (privoznye) limitchitsy naletaiut na zelen', kak babochki plodozhorki ili dazhe kak koloradskii zhuk, i noroviat obglodat' derevo do kostěi, to peterskie *lenivitsy* oblegchaiut balans kormiashchego dereva nezametno i intelligentno.
 'But while the Moscow (imported) guest workers rush upon the green like fruit-eating moths or even like the potato beetle, and strive to gnaw down the tree to the bones, the St. Petersburg *she-sloths* lighten the balance of the feeding tree imperceptibly and in a refined manner.' (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)
- (36) My mogli *chto-to znat'* za vraga Piterskoï Moli ili imet' skhozhiĭ s Khodorkovskim i Estergazi pocherk...
 'We could *know something* for the enemy of the Petersburg Clothes Moth or have handwriting similar to that of Khodorkovsky and Estergazi...' (January 22, 2008, 05:38 pm)
- (37) Leopold ustavilsia na menia, kak na dikovinnoe i nebezopasnoe nasekomoe.
 'Leopold stared at me like one looks at a strange and unsafe insect.' (June 26, 2006, 10:19 pm)

In examples (34) and (35), Rynska refers to women using a generic *nasekomye* 'insects' and two specific types *babochki plodozhorki* 'fruit-eating moths' and *koloradskii zhuk* 'potato beetle'. Interestingly, in example (34) the referents described as *nasekomye* 'insects' do not possess any individual qualities. The specific types mentioned in (35) are plant pests. The context of (34) and (35) illustrates Rynska's attitude towards women who are looking for rich sponsors, but lack sophistication and mastery. They are either vulgar and lack individuality,

as in (34), or are aggressive and not sagacious enough, as in (35). Therefore, they do not comply with Rynska's system of values. The lexical choice and the contexts signal that the women from (34) and (35) are representatives of the Opponents camp. Example (36) illustrates a different type of Opponents. *Piterskaia Mol'* 'Petersburg Cloth Moth', to which Rynska refers, is actually the former President of Russia, Vladimir Putin,¹² who is, for her, as it was partially discussed above, not only an actual criminal in the Khodorkovsky case, but also the ultimate evil that is responsible for most negative events in Russia. Such an exotic reference to the former President is based on the fact that Putin studied and began his career in St. Petersburg, as well as on his visual features, as Rynska finds his appearance pale and inconspicuous. The author's strong attitude towards Putin and the choice of the word she uses to represent him allows for placing Putin into the Opponents sphere. In example (37) Rynska uses the generic word *nasekomoe* 'insect' to refer to herself, or rather to an impression she made on an acquaintance. While *nasekomoe* 'insect' does not include specific features, Rynska compensates the lack of individuality in the representation of Self by adding additional characteristics, such as *dikovinnoe* 'strange' and *nebezopasnoe* 'unsafe'.

To conclude with the dominant of Fauna, two unique examples of representation of Others should be mentioned. Example (38) can be related to the

¹² Vladimir Putin was the President of Russia from January 2000 till May 2008, when he became Prime Minister.

earlier (27), where the particular breeds of dogs are used to represent Putin and Khodorkovsky, but (38) uses a different approach to the referents:

(38) I tut funktsiia pravdy vkluchaetsia uzhe u menia: Mozhno podumat', ty odnikh miss mira trakhaesh'! Videla ia tvoikh tĕlok v internete – odni dvorniazhki.

'And that's when the truth function already turns on in me: One could think that you only f*** Miss World winners! I've seen your girls online – only mongrels.' (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)

In (38) Rynska refers to the former lovers of her partner whom she defines as the least valuable breed of dogs. By choosing *dvorniazhki* 'mongrels' the author assigns the former lovers of her partner to a lower class in society. Rynska also comments on their appearance that is not suitable for higher ranks. Considering this aspect, it is possible to interpret the referents in (38) as Opponents.

The second instance refers to Rynska's best friend and role model mentioned above, Uliana Tseitlina:

(39) Okazyvaetsia, Dina ěta rabotala nekogda v Leningradskom dome modeleiĭ manekenshchitseĭ, khorosho znakoma s Ul'iasheĭ Tseitlinoĭ, - kenguriatina v shestnadsat' let tam zhe khodila, a potom uekhala v Avstraliiu.

'It appears that this Dina had once worked at the Leningrad fashion house as a model, she knows Uliana Tseitlina well – the kangaroo meat walked there at 16 as well, and then went away to Australia.' (January 6, 2007, 09:20 pm)

In (39), based on Tseitlina's life in Australia, Rynska represents her as a signature animal of the country, or rather as kangaroo meat, thus referring to her as an inanimate object. As Tseitlina is Rynska's close friend and personification of the

author's image of an ideal woman, *kenguriatina* 'kangaroo meat' is identified as a Supporter. While it is a rather unusual way to refer to Supporters, it is worth mentioning that (39) is the only instance where they are referred to as animal meat.

The dominant of Fauna illustrates Rynska's flexibility in the representation of Others and Self. The author mainly uses generic terms for animals, birds and insects, as well as flocks and herds, in reference to Opponents to underline their likeness and lack of individuality. However, the generic word *nasekomoe* 'insect' is once used for representation of Self but is accompanied with detailed descriptions of additional features the author possesses. Specific types of birds and mammals are employed for representation of Self and both types of Others. Rynska also employs specific breeds of dogs (or lack of breed) to represent Opponents and Supporters. Once in the corpus, 'kangaroo meat' is used to refer to a Supporter.

4.3 Geographical units

This dominant consists of references to geographical units that are either cities or places smaller than cities. In the corpus the dominant of Geographic units incorporates references to Moscow and its suburbs, St. Petersburg, foreign cities and non-existent places the author makes up.

The main dichotomy that has existed in Russian culture for many years, Moscow versus St. Petersburg, is responsible for many examples in this category. This dominant is not very broad, but deserves attention as it provides a deeper understanding of types of Others and reasons for defining Supporters and

Opponents. In the analyzed corpus, references to Muscovites are not as numerous compared to St. Petersburgers and mainly occur when the residents of these cities are compared. Interestingly, Rynska does not represent Self through reference to Moscow in the corpus, although she has lived there for many years and promotes Muscovite values in her blog. The examples concerned with the representation of the residents of St. Petersburg are more diverse and frequent. Such distribution can be explained by the fact that Rynska lives in Moscow, thus she does not need to stress that people she mainly talks about are from Moscow. However, the author uses references to other places to create a more interesting and detailed context. The references to St. Petersburg include both types of Others as well as Self. Earlier example (36) illustrates representation of an Opponent through the name of the city. The former President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, is referred to as *Piterskaia Mol'* 'St. Petersburg Cloth Moth' which underlines his place of birth. Similar are examples (40)-(42):

- (40) Slovom, v masse svoeĭ piterskie baryshni bolee vsego skhozhi so zverem lenivtsem.
 'In short, most of the Petersburg misses are most like the sloth animal.'
 (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)
- (41) U podrosshego baltiĭskogo pokoleniia nimf tiaga k prekrasnomu, naprimer, k sakvoiazhu dlia perevozki zhyvotnykh **Louis Vuitton**, prisutstvuet.
 'The grown-up Baltic generation of nymphs has a craving for the beautiful, for example, for Louis Vuitton animal travelling bag.' (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)
- (42) Lichnyĭ opyt: neskol'ko let nazad, kogda ia tol'ko pereekhala v Moskvu, u menia tlel roman s odnim piterskim tolstosumikom.

‘Personal experience: a few years ago, when I had just moved to Moscow, I was having a smouldering affair with one little Petersburg money-bag.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

In examples (40) and (41), Rynska discusses the characteristic features of the young St. Petersburg women. In (40) the author uses the adjective *piterskie* ‘of Petersburg’ derived from *Piter* (short name for St. Petersburg). In (41) the choice of the adjective *baltiškogo* ‘Baltic’ can be explained by the location of St. Petersburg on the Baltic Sea. These groups of women are considered Opponents as they either do not share Rynska’s way of living, as in (40), or are her competitors whom she considers not as skilled and experienced yet and excludes them from her circle, as in (41). Example (42) refers to a sponsor from St. Petersburg with whom Rynska was in a relationship. According to her post, she sees him now as insufficient and inappropriate for her level, thus putting him into the Opponents camp.

Representation of Supporters in this category includes references similar to those mentioned in examples (40) - (42), but also contains different types of references illustrated in (43) and (44):

- (43) Ul’iana Tseĭtlina, korennaiia peterburzhenka, prozhila v Avstralii piatnadtsat’ let, - ne baran chikhnul, mezhdū prochim.
 ‘Ul’iana Tseĭtlina, a St. Petersburg native, lived in Australia for 15 years – not a negligible period of time, one must note.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)
- (44) U Niki v novyĭ god sobralas’ kompaniia kozyrnykh oligarkhov SPb.
 ‘On New Year’s, Niki had assembled a group of the most prominent oligarchs of St. Petersburg.’ (January 6, 2009)

Tseitlina appears again in example (43) and is described as a native of St. Petersburg, which does not in any way diminish her high position in the society, as perceived by the author of the blog. This allows for attributing Tseitlina to Supporters. The value of St. Petersburg, depreciated in examples (40)-(42), is further supported by the reference to the main oligarchs that reside in St. Petersburg in (44). Rynska celebrates the New Year with oligarchs in the house of her close friend. In the entry example (44) is taken from, the author describes that she enjoyed spending time with the oligarchs as they are smart, fun and share her interests. The choice of the word *kozyrnykh* ‘prominent’ to refer to the oligarchs indicates Rynska’s respect for their high status not only in society in general, but also among other oligarchs. Therefore, the oligarchs are not only representatives of the circles to which Rynska is close, but also comply with her standards for men, as they are rich, intelligent and successful. This allows for indicating them as Supporters in the context of example (44).

Examples (40)-(44) show that connection to St. Petersburg can be both positively and negatively evaluated by Rynska. The contradictory value of St. Petersburg is important for understanding how the author represents Self:

(45) Ia byla tipichnoï piterskoï devushkoï.

‘I was a typical young woman from St. Petersburg.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

In (45), Rynska refers to Self using the same adjective *piterskoï* ‘from St. Petersburg’ that she employed for representation of her Opponents in example (40). Nevertheless, the author uses the past tense, thus showing that now she does

not necessarily share the typical system of values and lifestyle of residents of St. Petersburg.

Except for references to the two Russian capitals, another place that is used to refer to people in the blog is Rublevo, a popular place among the Russian elite and celebrities that is located near Moscow on the Rublevo-Uspenskoe Highway. In recent years, references to Rublevo are used to describe a luxurious lifestyle that is not accessible to the average Russians. Consider (46):

(46) Ustin'ia, kak nastoiashchaia vladelitsa salona tut zhe ustroila vecher khokku. Luchsheĭ geisheĭ Rublëvo-Uspenskogo okolotka priznali menia za trekhstishie.

'Ustinia, as a real salon owner, at once organized a hokku evening. For a tercet, I was acclaimed as the best geisha of the Rublevo-Uspensky neighbourhood.' (June 22, 2006, 05:21 pm)

Example (46) illustrates the way Rynska represents herself using a reference to this chic place where she does not live, but which she visits frequently thanks to her friends. In (46) Rynska not only describes Self as *geisha Rublëvo-Uspenskogo okolotka* 'geisha of the Rublevo-Uspensky neighbourhood' but also states that she was proclaimed the best by her friends who are residents of Rublevo. Through this Rynska represents Self as part of the circle of rich and successful women.

References to places other than St. Petersburg and Moscow with its suburbs are connected with representation of both types of Others. Consider (47) – (48):

(47) Dva krupnykh nedro-piiavtsa ustraivaiut tam konkursy krasoty miss Kher', miss Ust'-Uzhopinsk, miss Narym i prochee.

‘Two large natural resources leeches stage beauty contests there: miss Kher’, miss Ust’-Uzhopinsk, miss Narym etc.’ (June 30, 2006)

(48) A segodnia na borshch zaplyl samyi glavnyi oligarch Londona.

‘And today the main London oligarch sailed in for some borsch.
(January 21, 2009)

In example (47), Rynska lists non-existent Russian cities names are both obscene and similar to typical names of small provincial cities of no great importance from the point of view of a megapolis inhabitant. Referring to the winners of beauty pageants held in these cities, Rynska represents her Opponents, as they do not belong to the same circle of high Moscow society as she does. Example (48) represents a Supporter, as he is one of the Russian oligarchs currently residing in London with whom Rynska has a very friendly relationship and whose company she always enjoys.

The dominant of Geographic Units shows that residents of Moscow and St. Petersburg can be Rynska’s Opponents and Supporters, depending on their lifestyle and values. The author represents Self through references to St. Petersburg only when underlining that it is part of her past, as now her life is different from life of typical residents of St. Petersburg. No instances of representation of Self through references to Moscow are found in the analyzed part of the corpus. The residents of cities other than Moscow and St. Petersburg are represented as both Supporters and Opponents in the corpus.

4.4 Gender

Gender is another dominant that is of special interest for analyzing this blog. This dominant is significant as many entries are concerned with men, women and relationships between the two genders. This dominant includes all references to gender. In the analyzed corpus, the references consist of nouns that designate people of different age while specifying their gender, such as ‘a man’, ‘a girl’, ‘an old woman’ etc.

The main tendency in referring to men in this blog is to use the generic word *muzhchina* ‘male’ or its colloquial equivalent *muzhik* ‘man’. Consider (49) and (50):

(49) No iz-za togo, chto muzhchin s bol’shoi tsifry v Pitere men’she, tianushchiesia k prekrasnomu uezzhaiut ottuda, ne uspev sozret’.

‘But because there are fewer males in large digits in St. Petersburg, those seeking the beautiful leave it, without having ripened.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

(50) Voobshche, rebiata, kogda muzhik s udovol’stvie kushaet, eto takoe schast’e. Net vyshe schast’ia, chem kormit’ muzhika.

‘In general, guys, it’s such happiness when a man is eating with pleasure. There is no higher happiness than feeding a man.’ (January 21, 2009)

Examples (49) and (50) illustrate how Supporters are represented. In (49), the men mentioned are the richest people in St. Petersburg. They belong to the circle of people Rynska respects and with whom she has friendly relationships. *Muzhchiny* ‘males’ in (49) meet the author’s requirements for men as they are rich and thus successful. In example (60), she talks about a generic man as well as one of her oligarch friends who enjoys her first attempt at cooking. It is hard to

differentiate who specifically is meant here, a real or an ideal man. However, this person is a Supporter, as he is a part of Rynska's intimate circle and works well within the system of her understanding of how family life should be organized.

An interesting approach that combines the use of both *muzhchina* 'male' and *muzhik* 'man' in representation of the same male Supporter is found in (51):

- (51) Ètot semeĭnyĭ soïuz po nashim vremenam sovershenno unikalen. On - Muzhchina-muzhchina... On – takoiĭ nastoiashchiĭ, rokovoĭ, ochen' zrelyĭ, ochen' sil'nyĭ i otvetstvennyĭ Muzhik-muzhik.
 'This matrimony is completely unique for our times. He is a Male male. He is such a real, fatal, very mature, very strong and responsible Man man.' (January 31, 2009, 11:28 pm)

In (51), the same man is referred to as *muzhchina* 'male' and *muzhik* 'man'. The characteristics Rynska assigns to this man, such as *nastoiashchiĭ* 'real', *sil'nyĭ* 'strong' and *otvetstvennyĭ* 'responsible', signal that the man is represented as a Supporter. To underline the absolute correspondence between the referent from (51) and Rynska's image of a real man, the author uses repetition of both *muzhchina* 'male' and *muzhik* 'man' in reference to the represented Supporter.

The analyzed corpus incorporates many examples where male Opponents are represented through the use of *muzhchina* 'male' and *muzhik* 'man'. Consider (52) and (53):

- (52) Nu vot, eshchĕ grubee – ne velikiĭ muzhchina, ne orĕl.
 'Well, to put it even more rudely – not a great male, not an eagle.'
 (January 11, 2011, 05:54 pm)

(53) U odnogo znakomogo muzhika sheia izbytochno dlinnaia i v ravnomernykh skladochkakh. Khochetsia vziat' ego za golovu i vvernut' ètu sheiu poglubzhe v plechi, kak lampochku v patron.

'One man I know has a grossly long neck with uniform little folds all over it. I just want to take him by the head and screw this neck deeper into the shoulders, like one screws a light bulb into its socket.' (February 1, 2009, 06:16 pm)

In example (52), Rynska refers to a modern Russian poet who focuses on topics of social justice and whom she finds a great poet, but a rather pale and uncharismatic man. He falls out of her sphere of interests as an unpromising partner and thus, in this particular context, belongs to the Opponents camp as a representative of people of a different class. Example (53) describes one of Rynska's male acquaintances who irritates her enormously, because he often fails to keep his word without serious reason and thus puts himself in the sphere of Rynska's Opponents, as he does not follow her value system.

While the above-mentioned ways of representing male Others via generic *muzhchina* 'male' and *muzhik* 'man' are the most numerous in the corpus, three other forms are also seen quite frequently, but in reference to Opponents only. Consider (54) and (55):

(54) Ia, vidite li, reshila perestat' byt' zhaboi i zhit' ne dlia radosti, a dlia sovesti. Ne vykomarivat' s diadek babki, a sama-sama...

'I, you see, have decided to stop being a toad and to live not for joy, but for my conscience. I've decided not to pull money out of men, but to get it myself...' (June 29, 2006, 09:48 pm)

(55) Poproboval sunut'sia v odin proekt, v drugoi, a golova-to – nu ne biznesmen, prosto povezlo parniu v svoè vremia, tak vse proekty – chisto v minus. Zhal' patsana.

'He tried to get into one project, then another, but his head – he's just not a businessman, the young guy was just lucky at one point, so all of the projects went down completely. I feel sorry for the lad.' (June 22, 2006, 05:21 am)

Example (54) provides a reference to men through the use of colloquial *diad'ki* 'men'. The men in (54) do not understand that money should be given to women without making them ask or wait for it. The word *diad'ki* 'men' is frequently used in colloquial Russian by children to refer to an unfamiliar male adult. The term *diad'ki* 'men' is a rather impolite form of reference. The lexical choice Rynska makes in (54) to represent males signals that these males are Opponents, as they do not follow the author's values and are referred to in a colloquial and impolite manner. Example (55) includes two references to an unsuccessful businessman: *paren* 'young guy' and *patsan* 'lad'. Both are informal ways to refer to a man and both are often used to refer to adolescents rather than adults. In addition, *patsan* 'lad' is used in Russian criminal jargon where it designates a person belonging to a gang. As context of (55) shows, the unsuccessful entrepreneurship of the man that is a result of his lack of talent in business allows for interpreting him as an Opponent. It is unclear why Rynska uses these specific variants *paren* 'young guy' and *patsan* 'lad' in (55). A possible explanation is that the man represented through these references is not quite a man, as for Rynska being successful in life is an important value that every man should possess.

In the corpus several examples are found where men are referred to as *mal'chiki* 'boys'. This approach is used in one of the two instances where Rynska mentions her new male acquaintances. Consider (56) and (57):

- (56) Segodnia ili zavtra poprobuiu opisat' podslushannoe. Est' parochka zhemchuzhin – provereno na mal'chikakh-metroseksual'chikakh.
 'Today or tomorrow I'll try to describe what I had heard. There are a few gems – tested on the metrosexual boys.' (January 22, 2007)
- (57) Poznakomilas' s ocharovashkami-metroseksualami.
 'I met cuties-metrosexuals.' (January 22, 2007)

Both examples contain references to metrosexuals who, according to a few entries in the blog, in Rynska's eyes are rather representatives of her female Supporters, as they lack danger with which she associates men. It can be partially substantiated by the use of the word *mal'chiki* 'boys' in example (56). This word could have been chosen for the same reason as the word *patsan* in example (55); that is metrosexuals do not belong to men whom the author of the blog finds attractive as her potential partners. This suggestion is further supported by the use of the diminutive form *metroseksual'chikakh* 'metrosexuals' in (56). However, the metrosexuals are Supporters as they share Rynska's value system and are admirers of her writing. Such ambiguity can be explained by the nature of the metrosexual phenomenon where the masculine identity is not rigid and allows for certain variations. In (57) Rynska uses a diminutive form *ocharovashki* 'cuties' to refer to the same individuals. This can signal that the metrosexuals are not considered promising by the author of the blog.

In general, Rynska uses words *muzhchina* 'male' and *muzhik* 'man' to represent both Opponents and Supporters. She employs colloquial equivalents, such as *diad'ki* 'men', *patsan* 'lad' and *paren'* 'young guy' to refer to Opponents. The metrosexuals, who are Rynska's Supporters as they are fans of her work and

provide her with pleasant company, are referred to as *mal'chiki* 'boys', as they lack necessary characteristics to be considered men.

The representation of women also has several interesting features. Unlike men, women are rarely referred to with the generic *zhenshchiny* 'women'. One of these references is illustrated in (58):

- (58) ...ona – Zhenshchina-zhenshchina... A ona – malen'kaia, khрупkaia, dobraia, tēplaia i do konchika khvosta zhenshchina. (Ne devochka i ne mamka).
 '... she is a Woman woman... She is little, fragile, kind, warm-hearted, a woman to the tip of her tail. (Not a girl, nor a mother).' (January 31, 2009, 11:28 pm)

In (58), similar to *Muzhchina muzhchina* 'Male male' in example (53), the word *zhenshchina* 'woman' is repeated twice to stress the absolute conformity to the image of the ideal. This woman is interpreted as a Supporter, as she is everything Rynska herself tries to be and has a family that is as close to the author's understanding of an ideal family as possible.

In the analyzed corpus, women are mostly referred to as *devushki* 'young women' in diverse contexts. In the example (59), Rynska uses this word to describe herself:

- (59) Pravit'naia devushka v pravit'nom braslete s pravit'nyim shampanskim lezhit u kamina i sposobna otsenit' pravit'nye veshchi.
 'The right kind of young woman wearing the right kind of bracelet and with the right kind of champagne lies by a fireplace and is able to value the right kind of things.' (June 22, 2006, 05:21 am)

The type of reference to Self in (59) is seen several times in the corpus. The author frequently uses the word *devushka* ‘young woman’ to represent her Supporters, as in examples (60)-(61):

- (60) A nam, devushkam bednym, lazhat’ nel’zia.
 ‘And we, poor young women, cannot make mistakes.’ (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)
- (61) Druz’ia, mne nuzhno srochno pomoch’ odnoï miloï devushke, moeï khorosheï znakomoï.
 ‘Friends, I must urgently help one nice young woman, my good acquaintance.’ (January 11, 2011, 10:46 pm)

In example (60), Rynska talks about herself and her colleagues in search for perfect style who do not have the luxury of making mistakes while choosing clothes and accessories. Thus, *devushki bednye* ‘poor young women’ in this example are Supporters, as they are at the same financial level as Rynska and share her desire to look perfect without wasting the much-needed money. Example (61) contains a reference to Rynska’s acquaintance whom she wants to help. In (61) the context allows interpreting the mentioned ‘young woman’ as a Supporter as well.

The word *devushka* ‘young woman’ is also used in many instances where the author refers to Opponents. Example (62) shows two such instances of the use of *devushka* ‘young woman’, which is typical of the corpus:

- (62) Paru mesiatsev nazad odna znakomaia devushka sdelala mne gadost’ izpodtishka. Pomogla v rasprostraneniï iavnoï lzhi, znaia, chto èto lozh’.
Devushka dumala, chto nikto v zhizni ne uznaet, chto èto sdelala ona.
 ‘A couple of months ago one young woman I knew did a vile thing to me in an underhand way. She helped spread an obvious lie, knowing that it

was a lie. The young woman thought that no one would ever find out that she did that.’ (January 1, 2011, 07:04 pm)

The context of example (62) allows for interpretation of *devushka* ‘young woman’ as an Opponent. Rynska’s acquaintance that is referred to as *devushka* ‘young woman’ talked slanderously about Rynska, which could have potentially damaged the author’s image in society. The young woman violated Rynska’s general system of values and did not comply with the author’s requirements for appropriate behaviour for someone who has been helped by Rynska. Thus, the author uses the word *devushka* ‘young woman’ to refer not only to both types of Others, but also to Self.

The next trend in representation of female Others employs the word *dama* ‘lady’ to refer to Supporters and Opponents. Please note that no references to Self through *dama* ‘lady’ are found in the corpus. Consider (63) and (64):

(63) ...nu vot vizhu ia ëtu damu. Sutulaia. Plokho ukhozhennaia. Uzhasnaia, chudovishchnaia pokhodka – nogami zagrebaet i sharkaet, a osanka... Net povesti pechal’nee na svete. Voploshchënnnaia antizhenstvennost’!
 ‘... so I see this lady. Stooping. Unkempt. A horrible, monstrous gait; she makes strong strokes with her feet and shuffles, while the posture... There never was a story of more woe. Anti-femininity incarnate!’ (July 06, 2006, 02:10 pm)

(64) Razgovorilas’ s damoi v lobbi.
 ‘Started chatting with a lady in the lobby.’ (January 6, 2007, 09:20 pm)

In example (63), the lady belongs to the Opponents, as her appearance goes against every model Rynska has in that regard. Being stylish and beautiful is one of the main concepts in Rynska’s value system, as only an appropriately-looking female can succeed in most spheres of life. According to the general idea of the

entry, no amount of education or intellectual excellence can help if a woman looks as described in example (63). Example (64) shows how the same word is used in reference to Rynska's new acquaintance. This *dama v lobbi* 'lady in the lobby' turned out to be a former colleague of the author's role model, Uliana Tseitlina. The lady is a representative of the circle the author was part when Rynska lived in St. Petersburg. Thus, this example presents the use of *dama* 'lady' in reference to a Supporter.

Two other common ways to refer to female Others are colloquial expressions for females, such as *baby* 'chicks, skirts' and *tētki* 'old bags'. Examples (65) and (66) illustrate how Opponents are represented through these references:

- (65) Intellektual'nye marki v perevode znachit nekrasivye shmotki. Eshchē tochnē – antiseksual'nye. Maskiruiushchie polovye priznaki. Ikh pridumali khitrye baby, chtoby pod sousom trenda izbavit'sia ot sopernits.

'Intellectual brands, in translation, means ugly clothes. Even more precisely – anti-sexual clothes. Clothes that mask sexual characters. They were invented by sly skirts in order to get rid of opponents using the trend as reason.' (January 26, 2008, 01:51 am)

- (66) On kak raz iz tekh muzhchin, pri kotorykh dazhe avtoritarnye tētki stanoviatsia shēlkovymi, a drugie samtsy kak-to ochen' bystro sduvaiutsia.

'He is just one of those men, next to whom even the authoritarian old bags become docile while other studs somehow very quickly blow out.' (January 31, 2009, 11:28 pm)

Example (65) illustrates a case of reference to potential competitors who get quite inventive trying to get beautiful women out of their way. Since Rynska considers

these competitors a threat to those who share her views and lifestyle, the mentioned *baby* ‘skirts’ can be identified as Opponents in the context. In example (66), the qualities ascribed to *tětki* ‘old bags’ contradict Rynska’s expectations of how a woman should behave, especially in the presence of or in regards to men. Thus, as bearers of a different philosophy, these women belong to the Opponents camp.

One instance is present in the corpus where *tětka* ‘old bag’ is used in reference to a Supporter. Consider (67):

(67) Vot sostarius’ i sama stanu takoï tětkoï. Tsinichnoï, iazykastoï, sukhoï i s prishchurum.

When I get old, I’ll become one of such old bags myself. A cynical one, with a long tongue, dry, with screwed-up eyes. (June 23, 2006, 02:34 am)

In (67), Rynska refers to an older lady she met at an event, whose appearance and behaviour amazed her and made her wish to become just like this lady when the time comes. This lady is identified as a Supporter, as she personifies everything Rynska is trying to achieve and Rynska evaluates her very highly on several occasions in the blog entry.

The dominant of Gender incorporates the use of generic words for men and women to represent both Opponents and Supporters. Note that the generic word *zhenshchina* ‘woman’ is in most cases substituted by the word *devushka* ‘young woman’. *Devushka* ‘young woman’ is also the only way employed by the author to represent Self. Colloquial equivalents for men, such as *diad’ki* ‘men’ or *patsan* ‘lad’ are only used in reference to Opponents. The colloquial word *tětka* ‘old bag’ is once used in the corpus to refer to a Supporter.

4.5 Character and Intellectual Features

The dominant of Character and Intellectual Features consists of all references to peculiarities of temper, moral make-up and level of intelligence, such as ‘smart’, ‘stubborn’ or ‘liar’. In examples (68)-(70) Rynska employs this dominant to refer to her Opponents:

- (68) Ia ekhala v Piter na Sapsane. Otlichnyi poezd. Superskiĭ. I vot narod-vandal rasfigachil tol’ko chto sdelannyĭ, novĕkhon’kiĭ, krasiven’kiĭ Sapsan.

‘I went to St. Petersburg on the Sapsan train. It’s a great train. A super train. And the vandal people have broken this recently made, brand new, beautiful little Sapsan into pieces.’ (January 18, 2010, 02:46 am)

- (69) Esli by zlodei znali, chto garantirovannaia oglaska ikh dostanet, veli by sebia akkuratnee.

‘If the evil people knew that they are guaranteed to be reached by publicity, they would have behaved in a more careful way.’ (January 7, 2011, 06:32 am)

- (70) Èto neudobstvo pered det’mi prekrasnyi sposob derzhat’ v uzde podliugi i podlĕnysheĭ.

This embarrassment before the children is a great way to keep mean people and their mean offsprings in check. (January 7, 2011, 06:32 am)

In examples (68)-(70) Rynska portrays abstract groups of people and assigns certain moral qualities to them through the use of *vandal* ‘vandal’ in (68), *zlodei* ‘evil people’ in

(69), *podliugi* ‘mean people’ and *podlĕnyshi* ‘offsprings of mean people’ in (70).

In example (68), the object of such representation is formed by the common people who vandalized the new express train that connects Moscow to St. Petersburg. This train has influenced the lives of the residents of Russia in both

negative and positive ways. The negative influence has provoked a series of acts of violence, some of which Rynska mentions in this particular blog entry. Through referring to the common people as vandals, the author expresses her attitude towards them and their actions. The author puts herself outside of the circle of those unhappy with the existence of Sapsan, and thus marks the people as Opponents as they do not share her views and violate her system of values. Examples (69) and (70), *zlodei* ‘evil people’, *podliugi* ‘mean people’ and *podlënyshi* ‘offsprings of mean people’, are from a larger context of Rynska’s campaign against the judges of Moscow courts who passed a sentence on Mikhail Khodorkovsky, unfair in Rynska’s opinion. In examples (69) and (70) Rynska addresses not specifically those officials, but rather everyone who had acted or will ever act in a way that is against universal human moral values that the author shares. The lexical choice Rynska makes further contributes to identifying *zlodei* ‘evil people’, *podliugi* ‘mean people’ and *podlënyshi* ‘offsprings of mean people’ as Opponents.

It is worth mentioning that the vast majority of examples referring to Opponents are concerned with their moral, rather than intellectual features. Nevertheless, a few references to specific characteristics of the Opponents’ intelligence are present in the corpus. Example (71) is a typical illustration of such representation:

(71) Chasto blagotvoriteli i podvizhniki okazyvaiutsia zashorennymi ogranichennymi mentorami.

Frequently, the benefactors and zealots turn out to be narrow-minded and hidebound mentors. (January 23, 2007, 09:33 pm)

In (71), while discussing people who became very active participants of the Russian Orthodox Church in the past few years, Rynska underlines that adopting Christian morals does not necessarily provide people with increased intellectual abilities. Her judgement in (71) rendered via adjectives *zashorennye* ‘hidebound’ and *ogranichennyye* ‘narrow-minded’ allows for interpreting the mentioned people as Opponents as they do not share Rynska’s open-minded views.

While referring to Opponents whom Rynska actually knows, she concentrates on discussing their moral features rather than intellectual ones as well. Consider (72) and (73):

(72) Ia neplokho znala odnogo vora v zakone. Krupneishiĭ Forbs, na babkakh sumasshedshikh. Khamlo, grubiiian.

‘I knew one lord of the underworld quite well. A big name in Forbes. Crazy money. A boor, a rude fellow.’ (January 7, 2011, 06:32 am)

(73) No uzh tak rechist i *machist* byl zlodeĭ, i takoĭ uragan libido vyzyval u okruzhaiushchikh, chto i ia poddalas’ obshchemu pomeshatel’stvu.

‘But the villain was such a smooth talker and such a mucho, and he was provoking such a storm of libido in everyone around him, that I also submitted to the general insanity’. (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)

In both (72) and (73), Rynska comments on the temper and behavioural patterns of her close acquaintances through use of words *khamlo* ‘boor’ (72), *grubiiian* ‘a rude fellow’ (72) and *zlodeĭ* ‘villain’ (73). The referents in (72) and (73) both belong to the Opponents camp despite their high financial status (72) and regardless of being in a close relationship with the author (73). Both of these Opponents lack the necessary moral characteristics that Rynska requires in men, which puts them outside of the circle Rynska considers trustworthy.

The tendency to refer to Opponents through their moral rather than intellectual features is seen in the Political entries as well. No references to intelligence (or lack thereof) are found in the present data. However, the discussion of moral features of Rynska's political Opponents is diverse and extensive. Consider (74) and (75):

(74) Vot pochemu ia prosila zapomnit' prokurora Khomutovskogo. Étot merzavets dozhdëtsia svoego chasa.

'That's why I asked you to remember prosecutor Khomutovskii. One day this creep will get his desserts.' (January 22, 2008, 08:10 pm)

(75) Ia goda dva nazad v interv'iu Sobake.ru skazala, chto Putin i Ivanov antigeroi nashego vremeni: melkotravchatye, melkopomestnye, melochnye, blagorodstva i chesti – ni na grosh.

'About two years ago I said in an interview for Sobaka.ru that Putin and Ivanov are the anti-heroes of our time: they are petty, narrow, puny. They completely lack nobility and honour.' (January 22, 2008, 05:51 pm)

Examples (74) and (75) are taken from the entries concerned with Aleksanian's case. Vasily Aleksanian was the Executive Vice President of Mikhail Khodorkovsky's company and was arrested during the investigation into Khodorkovsky's case. According to Aleksanian's lawyers, he was diagnosed with AIDS in 2006 but never received any medical treatment while in jail, which is a violation of the basic human rights. Rynska joined the protests against unlawful actions of the authorities and started several online flashmobs where Internet users were asked to call down curses on the heads of everyone who was responsible for provoking or supporting these events. The prosecutor mentioned in example (74) was one of the people who did not stop the inhuman treatment of Aleksanian and even promoted it. Thus, in Rynska's system of values, he deserves the worst fate

possible. The context and the lexical choice Rynska makes to refer to the Prosecutor (*merzavets* ‘creep’) allows for placing him into the Opponents camp. In example (75), Rynska characterizes Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation at the time the blog entry was written, and Sergei Ivanov, Deputy Prime Minister at the same time, in an extremely negative way, referring to them as *melkotravchatye* ‘petty’, *melkopomestnye* ‘narrow’ and *melochnye* ‘puny’ and stating that they are dishonourable. The author denies them the right to be called humans due to their moral features. The context and choice of words in (75) indicates that the two politicians can be interpreted as Opponents.

The Supporters are represented through both intellectual and moral characteristics, as can be seen in examples (76) – (78) below:

- (76) Slovom, shchedryĭ i slavnyĭ chelovek, ètot Kostik.
‘In a word, this Kostik is a generous and nice person.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:27 pm)
- (77) Umnaia krasivaia i pravil’naia ledi Irina vernulas’ iz Izrailia.
‘The clever, beautiful and right lady Irina has returned from Israel.’ (June 23, 2006, 02:23 am)
- (78) Perepisyvalis’ s odnim umnym chelovekom. On posetoval, zachem ia knizhki ne pishu.
I was exchanging letters with one smart man. He lamented that I don’t write books. (January 28, 2009, 03:10 am)

In example (76), Rynska talks about one of her friends, whom she considers a very pleasant man. Rynska expresses her perception of this man through the use of word *slavnyĭ* ‘nice’ in reference to him. Interestingly, she mentions his generosity (*shchedryĭ* ‘generous’), which is an important feature a man should

possess to be considered an ideal partner in Rynska's system of values. Thus, this man in (76) can be identified as a Supporter, as he complies with Rynska's requirements for a man and is perceived by the author as a very pleasant person. Examples (77) and (78) illustrate how Rynska refers to two of her acquaintances as intelligent people. One of them is her friend, whom the author admires for her perfect lifestyle and whose level she is trying to approach. This lady is identified as a Supporter, as she belongs to the circle in which Rynska moves and is another role model for Rynska, as she has everything (happy marriage, successful career, financial stability etc.) the author tries to achieve. In example (78), the author refers to an admirer of her writing who urges her to write books rather than columns. This person can also be interpreted as a Supporter due to a very positive attitude Rynska shows towards him in the blog post and the use of the word *umnyi* 'smart' in reference to the man.

Two rather unusual instances of representation of Supporters through calling them fools were found in the corpus. It is worth mentioning, however, that both of these examples come from the same entry written in a highly ironic manner:

- (79) Veterok s Korsiki obduvaet zagoreluiu dur'iu grud', (tvorenie luchshego khirurga kliniki **Montre**), lishnie zhirovye skladki navsegda udaleny, poglazhivaet dura prokachannoe luchshim trenerom puziko v kubikakh, popivaet nevkusnyi sel'dereinyi fresh (a ne navorachivaet po piat' portsii vkusnoi kartoshki-fri) i prikidyvaet, ne makhnut' li v Provans za antikvariatom. Takaia skuchnaia i pustaiia zhizn', - priam zhalko durishchu.

'A little wind from Corsica is blowing over the tanned breast of the fool, (it's the creation of the best surgeon of the Montre clinic), the redundant

fat folds are gone forever. The fool is stroking the beefy torso, trained by the best coach. The fool takes a sip of the tasteless celery drink (instead of tucking in five helpings of French fries in a row) and thinks that maybe she should go to Provence for some antiques. Such a boring and empty life; I feel absolute pity for the crazy fool.’ (July 6, 2006, 03:06 pm)

- (80) Durak by izuchil, prepariroval chuzhoï uspek, slizal strategiiu i sam otvalil na Sardiniiu ili Eze. Klimat tam khoroshiï, duraki ochen’ odobriaiut. A umnyi znaet, chto schast’e ne v den’gakh, i ne v novoï kolleksii mes’e Èl’baza i zhivët ne dlia radosti, a dlia sovesti.

‘A fool would have studied, dissected the other person’s success, stolen the strategy and gone off to Sardinia or Eze himself. The climate is good there, fools really approve of it. On the other hand, the smart person knows that happiness does not lie in the money, neither does it lie in the new collection by Monsieur El-Baz, and thus lives not for joy, but for his conscience.’ (July 6, 2006, 03:06 pm)

In both (79) and (80), Rynska describes the lifestyle, which many of her supporters lead and for which she strives. Nevertheless, the people leading this life are referred to as *dura* ‘female fool’ or *durishcha* ‘crazy fool’ in (79) and *durak* ‘male fool’ or *duraki* ‘fools’ in (80). The person who criticizes these people and prefers to lead a life that in Rynska’s opinion is pale and boring is represented as *umnyi* ‘a smart person’ in (79). The lexical choices the author makes for the referents in examples (79) and (80) can signal that the fools are Opponents and the smart person is a Supporter, as Rynska values intelligence in people. However, by uttering that the fools are attractive (*lishnie zhirovyie skladki navsegda udaleny* ‘the redundant fat folds are gone forever’ (79)), rich, and can spoil themselves with luxury (*ne makhnut’ li v Provans za antikvariatom* ‘maybe she should go to Provence for some antiques’ (79)) and are persistent in achieving

their goals (*Durak by izuchil, prepariroval chuzhoï uspek, slizal strategiiu* ‘A fool would have studied, dissected the other person’s success, stolen the strategy’ (80)), Rynska shows that she respects and praises the fools for their lifestyle choices. The context thus testifies that the fools from (79) and (80) can be placed into the Supporters camp. On the contrary, *umnyi* ‘a smart person’ in (80) is represented as a bearer of a hostile philosophy as he does not attribute value to the sides of life that Rynska considers important (*schast’e ne v den’gakh, i ne v novoï kolleksii mes’e Èl’baza* ‘happiness does not lie in the money, neither does it lie in the new collection by Monsieur El-Baz’). The divergence of Rynska’s views with those of the smart person in (80) allow for interpreting *umnyi* ‘a smart person’ as an Opponent regardless of the lexical choice the author makes. Examples (79) and (80) illustrate an interesting approach to the representation of Others where the context is more reliable than the lexical choice. It is worth mentioning that (79) and (80) are the only instances where Supporters are described as non-intelligent and Opponents as smart. In general, the dominant of Character and Intellectual Features illustrates a strict differentiation between the two types of Others. Except for the ironic (79) and (80), Supporters are always smart, kind and moral, while Opponents are villains and rascals.

The representation of Self is very diverse with respect to both intelligence and temper references. The first group of examples shows instances where the author questions her own intellectual abilities. Consider (81) and (82):

- (81) Ia nikogo ne frendila. Vidimo, po prichine komp’iuternoï tuposti, ne spravilas’ s nastroïkami.

‘I didn’t add anyone to my friends. Probably, because of my stupidity with computers, I couldn’t figure out the settings.’ (June 22, 2006, 04:25 am)

- (82) Nakonets-to tekhnicheskaia tupitsa osvoila shablony na mobil’nike. Chto nazyvaetsia, pripërlo. Neskol’ko let zhila bez shablonov.
 ‘Finally did the technology dimwit master templates on the cell phone. Life forced me to do it, as they say. I’ve lived for several years without the templates.’ (July 4, 2006, 03:43 pm)

With respect to (81) and (82) it is worth mentioning that the impaired abilities are mainly connected with technical issues. In (81) Rynska states that she is not a proficient computer user (*po prichine komp’iuternoï tuposti* ‘because of my stupidity with computers’) which leads to problems with privacy in her Live Journal. In (82) the author refers to Self as *tekhnicheskaia tupitsa* ‘the technology dimwit’ based on the belated mastering of her own cell phone. Interestingly, general intelligence is not mentioned in reference to Self in the analyzed data.

Certain character and moral features, such as persistence and honesty, are considered important by the author. They are widely spread in the corpus in reference to Self. Consider (83) and (84):

- (83) I èto pri moëm-to boïtsovskom kharaktere! Gvozdi by delat’ iz ètikh liudeï, - ia nikogda ne sdaius’, nikogda ne proigryvaiu, i esli zakhochu khodit’ po kanatu – mesiats, drugoï i, - posmotrite, ona po kanatu idët.
 And this with my fighter spirit! They could make nails from people like me – I never give up, I never lose, and if I wanted to walk the rope, just give me a month or two and look, there she goes, walking on the rope.
 (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)
- (84) Ia – tsinichnyiï pravdist. Iznasilovannyï romantik. Èta gorchinka menia i spasaet.

I'm a *cynical truth-teller*. A raped romantic. It's this bit of bitterness that saves me. (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)

In example (83), Rynska stresses her persistence in achieving set goals through representing herself as a fighter (*pri moëm-to boïtsovskom kharaktere* 'with my fighter spirit'). To support the image of a fighter, the author describes her motto (*ia nikogda ne sdaius', nikogda ne proigryvaiu* 'I never give up, I never lose'). Example (84) underlines Rynska's truthfulness as she represents Self as *tsinichnyi pravdist* 'cynical truth-teller'. The importance of telling the truth is discussed many times in the blog, mainly in reference to its author. Rynska frequently states that her blog is an accurate depiction of life. On several occasions in the corpus, the author discusses the potential destructive power of the truth. In (84) Rynska adds *tsinichnyi* 'cynical' to her description of Self and underlines that this is what makes her the 'right' truth-teller (*Èta gorchinka menia i spasaet* 'It's this bit of bitterness that saves me'). Therefore, the author's understanding of the value of the truth includes knowing how to present the truth to people.

References to Self in the blog serve as manifestations of Rynska's value system that she promotes among her readers. Consider (85) and (86):

- (85) No ia vospityvat' v sebe nnavstvennogo geniia ne budu, ne prosite.
'But I won't be cultivating a moral genius in myself, don't ask me to.'
(June 22, 2006, 04:25 am)
- (86) Poka proshu po-khoroshemu: ne popadaïte vy tuda, ne sviazyvaïtes' s professional'noi sklochnitseï.
'For now I'm asking you kindly: don't you go there, don't get mixed up with the professional squabblers.' (June 30, 2006, 05:13 pm)

Example (85) portrays Rynska as a person who does not want to achieve the highest possible level of moral integrity. She represents Self as not *nравstvennyiĭ geniĭ* ‘moral genius’. Such representation of Self presupposes the lack or absence of some positive moral features in her value system. This actually follows one of the main trends in the blog, where Rynska often verbally attacks people who comply with two stereotypical spiritual values of the Russian Orthodox Church – non-resistance to evil and forgiveness to all. In Rynska’s view, these values are what destroys the society and leads to ignorance and connivance. A similar trend is demonstrated in (86). Rynska presents herself as *professional’naia sklochnitsa* ‘professional squabbler’ while referring to journalists who copy posts from her blog and use them as parts of their own columns. The author warns her colleagues not to confront the specialist in scandals that she is, because she will not forgive anyone who has treated her unfairly. References to Self similar to *professional’naia sklochnitsa* ‘professional squabbler’ (86) and *vospityvat’ v sebe nraustvennogo geniia ne budu* ‘I won’t be cultivating a moral genius in myself’ (85) are frequent in the corpus. They underline that the system of values Rynska promotes through her journal is different from the one imposed by the society.

The dominant of Character and Intellectual Features incorporates references to Self and both types of Others. Interestingly, Others are represented mainly through references to their moral qualities, while Supporters are referred to through their intellectual abilities as well as moral characteristics. Rynska uses representation of Self to promote her system of values that might be different from conventional norms of the society. Representation of Self contains

references to lack of proficiency with devices, honesty and persistence in achieving goals and punishing enemies.

4.6 Myth

The dominant of Myth consists of references to people as non-existent creatures. There are two main types of references in this dominant that can be divided into two groups: General and Nymph. The General group includes all references to non-existent creatures such as mermaids, signs of zodiac, dwarves and the like. References to Nymph would be of the type ‘nymph’, ‘novice-nymph’, ‘Supreme Nymph’ etc. Such division is necessary as the discussion of the Nymphs and their lives composes a large number of entries in this blog.

Examples (87) - (89) show typical General references to both types of Others and to Self that are seen throughout the corpus:

(87) Vchera noch'iu poluchila nezhnuiu sms-kolybel'nuiu ot chervonogo korolia.

‘Yesterday night I got an affectionate SMS-lullaby from the king of hearts.’ (July 2, 2006, 02:29 pm)

(88) Pervym poiavilsia vladelets kanala Fashion TV Aleks Shusturovich s model'noï vneshnost'iu undinoï.

‘The first to arrive was the owner of Fashion TV channel Alex Shusturovich with an undine with a fashion model appearance.’ (January 21, 2009, 05:17 am)

(89) Uzhasno len' pisat' drugu o zhabakh. A ne pisat' - nel'zia. Vo-pervykh, poobeshchala. A kozerog – takoe zhyvotnoe, chë skazal, tak za bazar otvetit.

‘I’m too lazy to write about toads for my friend. But I have to. First of all, I promised. And the Capricorn is such an animal that, when he’s said something, he’s gotta deliver.’ (July 4, 2006, 03:49 pm)

In (87), Rynska refers to her partner at the time, referring to him as *chervonyĩ korol'* 'King of Hearts', which in the context of the Russian traditional cartomancy represents a man, single or divorced, and thus, potentially looking for partners. The lexical choice the author makes in (87) together with the general tone of the entry this example is taken from and the fact of the close relationship with the author, allow for interpreting *chervonyĩ korol'* 'King of Hearts' as a Supporter. Example (88) contains a reference to a young lady who accompanied one of the guests to a house party of one of the Russian oligarchs. She is referred to as *undina* 'undine'. This person was the only one mentioned without a name, only as an appendage to a rich and respectable businessman. Because of that, as well as her being a potential competitor for Rynska, it is possible to put this example into the Opponents category. In example (89), Rynska represents Self through mentioning character peculiarities of *kozerog* 'Capricorn', her Zodiac sign. The instances of using non-existent creatures to refer to people, although not very numerous, constituted a significant part of the corpus. However, the group of examples concerned with the Nymphs is much more extensive and elaborate.

The Nymph in this blog is the perfect woman who follows a certain system of rules and has distinct values. All other women are referred to as *dukhovno bogatye devy* 'spiritually rich maidens' or *DBD*. The terms were not coined by Rynska, but by another popular blogger, corpuscula. However, Rynska popularized these notions and devoted a large part of her journal to her own journey from being a DBD to being a Nymph. The lifestyle every Nymph is supposed to follow is described in detail. Without going into specifics, it is still

worth mentioning that one of the main characteristics that differentiate a Nymph from a DBD is that a Nymph always cares about herself more than about anyone else. This simplified division of women into two types allows for the following identification of Others represented through this dominant. The Nymphs are always Supporters, as they represent Rynska's role models and lead a life she herself tries to lead. Their position as Supporters is not jeopardized by the fact that Rynska refers to herself as a DBD who is, importantly, trying to become a Nymph. The DBDs are considered non-feminine and unsuccessful, as they, according to the Nymph values, cannot achieve happiness in life and realize themselves as women. However, the term *DBD* belongs more to the dominants of Gender and Intellectual/Moral Features and thus will not be discussed in greater detail here. Interestingly, the term *DBD* is rarely used in the present data. However, in the blog in general this type of reference is relatively frequent, although insignificant compared to the number of instances where Nymphs are mentioned.

The following examples show typical uses of the word Nymph. Consider (90) and (91):

- (90) Nachali izvlekat' so dna pamiati nimf minuvshikh dneĭ.
 'We've started retrieving the nymphs of the days long gone from the bottom of memory.' (January 6, 2007, 09:20 pm)
- (91) Kstati, nimfy, zapishite-ka v moleskiny. Nimfa i zhĕvka ne sovместimy.
 'By the way, nymphs, write this down in your diaries. A nymph and chewing are incompatible.' (January 3, 2007, 07:10 pm)

As was mentioned above, no Nymph is considered an Opponent in the blog. On the contrary, they are either friends or ‘gurus’, as by personal example they teach those who want to be taught how to achieve the state of being a Nymph. In (90), Rynska and her new acquaintance discuss *nimf minuvshikh dneĭ* ‘nymphs of the days long gone’, recreating the image of beautiful and successful women they knew personally or heard of. Some of the *nimf minuvshikh dneĭ* ‘nymphs of the days long gone’ are role models for Rynska and her new acquaintance. This context further contributes to identification of the referents in (90) as Supporters. In (91), Rynska refers to Nymphs twice. She addresses women who are still learning how to be Nymphs as *nimfy* ‘nymphs’. The lexical choice the author makes and the fact that the referents in (91) share Rynska’s desire to become a Nymph allows for interpreting *nimfy* ‘Nymphs’ as Supporters. The second reference, *nimfa* ‘nymph’, represents an ideal image of a Nymph. Rynska uses this image to show her followers what is inappropriate for a real Nymph, which signals that *nimfa* ‘nymph’ in (91) is a Supporter.

Interestingly, even though Nymphs are never represented as Opponents in the blog, there is a certain hierarchy in the Nymph world, as examples (92) and (93) illustrate:

- (92) No kruche vsekh otozhgla Verkhovnaia Nimfa – Ul’iana Tseĭtlina.
 But the Supreme Nymph, Uliana Tseitlina, topped them all. (January 27, 2007, 04:38 am)

- (93) My za obedom s verkhovnoï nimfoï¹³ zametili, chto-to nashi fin de kler podozritel'no zeleneiut.

At lunch, the supreme nymph and I noticed that our fine de claire were turning suspiciously green. (February 2, 2009, 05:45 am)

Verkhovnaia Nimfa ‘the Supreme Nymph’ from (92) and (93) possesses the highest rank among her colleagues. Mrs. Tseitlina, who was mentioned in several examples above, is considered to be the Supreme Nymph, as, according to Rynska, she is one of the few born Nymphs who did not need to go through any evolution processes and she is the most perfect representative of that philosophy. Tseitlina is often referred to in the blog as simply ‘the Supreme Nymph’ without her actual name, as can be seen in example (93). References to *Verkhovnaia Nimfa* ‘the Supreme Nymph’ in (92) and (93) are considered to be representations of a Supporter, as the referent is not only referred to as a Nymph, but is at the top of the hierarchy present in the blog.

References to Self as a Nymph in the blog are not numerous.

Nevertheless, they are worth mentioning. Consider (94):

- (94) Olesia proiavila terpimost' k nimfe-neofitke i milostivo razreshila gnat'sia za belym bel'ëm novoï kollektcii i ne zakleimila beloe bel'ë proshloï – *lokhovstvom* i *chipukhoï*.

‘Olesya demonstrated tolerance towards the neophyte nymph and gracefully permitted her to pursue the new white linen from the new collection and did not stigmatize the white linen of the old collection as *oaf-fullness* and *rubbish*.’ (June 23, 2006, 03:22 am)

¹³ Please note the difference in the use of capitalization in (92) and (93). The author uses both variants interchangeably without any strict system. Therefore, the difference is not considered important and is attributed to the author’s personal writing style.

In (94), Rynska refers to Self as *nimfa-neofitka* ‘the neophyte nymph’. Such an interesting choice of words is explained by the fact that the mentioned woman, Olesya, is one of the most advanced Nymphs, in Rynska’s opinion, while Rynska is only at the beginning of her journey to becoming a Nymph. The author is following this woman during their stay at a resort in Courchevel to learn how to be a Nymph. In example (95), two and a half years later, Rynska admits that her struggle was unsuccessful. Consider (95):

(95) Konechno, nikakaia ia ne nimfa. DBD byla, eiu, uvy, i ostanus’...
 Nastoiashcheĭ nimfy iz menia ne vyshlo, zabit’sia mne po-prezhnemu
 nraivitsia bol’she, chem potrebiat’, a stalo byt’, pridetsia vizhat’ “i-i”
svoim sobstvennym dbd-eshnym golosom.

Of course, I’m no nymph. I’ve always been a DBD and will, alas, remain one... I didn’t become a true nymph. I still like caring more than consuming and thus I’ll have to squeal “eeeeee” in my own DBD voice.
 (February 1, 2009, 12:32 am)

In (95), the author refers to herself as *ne nimfa* ‘not a Nymph’ and positively states that she is a DBD (*DBD byla, eiu, uvy, i ostanus’* ‘I’ve always been a DBD and will, alas, remain one’), while continuing to represent DBDs in a rather negative tone through reference to the generic DBD voice which is similar to the squeal of a pig (*vizhat’ “i-i” svoim sobstvennym dbd-eshnym golosom* ‘squeal “eeeeee” in my own DBD voice’).¹⁴

The dominant of Myth incorporated references to Self and both types of Others. The author uses references to people through names of general

¹⁴ The entire discussion of Nymphs and DBDs presents an interesting point for analysis in terms of representation of gender roles in the modern society. This, however, falls outside of the scope of the current project.

mythological creatures such as *chervonyĭ korol'* 'King of Hearts', *undina* 'undine' and the like to represent Self, Supporters and Opponents. The group of references to Nymphs contained references to Supporters and, rarely, Self.

4.7 Personal Names

The dominant of Personal Names consists of references to people through the use of their actual names; that is personal names and surnames. No instances of Self-representation of this kind are found in the corpus. References to both types of the Others are significant in the data.

The main tendency to refer to Opponents in the blog is to use their surname only. Consider (96) and (97):

(96) *Istoriia pokazyvaet, chto vsekh, kto podnial ruku, taki vspominaiut poimënno. Vot pochemu ia prosila zapomnit' prokurora Khomutovskogo. 'History demonstrates that *all that lifted a hand* are remembered individually. That's why I asked you to remember prosecutor Khomutovskii.'* (January 22, 2008, 08:10 pm)

(97) *Aga, vot spasibo chitateliam. Grazhdanka Usachëva iz Mosgorsuda nas tut puzhat' nadumala. Chego my eĭ pozhelaem? 'Aha, thanks to the readers. Mrs. Usacheva from the Moscow City Court decided to intimidate us here. What will we wish her?'* (January 7, 2011, 08:13 pm)

In example (96), Rynska refers to the Prosecutor Khomutovskii, who, in her opinion, participated in unlawful and inhuman actions towards Aleksanian, which were discussed earlier in reference to example (74). These actions provide solid ground for identifying this man as an Opponent. Example (97) presents an Opponent as well. Rynska refers to one of the officials of the Moscow City Court,

Usacheva. This official spoke on television addressing Internet users who participated in a flashmob started by Rynska. This flashmob was directed against the judges who worked on Khodorkovsky's case and passed a sentence that, in the opinion of Rynska and her supporters, is unfair. The Moscow City Court official described this flashmob as persecution and warned the participants about serious consequences of their actions. Therefore, the Other who is referred to as *Usachëva* 'Usacheva' in (97) is an Opponent, as she not only belongs to a different camp for the specific legal affair, but also threatens Rynska and her followers.

References to Vladimir Putin are significant in the corpus. He is the main antagonist of Rynska in her politics-related entries. Putin is represented only as an Opponent in the blog, as he embodies one who falls short of the qualities required by the system of values Rynska has for men and politicians. While Rynska mainly refers to Putin using his surname, similar to the representation of Opponents in examples (96) and (97), a peculiar reference to Putin is found in example (198):

(98) A ne pisala ia potomu chto davala slovo pomen'she pisat' o Vladimire Pë, a takzhe o ego detiakh. A potom éta merzost' s sudom sluchilos', ia reshila pisat' o Vladimire Pë i o detiakh vsë, chto znaiu i dumaiu, i éta istoriia kak-to pomerkla i zabylas'.

'I didn't write because I had promised to write less about Vladimir P. and his children. Then that disgusting court situation happened and I decided to write all that I know and think about Vladimir P. and the children, and this story somehow paled and was forgotten.' (January 11, 2011, 11:01 pm)

In (98), Putin is referred to as *Vladimir Pë* ‘Vladimir P’. Rynska uses only his personal name and the first letter of his surname. It is unclear why the author chooses this form to represent an Opponent. A possible suggestion is that she tries to hide his identity to protect herself. In 2010, the Russian government sued several bloggers who referred to Putin in an impolite or critical way in their blogs. The desire of the author to show disrespect to Putin can also serve as an explanation for the lexical choice in (98), as Rynska uses Putin’s first name without the patronymic, which is not a polite form in Russian for a citizen to use to refer to the country’s officials.

Reference to Opponents by their last names is the most popular approach in the non-political entries as well. In (99) and (100), Rynska talks about her colleagues, writers and journalists, who, in her opinion, are bad at their job. Consider the following:

- (99) Dazhe trekhgroshovaia Robski, kak ni stranno, bol’she proza, nezhe li Minaev.
 ‘Even the three-penny Robski is actually greater prose than Minaev.’
 (June 26, 2006, 03:48 pm)
- (100) Kstati, pomnite istoriiu pro vorovku Beloshapkinu iz Vechernei Moskvy? Kotoraiia spisyvala moi stat’i s moimi zhe vyrazheniiami?
 ‘By the way, do you recall the incident with thief Beloshapkina from the Evening Moscow? The one that would plagiarize my articles with my own expressions?’ (January 9, 2007)

In example (99), Rynska compares two writers, Robski and Minaev, whose style she did not really enjoy and whose portrayal of the modern society she found unacceptable. Robski is described as *trekhgroshovaia* ‘three-penny’. This lexical

choice signals that Robski's standards of writing are very low. Minaev in (99) is represented as being even worse than Robski. Therefore, even though one of the writers is considered to be slightly better than the other, they are both Opponents, as they do not comply with the high standards Rynska sets for her colleagues. In example (100), the author refers to a fellow journalist who, on several occasions, copied posts from Rynska's blog and published them without quoting Rynska. This person is considered an Opponent, as she not only stole Rynska's intellectual property, but violated the strict set of rules for people's behaviour Rynska considers very important and necessary for positive relationships.

Unlike Opponents, Supporters are mainly referred to through the use of their first names, often in diminutive or endearment forms. Consider (101) – (103):

(101) Otlichno otmetili Novyĭ God u Niki v Repino. Seĭchas vyletaiu v Parizh, gde menia zhdēt uzhin s Gaukhar, a potom – vsĕ-taki Kurshevel', i dal'she, po Evropam.

'Had a perfect New Year celebration at Nika's place in Repino. Now I'm flying off to Paris, where I'm having dinner with Gauhar, and then nevertheless Courchevel, and onwards around Europe.' (January 6, 2009)

(102) U nashego Kiriushi, po prozvishchu tsyganskiĭ baron, udivitel'naia, redkaia po nashim vremenam, sposobnost' k empatii... Pochti vsiu zimu ia provela v raz'ezdakh. V Moskvu dazhe ne zaletala. I poĕтому my s Kiriuneĭ ne videlis'.

'Our little Cyril, aka the Gypsy Baron, has an amazing, rare for our times, ability for empathy... Almost all winter, I was travelling. Didn't even fly to Moscow. And that's why I didn't even see little Cyril.' (June 23, 2006, 03:32 am)

(103) Vyiasnilos', chto glamurnitsa Oles'ka posle odnoĭ noski beloe bel'ĕ prosto vybrasyvaet.

‘It was revealed that glamour girl Olesya, having put white underwear on once, throws it away.’ (June 23, 2006, 03:22 am)

In example (101), Rynska mentions two of her close girlfriends with whom she frequently spends time and whose company she enjoys. The author uses a short form, *Nika* (short from Veronika), for one of her friends. The other friend is referred to through the full version of the name, *Gaukhar* ‘Gauhar’. Both women are Rynska’s friends and share her lifestyle, which allows for interpreting them as Supporters. Example (102) contains two references, such as *Kiriusha* and *Kiriunia* ‘little Cyril’, to one of Rynska’s friends of whom she often speaks ironically but who is still an important and dear person in her life. In both of these references, the friend’s first name is put in the diminutive form. The lexical choice the author makes and the context of example (102) signal that *Kiriusha* or *Kiriunia* ‘little Cyril’ is a Supporter. In (103), Rynska talks about one of the Nymphs who provided her with consultations on how to be a Nymph. Rynska became really close with *Oles’ka* ‘Olesya’ during their vacation and admired the woman for her style and intellectual and moral features. This allows for considering the referent in (103) a Supporter.

Even though the main strategy to refer to Supporters is through first names only, several instances are present in the corpus where surnames are used as well. Surnames only are used in reference to Rynska’s Supporters in Political entries. Please note that these references are connected with the unfairly sentenced Khodorkovsky and Aleksanian and are very rare in the corpus. References to

Supporters through the use of both first and last names are more frequent than through the use of the surname only. Consider (104) and (105):

(104) My s podruzhkoï Mashkoï Fel'dman u neë v Berline.

‘My girlfriend Mashka Feldman and I are at her place in Berlin.’ (January 25, 2010, 02:55 am)

(105) Ul'iana Tseïtlina, korennaiia peterburzhenka, prozhila v Avstralii piatnadsat' let, - ne baran chikhnul, mezhdou prochim.

‘Uliana Tseitlina, a St. Petersburg native, had lived in Australia for 15 years; not a negligible period of time, one must note.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

In example (104), Rynska refers to her former classmate *Mashka Fel'dman* ‘Mashka Feldman’. Rynska has been visiting this woman frequently in recent years and sees her as a happy and successful woman who has achieved everything that is important in Rynska’s value system. Rynska chooses to use the short informal form *Mashka*¹⁵ (short from Maria) to refer to her friend, which can be explained by the fact that they are classmates and have certain habits for referring to each other. In (105), Uliana Tseitlina, the Supreme Nymph, Rynska’s close friend and role model, is referred to by first name and surname. Tseitlina appears very often in the analyzed part of the blog. Rynska uses a diverse palette of diminutive forms of her friend’s name. These include *Ul'iasha*, *Ulich*, *Ulen'ka* and several others. It is worth mentioning that on several occasions the author uses full and diminutive forms of a different name, Ustinia, to refer to Tseitlina:

(106) Kak raz naprotiv Ustin'ki zhivët moï drug Gena po klichke Krezi-Ugol'shchik, vladelets mashiny Ferrari, iakhty Feretti i samolëta Fal'kon.

¹⁵ A more casual short form from the name Maria is *Masha*. Rynska opts for an informal variant *Mashka*.

‘Directly opposite Ustinya lives my friend Gena called Crazy-Collier, owner of a Ferrari car, a Feretti yacht and a Falcon plane.’ (June 23, 2006, 03:22 am)

In (106), Tseitlina is referred to as *Ustin’ka*. It is unclear why exactly this technique is used. Similarity of names Ustinia and Uliana or the fact that Tseitlina is called Ustinia among her close friends can be possible explanations for the interchangeable use of both names.

In general, the dominant of Personal Name is used to represent only Others. Rynska mainly refers to her Opponents by their surname only. The only exception to this trend is a reference to Vladimir Putin as ‘Vladimir P.’ Supporters are generally represented through the use of full and short forms of first names only and of both first and last names. References to Political Supporters, such as Khodorkovsky and Aleksanian, contain only last names of referents.

4.8 Generalized Names

The dominant of Generalized Names incorporates instances where people are represented through the names of others, for example, literary characters, famous people, abstract names etc. In this category, both types of Others as well as Self are represented.

The user name of Rynska in LiveJournal is becky-sharpe. Becky Sharpe is one of the main characters in William Makepeace Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair: A Novel without a hero*. Rynska identifies herself with this literary character due to their similarities. For instance, both Rynska and Becky Sharpe started on the path

from poverty to wealth. Therefore, Rynska uses this character's name to refer to Self in some entries in her blog. Consider (107) – (109):

(107) Bekki Sharp vela svoï dnevnik, sovershenno ne rasschityvaia na vizitërov. Èto byl chernovik moeï zapisnoï knizhki. I ia mogla voïti v nego i cherknut' parochku nabliudeniï kholodnogo uma v liubom svoëm voiazhe.

'Becky Sharpe was writing her diary without any expectation of visitors. It was the draft of my organizer and I could enter and scribble a couple of observations of the cold mind in any of my journeys.' (June 22, 2006, 04:25 am)

(108) Ia teper' Biaka Sharp. Vot.

'Now I'm Baddie Sharpe. There.' (July 5, 2006, 12:07 am)

(109) Ochchchen' khorosho, murlychet Biaka Sharp, poglazhivaia puziko.

'Verrry good, purrs Baddie Sharpe, stroking the belly.' (January 25, 2007, 02:04 am)

Example (107) is taken from the first post in the blog. In this post, Rynska introduces her journal. Interestingly, she never mentions her own name or occupation in this entry, and thus stays as *Bekki Sharp* 'Becky Sharpe' for her readers. In fact, Rynska never mentions her name in the blog posts and in the LiveJournal user information. The author does not hide her identity, as Rynska mentions the blog frequently in the media and includes her pictures and links to articles about her into the posts. The desire of the author to distance herself from the person whose life is described in the blog can serve as a possible explanation of the use of *Bekki Sharp* 'Becky Sharpe' instead of the real name. In examples (108) and (109), Rynska alters her pseudonym and refers to herself as *Biaka Sharp* 'Baddie Sharpe'. In Russian, the term *biaka* 'baddie' or 'nasty thing' refers to a wicked person and is a part of baby talk. In (108) and (109) Rynska plays

with the consonance of the words *Bekki* ‘Becky’ and *biaka* ‘baddie’. Through this word play, she attributes additional characteristics to the image of Self. The use of usernames as well as actual names online presents an interesting point of analysis, which unfortunately falls outside the scope of the current project.

While referring to her Supporters, Rynska uses literary characters as well.

Consider (110) and (111):

(110) Vylitaia Mar’ia Abrosimova iz *Anny Kareninoi*. Mozhet, ona samostoiatel’naia bogachikha?

‘A splitting image of Maria Abrosimova from *Anna Karenina*. Maybe she is an independent money-bag?’ (June 23, 2006, 02:34 am)

(111) Mne vseгда nraivilis’ Sidy Soery.

‘I’ve always liked Sids Sawyers’. (January 2, 2010, 01:23 am)

In example (110), Rynska refers to an older woman as *vylitaia Mar’ia Abrosimova* ‘a splitting image of Maria Abrosimova’. The older woman from (110) amazed the author with her style and intelligence at a social event. In the entry from which example (110) is taken, Rynska expresses a wish to become just like this woman when she is older. That allows for interpreting the referent from (110) as a Supporter, as the woman in question is a potential role model for Rynska. In example (111), Rynska talks about her preferences in men while comparing her ideal partners with one of the characters of Mark Twain’s *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. To make the image of her ideal man clear and accessible to her readers, the author draws an analogy to Sid Sawyer by referring to men that she prefers as *Sidy Soery* ‘Sids Sawyers’. Based on this, these men are

interpreted as Supporters, as they comply with Rynska's requirements for her potential partners.

The Opponents are also represented in the corpus through the references to generalized names. Consider (112) – (114):

- (112) Liubimyĭ psikhiatr prosit ne obizhat' Vasiu.
 'My favourite psychiatrist asks me not to offend Vasya.' (June 22, 2006, 04:25 am)
- (113) Kstati, v Londone ia poznakomilas' s odnim pleĭboem. Zagorelyĭ, stil'nyĭ, priamo Banderas.
 'By the way, I met a playboy in London. Sunburnt, stylish, like Banderas.' (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)
- (114) Ia ispytyvala gadlivost' k putinoidam vchuzhe. Zhila v svoĕm svetskom mire i otmakhivalas' ot politiki.
 'I felt an aversion towards the Putin-oids without having anything to do with them. I lived in my own high-society world and brushed aside politics.' (January 22, 2008, 05:51 pm)

The name *Vasya* (short for *Vasiliĭ* 'Basil') that Rynska uses in example (112) is a common name in Russia. It is not connected with any literary character nor, in fact, is it connected with anyone specific at all. Using *Vasya*, Rynska refers to all common people who are of lower social and financial status and who cannot behave appropriately and respectfully. One of the main goals of Rynska's life, as she describes in the blog, is to create a barrier around herself that will be impassable for commoners. This reference to *Vasya* signals that this abstract person can be interpreted as an Opponent, as he is a representative of a hostile circle that the author tries to avoid by all means. Example (113) contains a reference to actor Antonio Banderas. The visual similarity of her ex-lover to the

celebrity allowed Rynska to represent her ex-lover through Banderas's name. In the context of (113), regardless of Rynska's former close relationship with the man, her ex-lover is an Opponent, because a significant part of the entry from which (113) is taken is devoted to a discussion of his inappropriate behaviour towards Rynska. Example (114) presents an innovative reference to Opponents. Rynska refers to Vladimir Putin's followers not as *putintsy* 'Putinists', as in literary Russian, but as *putinoidy* 'Putinoids'. This word coinage, which can be understood as 'Putin-like', suggests that there are people who are very similar to Putin. The similarity probably lies in the system of moral values of these people rather than their appearances, which allows for interpreting *putinoidy* 'Putinoids' as a case of reference to Opponents. Note that Putin and his actions are frequently criticized by Rynska in a very severe manner. While references similar to *Vasya* and *Banderas* shown in examples (112) and (113), albeit infrequent, occur in the corpus, example (114) with its creative reference *putinoidy* 'Putinoids' is truly unique.

The author employs the dominant of Generalized Names to represent Self and both Others. The references Rynska uses incorporate literary characters, such as Becky Sharpe and Sid Sawyer, famous people, such as Antonio Banderas or Vladimir Putin, and generic names, such as Vasya.

4.9 Nationality and Ethnicity

The dominant of Nationality and Ethnicity includes all references to people's geographical and ethnic origin. The author employed this dominant to

represent Supporters and Opponents, but no references to Self are found in the analyzed corpus.

The only Supporters that are represented through references to their nationality are Jews, as example (115) illustrates:

(115) Odin iz moikh druzeĭ – umnyĭ nekrasivyĭ evreĭ, (ne Ivanych, drugoĭ) ot zavisti prozval ego trĕkh-khromosomnym.

‘One of my friends, a smart unattractive Jew (not Ivanovich, but another one), out of envy, called him a three-chromosome.’ (June 24, 2006, 06:38 pm)

In (115), Rynska refers to one of her friends as *umnyĭ nekrasivyĭ evreĭ* ‘a smart unattractive Jew’. This person’s close relationship with Rynska and the author’s high appraisal of his intelligence allow for interpreting him as a Supporter in the context of (115). The unattractiveness of the referent does not play an important role in identifying the type of Other, because for Rynska beauty is not of great significance in men.

References to all other nationalities and ethnicities incorporate only the representation of Opponents. Consider (116) and (117):

(116) Frantsiia – drugoe delo. *I cheliad’ chaĭniki bezmolvno podavala*, - ěto ne k gordym gallam. Gally i le riuussy postoianno vyiasniaiut, kto v dome khoziain.

‘France is a whole different story. *And the servants were bringing teapots in silence*; that’s not about the proud Gauls. Gauls and le russe people constantly determine, who is the head of the house.’ (June 22, 2006, 05:21 am)

(117) Na territorii Moskvyy, kak i v Germanii, tozhe deĭstvuet pravilo trĕkh KKK. Tol’ko u nikh, u nemchury, Kirkhe, Kukhen, Kinder, a u nas – Kutuzovskĭĭ, Kainechik, Kurshevel’.

‘The three KKK rule works in Moscow like in Germany. Only they, the krauts, have Kirche, Kuchen, Kinder, and we have the Kutuzovsky avenue, a Cayenne, and Courchevel.’ (June 24, 2006, 07:10 pm)

In example (116), Rynska refers to the French people through the use of the name of an ancient Indo-European tribe, *gally* ‘the Gauls’, that populated a part of the territory of modern France. The Russians are referred to in the transliterated French version of the name of the nation (*le riussy* ‘le russe’). It is unclear why the author opted for such an unusual way to present these two nationalities. However, both references are considered representations of Opponents, as the blog post in question is devoted to a discussion of how the Russian guests and the French serving personnel do not behave appropriately for their status at one of Courchevel resorts. Rynska considers both sides wrong, as in her opinion not knowing how to serve is just as bad as not knowing how to accept the suggested service. Thus, both the French and the Russians are Opponents in this particular case. In example (117) Rynska chooses the word *nemchura* ‘krauts’ to refer to Germans. This word is a disparaging and derogatory way to address a German person. In this particular case, it is used to refer to the Germans as a nation, not to a specific representative of it. The word choice here allows for interpretation of this reference as a case of Opponents representation.

Note that no positive references to the Russians are found in the present corpus. On the contrary, a negative reference to Russians is present in (118):

(118) I vse eti piatnadsat’ minut v kabinke riadom so mnoĭ sidel ruskiĭ kaban i oglushitel’no bezostanovochno chavkal.

‘And for the whole 15 minutes in the booth next to me there sat a Russian boar and champed deafeningly and without stopping.’ (January 3, 2007, 07:10 pm)

In (118), the Russian man is referred to as *ruskiĭ kaban* ‘Russian boar’. The referent does not observe proprieties and annoys Rynska. As the context and word choice in (118) suggest, the character in this example is an Opponent due to his not knowing how to behave and which rules to follow. The approach of representing nationality and ethnicity through references to animals combined with adjectives that define the origin is not limited to Russian Opponents only. Consider (119):

(119) Poniatno, kozly frantsuzskie, kozly gollandskie, kozly angliĭskie?!
 ‘Got it, you French jerks, you Dutch jerks, you English jerks?!’ (January 3, 2007, 06:52 pm)

In example (119), the author talks about the French, the Dutch and the English who do not know and do not teach their children how to handle ski equipment in a way that is safe for the others around them. As Rynska almost received a serious injury due to carelessness of *kozly frantsuzskie* ‘French jerks’, *kozly gollandskie* ‘Dutch jerks’, and *kozly angliĭskie* ‘English jerks’, she was infuriated with such behaviour and in her entry criticized these nations severely. The context in (119) supports the interpretation of these Others as Opponents. It is worth mentioning that in the present data no reference to Self through the dominant of Nationality and Ethnicity is found.

The dominant of Nationality and Ethnicity incorporates references to Supporters and Opponents. The author does not represent Self through this dominant. The

only Supporters whose ethnicity is mentioned are Jews. Representation of Opponents' nationality and ethnicity often contains offensive references.

4.10 Status

The Status dominant includes all references to status, whether professional, social or financial. Both types of Others and Self are represented through this dominant. References to professions constitute one of the trends that is singled out in the use of this dominant. While there were no instances of representation of Self through profession, occupations of both Supporters and Opponents are used as a way to refer to them. Consider (120) and (121):

(120) Fal'kon, Gol'fstrim ili Sellendzher – i ia uzhe zashchishchena, ne vizhu i ne slyshu upyria-pogranichnika (ili pogranichku s plokho prokrashennymi korniami pergidrol'nykh kosm).

'A Falcon, a Gulfstream or a Challenger – and I'm already protected, I don't see or hear the vampire border guard (or guard-ess with badly dyed roots of perhydrolic dishevelled locks.' (June 22, 2006, 04:25 am)

(121) A povar v nashem shale ne prostoĭ, a mishlenovskĭi. Ne kakaia-nibud' striapukha, - povarskaia èlita.

'The chef at our chalet is not a simple one but a Michelin one. Not just some cook helper, but a member of the chef elite.' (June 22, 2006, 05:21 am)

In example (120), Rynska refers to border guards as *upyr'-pogranichnik* 'vampire border guard' and *pogranichka* 'guard-ess'. While she does not mean any guard in particular, she talks about border guards whose sometimes disrespectful behaviour towards her she finds annoying and unacceptable. Together with the features assigned to both guards in (121) and the choice of the pejorative form *pogranichka* 'guardess', Rynska's attitude allows for identifying these officials as

her Opponents. It is unclear in this particular example whether Rynska dislikes all representatives of this profession or only those who do not comply with her understanding of appropriate behaviour. Example (121) contains references to both an Opponent (*striapukha* ‘cook helper’) and a Supporter (*povar* ‘chef’). The differentiation here is based on the level of excellence the representatives of a certain profession have achieved in it. In (121), the chef is considered a Supporter due to the fact that he possesses a Michelin star, which serves as proof of the highest qualification of a chef. He is put into the elite of his profession (*povarskaia elita* ‘chef elite’), opposite an abstract female cook helper whose level of excellence is not supported by any evidence. Interestingly, Rynska uses an outdated word for a cook’s helper (*striapukha* ‘cook helper’) in reference to the female cook in (121). Thus, the author further underlines the lower level of *striapukha* ‘cook helper’ compared to the chef, which suggests interpreting this reference as representation of an Opponent.

Representation of Others through reference to their financial status is another trend seen in the dominant of Status. In examples (122) and (123), Rynska discusses her Supporters:

(122) Sudia po avtomobilu, kakaia-to oligarkhessa-light.

‘Judging by the auto, some light-weight oligarch-ess.’ (June 23, 2006, 02:34 am)

(123) Zachem-to pozvonila byvshemu oligarkhu, (oligarkhu-rasstrige) i priglasila ego na kofe.

‘For some reason called a former oligarch (unfroked oligarch) and invited him for coffee.’ (July 4, 2006, 03:49 pm)

In example (122), the author makes a suggestion about the status of a charming older woman whom she meets at a social event. In the entry from which (122) is taken, Rynska describes the oligarchess as a perfect example of a successful woman. The older woman not only achieved financial heights, but also aged beautifully. Rynska's fascination with *oligarkhessa-light* 'light-weight oligarchess' allows for putting the woman into the Supporters category of the data. In example (123), Rynska, interestingly, refers to one of her friends as *byvshii oligarkh* 'former oligarch' and *oligarkh-rasstriga* 'unfrocked oligarch', showing that his financial level might have significantly decreased. Nevertheless, she still considers him her friend and calls for his help in an hour of need. This allows to assign this man to the Supporters as well.

In the corpus, rich people often belong to the camp of Opponents of the author, as (124) illustrates:

- (124) Komu-to iz nikh ulybnetsia sud'ba – dopustiat v **VIP**-lozhu k velikim forbsam i zapisnomu pleiboiu, otstavnoi kozy barabanshchiku.
 'Fate will smile at some of them – they will be admitted to the VIP-box to the great Forbes-names and the regular playboy, the retired nanny-goat.' (June 30, 2006, 06:11 pm)

In example (124), Rynska refers to the richest people of Russia according to the Forbes list as *velikie forbsy* 'great Forbes-names'. In the entry from which (124) is taken Rynska describes the customs of the richest Russians. The author focuses on their tradition to spend time with prostitutes regardless of the fact that they are married or instead of building serious relationships. The lexical choice Rynska makes in (124), *velikie forbsy* 'great Forbes-names', can be explained by irony, as

their greatness is diminished by their lifestyle and values. The context of (124) and the choice of words allow to assign the referents from (124) to Opponents as they do not share Rynska's value system.

Rynska frequently represents Others through the use of a hierarchy based on features known only to herself. Examples (125)–(127) show several instances where the author chooses such an approach:

(125) *Zaezzhie gastrolëry lovko ispol'zuiut neznanie rynka piterskikh razziav i za bolee chem umerennye den'gi imeiut pervoklassnykh tëllochek.*

'Guest performers artfully use the fact that Petersburg scatterbrains don't know the market and bang first-rate chicks for very moderate money.'
(June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

(126) *Priekhal vtorosortnyĩ pups, kotorogo v Moskve dazhe v ustarevshuiu *Galereiu* by ne pustili.*

'A second-rate cutie pie came, that wouldn't have been admitted even to the outdated *Gallery* in Moscow.'
(June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

(127) *Nachala vkluchat' v garderob elementy, otpugivaiushchie vysokorangovykh samtsov (tak nazyvaemuiu modu dlia prodvinutykh).*

'She¹⁶ has started including into her wardrobe the elements that would scare away high-rank studs (so-called advanced fashion).'

(January 26, 2008, 01:51 am)

In examples (125) and (126), Rynska uses direct gradation while referring to her Opponents. She uses *pervoklassnye* 'first-rate'(125) and *vtorosortnyĩ* 'second-rate'(126) to describe the referents. The first-rate girls mentioned in (125) are described in the entry as not knowledgeable enough to understand the appropriate level of a man they should date. Despite their fortunate initial predisposition (*pervoklassnye* 'first-rate'), the women are hardly ever successful in Rynska's

¹⁶ In (127), Rynska refers to Ksenia Sobchak, a popular Russian media figure.

definition, which puts them into the Opponents camp. Example (126) contains a reference to a man (*vtorosortnyi* ‘second-rate’) who, in the author’s opinion, is of a very low status. Therefore, this man is not worth Rynska’s attention and time. As the second-rate man falls out of the sphere of Rynska’s interest, he can be interpreted as an Opponent. In example (127), the reference is to men of high social, financial and professional status (*vysokorangovye* ‘high-rank’). Rynska sees these men as potential partners, as they comply with her standards for men. The entire entry does not contain any negative or ironic references to these men. On the contrary, they are referred to as wise and tasteful enough to see what looks good on women and what does not. All of this corroborates the suggestion that *vysokorangovye samtsy* ‘high-rank studs’ are Supporters in the context of (127). However, the author refers to them as *samtsy* ‘studs’, which in Russian is a rather sarcastic way to address men. This lexical choice does not refute the initial interpretation based on the context, but reveals a possible contradiction in this particular case.

References to bureaucrats form a separate category, as they constitute a large portion of the data and are quite diverse and creative. No Supporters are found among this category, as Rynska mainly talks about high-level bureaucrats who, in her opinion, are mostly followers of Putin. Consider examples (128) and (129):

- (128) Bolee togo, v étom godu na sklonakh rezko uvelichilos’ pogolov’e chinovnikov. To li éto poslednie bryzgi shampanskogo, - uvidet’ Kurshevel’, prosiiat’ i pogasnut’, to li blagosostoianie slug naroda rastët s

kazhdym dnëm krizisa, no sanovnikov bylo mnogo, i byli oni nepugannye, kak belki v Gaïd Parke.

‘Moreover, this year the total head of bureaucrat-stock on the slopes had increased. Either these are the last splashes of champagne – to see Courchevel, shine and go out, or the well-being of the servants of the people increases with each day of the crisis, but there were many dignitaries and they were at ease, like squirrels in Hyde Park.’ (January 21, 2009, 05:17 am)

(129) Troitsa sanovnykh nebozhiteļi v kompanii model’era Valentina Iudashkina ezhdnevno spuskalas’ s pokorenykh vershin v shale, kotoroe v narode nazyvaiut dacheï Mikhaila Prokhorova.

‘A trinity of dignitary deities, in company of fashion designer Valentin Yudashkin, came down every day from the conquered summits to the chalet, which the commoners call Mikhail Prohorov’s cottage.’ (January 21, 2009, 05:17 am)

In both (128) and (129), Rynska refers to bureaucrats in a highly ironic way. In (128), while referring to the bureaucrats using the generic word *chinovniki* ‘officials’, Rynska adds *pogolov’e* ‘head of livestock’. This comparison to a herd of farm animals diminishes the importance of bureaucrats. Rynska also describes the bureaucrats as *slugi naroda* ‘servants of the people’ while talking about their luxurious vacations during the financial crisis, when many common people have lost their jobs. The last reference to the bureaucrats in (129) is *sanovniki* ‘dignitaries’. This is an old-fashioned pre-Revolutionary term for high officials that is not used in modern Russian. It can be used by Rynska to underline her ironic attitude towards Russian officials she describes. The combination of the three references in (128) allows to interpret the bureaucrats as Opponents. The context of (128) also supports this interpretation. The referents can be considered

Opponents due to their reckless spending of taxpayer money, especially during the financial crisis. Example (129) also contains an ironic reference to bureaucrats. Rynska uses *troitsa sanovnykh nebozhitei* ‘trinity of dignitary deities’ to represent the officials who lead a luxurious life at the resort. The author underlines the ‘heavenly’ status of the bureaucrats as much as possible. She not only uses *nebozhiteli* ‘deities’ to refer to the officials, but represents their group as *troitsa* ‘trinity’. In Russian *troitsa* can mean both ‘the three of them’ or ‘Holy Trinity’, a Christian doctrine that represents God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The additional connotation contributes to Rynska’s ironic representation of Russian officials. The context and lexical choices the author makes indicate that the referents from (129) can be identified as Opponents.

The last trend in the representation of Others incorporates only references to Supporters. This trend consists of representation of women who completely depend on their partners for a living. Consider (130):

- (130) Bud’ ia nuvorish, ia by predpochla krasivuiu ukhozhennuiu soderzhanku.
 ‘If I were a nouveau riche, I would have preferred a beautiful well-groomed kept woman.’ (July 6, 2006, 02:10 pm)

Example (130) displays a reference typical in the data. Rynska mentions *soderzhanka* ‘kept woman’ and describes her as *krasivaia* ‘beautiful’ and *ukhozhennaia* ‘well-groomed’. Rynska frequently stresses in her blog that earning money and being independent, although advisable and not at all reprehensible, is not the right path for a woman as it should be a male role only. Being beautiful and knowing how to take care of one’s appearance is considered important by the author. Therefore, *soderzhanka* ‘kept woman’ Rynska refers to in (130) complies

with Rynska's system of values. The context of (130) and the choice of words the author makes to describe the referent signal that *soderzhanka* 'kept woman' is represented as a Supporter.

Example (131) shows two instances of reference to Self in terms of social and financial status:

(131) Khvostilas' po vecherinkam za Ksiusheĭ, a organizatoram prikhodilos' vosprinimat' Ksiushin dovesok, kak neizbezhnoe zlo... Bezbiletnyi passazhir krasivoi zhizni.

I served as Ksiusha's tail at a number of parties, while the organizers had to take Ksiusha's appendage as the necessary evil... The good life stowaway. (January 7, 2007)

References in (131), *Ksiushin dovesok* 'Ksiusha's appendage' and *bezbiletnyi passazhir krasivoi zhizni* 'the good life stowaway', portray Rynska at the very beginning of her journey to the highest circles of the Russian society. At that time, her social and financial status was so low that she could only visit certain events or prestige resorts together with Ksenia Sobchak. As this is the only entry in the data where Rynska represents Self through status, specifically as a low-status person who is dependent on others, it allows the author to show how high she has gone up in the society. In the corpus overall, Rynska frequently mentions first-rate brands she prefers in clothing, make-up and hotels, which significantly assist in creating an image of a successful young woman without overt references to the author's status.

The author widely employs the dominant of Status to represent both types of Others. Note that only two references to Self through status are present in the

analyzed corpus. These references are from the same blog entry and show the former low status of the author. The trends that Rynska uses to represent Opponents and Supporters include references to professions or other ways to earn a living, such as *povar* ‘chef’, *pogranichnik* ‘border guard’ or *soderzhanka* ‘kept woman’, financial status, such as *oligarkhessa* ‘oligarchess’ and *forbsy* ‘Forbes-names’, place in a hierarchy, such as *vtorosortnyĭ* ‘second rate’ or *vysokorangovye* ‘high-rank’. Bureaucrats form a separate category due to the amount of examples in the analyzed corpus. This category contains references only to Opponents which are represented in an ironic and negative way.

4.11 Relationships

The dominant of Relationships consists of references to the relationship status of people represented in the blog. These references include marital or dating status, friendship, and family relations.

References to wives or female spouses constitute the largest part of this dominant. Both Supporters and Opponents are represented through these references. Consider (132) and (133):

(132) Prichëm zhena – boevaia podrugā, takaia plotnaia 45-letniaia zhenshchina.

‘While the wife is a fighting companion, such a thickset 45-year old woman.’ (June 22, 2006, 10:27 pm)

(133) I na litsakh dobrodetel’nykh supruzhnits schast’ia chto-to ne vidat’, khot’ u nikh i muzh, i deti, i sobaka.

‘One can’t see happiness on the faces of the virtuous spouses, although they have a husband, they have kids and a dog.’ (January 1, 2007, 02:52 am)

In example (132), Rynska describes the wife of one of the richest men in Russia. The author refers to her as *zhena* ‘wife’. In Rynska’s opinion, there is a general trend in Russia that men of high financial status tend to go for younger women and divorce older wives. *Zhena* ‘wife’ represented in (132) is an exception from this trend. Even though this *zhena* ‘wife’ hardly complies with Rynska’s standards for the ‘right’ woman, both in regards to appearance and age (*plotnaia 45-letniaia zhenshchina* ‘a thickset 45-year old woman’), Rynska highly respects the character in (132) and praises her for being able to keep the family together. Therefore, *zhena* ‘wife’ is a role model and is interpreted as a Supporter in this particular case. Example (133) contains a reference to Rynska’s Opponents. *Supruzhnitsy* ‘spouses’ already have everything that Rynska only wants to achieve. As potential competitors, *supruzhnitsy* ‘spouses’ belong to the Opponents camp. The lexical choice Rynska makes also supports this interpretation, as the term *supruzhnitsy* ‘spouses’ is a colloquial and pejorative equivalent of the word *supruga* ‘female spouse’.

Interestingly, while there are quite a few references to wives, only one reference to a husband is found in the corpus. Earlier example (15), repeated here as (134), contains this reference:

- (134) Chelovecheskiĭ muzh, zhivotnoe muzhskogo pola, predast ni za grosh, ni za poniushku tabaka.
 ‘A human husband, an animal of the male sex, will betray for less than a penny, for less than a pinch of tobacco.’ (January 1, 2007, 02:52 pm)

In (134), the husband is referred to as a ‘betrayer’, suggesting that this reference can be interpreted as an Opponent. Example (135) contains *muzh* ‘husband’ as well, but in reference to *byvshiĭ muzh* ‘ex-husband’:

- (135) Vsem nam, svobodnym krasavitsam, oplatil otpusk ili byvshiĭ muzh ili nesvobodnyiĭ finans-popechitel’, resursnyiĭ muzhchina.
 ‘All of us, free beauties, had our vacation paid for either by an ex-husband or a married financial guardian, a resource man.’ (June 22, 2006, 05:21 am)

Example (135) incorporates typical references to men in the dominant of Relationships: *finans-popechitel’* ‘financial guardian’ and *resursnyiĭ muzhchina* ‘resource man’. Since the men mentioned in (135) have sponsored the journey of Rynska and her friends, they are considered Supporters. It is peculiar that the main relationship to men mentioned in the blog is strictly financial, without any legal bonds. No instances of such representation are found for the Opponents.

Rynska represents her own long-term partner in a more sophisticated and creative way. Consider (136)–(138):

- (136) Prichĕm sms-ki serdeshnogo družhka, kak kukushata, vykinuli iz gnezda *vkhodiashchie* vseh ostal’nykh.
 ‘Moreover, the SMS messages of the friend of my bosom, like young cuckoo birds, threw out all the rest from the *inbox* nest.’¹⁷ (July 4, 2006, 03:49 pm)
- (137) Nu, i moĭ korol’ potikhon’ku vozvrashchaet mne veru v gadkuiu muzhskuiu porodu, - on prekrasen svoeĭ netruslivost’iu i velikodushnichan’em.

¹⁷ Cuckoos are brood parasites, which means that they lay their eggs into other birds’ nests. Cuckoo chicks develop earlier and get rid of the eggs of the other species.

‘So my king slowly returns to me the trust into the vile nature of man; he is wonderful due to his lack of cowardice and tendency for generosity.’

(January 8, 2010)

(138) Èto ia k tomu, chto samyĩ liubimyĩ i samyĩ blizlezhavshiĩ i blizlezhachiĩ okazalsia ne na vysote, i mama mne ne pozvonila i ne nasms-sila, i ia poètomu povodu rydala poçhti ves’ pozdniĩ veçer.

‘It’s just that my most loved person, the one that was closest to me and still is, was not at his best, and my mom didn’t call me or send me an SMS, and that’s why I was weeping most of the late evening.’ (January 21, 2009, 05:46 am)

Example (136) shows a frequent pattern that Rynska uses to refer to the man with whom she is in a relationship. When their relations are at a good stage, he is referred to as *serdechnyĩ družhok* ‘friend of my bosom’. The context and the lexical choice suggest that the referent in (136) can be interpreted as a Supporter. The same is true for example (137), where Rynska’s partner is represented as *moĩ korol’* ‘my king’. He reassures her that not all men are as bad as she thinks. This reassurance is provided through moral features that the author considers important and vital for any man: *netruslivost’* ‘lack of cowardice’ and *velikodushnichanie* ‘tendency for generosity’ (137). Therefore, the possessor of these features can be assigned to Supporters. Example (138) is a case where the same person as in (136) and (137) is represented as an Opponent, even though he is referred to as the closest person in Rynska’s life, *samyĩ liubimyĩ i samyĩ blizlezhavshiĩ i blizlezhachiĩ* ‘my most loved person, the one that was closest to me and still is’. His behaviour that does not comply with Rynska’s requirements is the reason of his temporary move to the Opponents camp.

The last category in the dominant of Relationships contains references to friends:

- (139) Dve Natashki, Zheka, Serēzha, i vse frendy moi, SPASIBO!!!!
 ‘Two Natashas, Zheka, Serezha, and all of my friends – THANK YOU!!!!!’ (January 22, 2007, 03:36 pm)
- (140) Moi druz’ia s bolonkom pereekhali v drugoĭ otel’.
 ‘My friends with a Maltese dog moved to a different hotel.’ (January 3, 2007, 03:50 pm)
- (141) Odin drug vypolnil neкое trefovoe obeshchanie¹⁸, posul, tyk-skyt’, i ne zabył, i sam vspomnil obo mne, sirotine.
 ‘One friend fulfilled one money pledge, a promise, so to say, and didn’t forget, remembered about me, an orphan, by himself.’ (January 8, 2010, 02:53 am)

References in (139)–(141), *frendy* ‘friends’, *druz’ia* ‘friends’ and *drug* ‘male friend’, are interpreted as Rynska’s Supporters as they describe her actual friends who treat the author in a very good way. They either send the author their best wishes for her birthday (150), which is very important for Rynska, or spend their vacation together with her (151), or keep their promises that are profitable for Rynska (141). Example (141) contains a unique reference to the author’s own family status. She describes herself as an orphan, for unclear reasons, as both her parents are living. It can be speculated that she uses it as a figure of speech that exists in the Russian language. This expression stems from the commandments of the Russian Orthodox Church, which require being kind to orphans no matter what happens.

¹⁸ In Russian traditional cartomancy clubs mean business or money.

The dominant of Relationships includes representation of Opponents and Supporters. Rynska uses references to marital status, such as *supružnitsa* ‘spouse’ and *muzh* ‘husband’, dating status, such as *finans-popechitel’* ‘financial guardian’ and *serdeshnyi družhok* ‘friend of my bosom’, and friendship, such as *druz’ia* ‘friends’. Note that Self is not represented through the dominant of Relationships.

4.12 Appearance

Appearance is the last analyzed dominant that Rynska employs to represent Self and Others in her blog. This dominant includes all references to visual features of people, such as weight and body features, beauty, hair colour, and style. This dominant is of particular interest for the analysis of this blog because appearance is one of the main themes here and also an important value for the author.

The first trend consists of references to the weight and body features, as illustrated in (142)-(145):

- (142) A zhirnye i zaplyvshie – èto prosto beskhibetnye lentiai. Ne mogut, vidite li, oni pereterpet’ malen’kiĭ napriag v sportzale!
 ‘And the fat and swollen are just spineless lazybones. They can’t, you see, endure a small effort in the gym!’ (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)
- (143) Figura neulovimo plokhiaia: vrode i ne tolstaia, no kakaia-to neproportsional’naia, chutok defektivnaia.
 ‘The figure is imperceptibly bad: not really fat, it seems, but somehow disproportionate, a bit defective.’ (July 6, 2006, 02:10 pm)
- (144) Vse moi popytki stat’ gratsioznoi, kak Ustin’ia, i tochënoi, kak vse bez isklucheniia posetitel’nitsy *Galerei* i *Vogue cafe* poterpeli polnoe fiasko.

‘All of my attempts to become graceful, like Ustinia, and fine, like all, without exception, visitors to the *Gallery* and the *Vogue cafe*, have come to absolute grief.’ (June 22, 2006, 05:45 am)

(145) Èto ia, uzhasno iskhudavshaia v **Le Cave**.

‘That’s me, terribly skinbound in Le Cave.’ (January 14, 2007, 11:01 pm)

Example (142) contains typical references to Opponents, *zhirnye* ‘fat’ and *zaplyvshie* ‘swollen’. The referents in (142) do not comply with Rynska’s understanding of beauty, because being thin is one of the most important characteristics for the author. Example (143) demonstrates that being thin (*vrode i ne tolstaia* ‘not really fat’) is the only condition of Rynska’s visual ideal. The author describes the figure of a person in (143) as not appropriate for a beautiful person: *plokhaia* ‘bad’, *neproportsional’naia* ‘disproportionate’ and *chutok defektivnaia* ‘a bit defective’. Rynska’s standards and the lexical choice she makes allow to interpret the referent in (143) as an Opponent. In (144), Rynska praises gracefulness and slenderness of Tseitlina and the women who are frequent visitors of elite Moscow restaurants (*gratsioznaia* ‘graceful’ and *tochënaia* ‘fine’). Therefore, the referents in (144) are identified as Supporters. The dichotomy in the representation of Others through weight and bodily constitution is very simple and follows the pattern set by these examples. Being fat and ungracious puts people in the Opponents camp, while conformity with Rynska’s understanding of beauty allows one to become her Supporter. Rynska does not hide her struggle to reach her ideals in terms of weight, but her references to own imperfection are very rare. She mainly concentrates on the representation of her new Self as seen in

example (145) via the note *uzhasno iskhudavshaia* ‘terribly skinbound’ that accompanied a picture of Rynska on vacation.

The second trend includes references to being beautiful. Earlier example (88), repeated here as (146), illustrates a typical, although not very frequent, representation of an Opponent through her beauty. Consider (146):

(146) Pervym poiavilsia vladelets kanala Fashion TV Aleks Shusturovich s model’noï vneshnost’iu undinoï.

‘The first to arrive was the owner of Fashion TV channel Alex Shusturovich with an undine with a fashion model appearance.’ (January 21, 2009, 05:17 am)

In (146), Rynska refers to a young woman who accompanied a businessman as *model’noï vneshnosti undina* ‘undine with a fashion model appearance’. While the referent complies with Rynska’s requirements for beautiful women, the potential competition the young woman poses to Rynska allows to interpret the referent in (146) as an Opponent.

Similar representation of Supporters is also found in the corpus, as illustrated in (147) and (148):

(147) Esli v semidesiatykh vse-vse byli kinorezhissërami, to teper’ èti vse idut v biznesmeny. Indikator – krasavitsy. V piatidesiatykh otborneïshie nimfy (termin Korpuskuly) vykhodili za sovetskikh pisateleï. Zatem èta gribnitsa pereselilas’ v restoran Doma Kino. Seïchas modno byt’ ochen’ bogatym, i samye shikarnye feminy pribivaiutsia k oligarkham.

‘While in the 70s *everyone* wanted to be a movie director, now the same *everyone* becomes a businessman. The indicator is the beauties. In the 50s, the most select nymphs (term by Korpuskula) married Soviet writers. Then this mycelium moved into the Cinema House restaurant.

Now it's fashionable to be very rich and the finest females get attached to oligarchs.' (July 3, 2006, 02:10 pm)

- (148) Tomu primer – piterskaia krasavitsa Sof'ia Arzhakovskaia. Ne uspev dostignut' sovershennoletii, tantsovshchitsa s model'nymi dannymi perebralas' v Moskvu.

'An example: Petersburg beauty Sofia Arzhakovskaia. Before reaching age of majority, the dancer with fashion model makings moved to Moscow'. (June 22, 2006, 10:19 pm)

Examples (147) and (148) describe attractive women through the overt terms *krasavitsa* 'beauty' or *krasavitsy* 'beauties'. The referents in both (147) and (148) are identified as Supporters, as they comply with Rynska's standards of beauty and are not represented as competitors in the context. The author mainly uses the overt terms to represent her Supporters through their attractive appearance. It is worth mentioning that example (147) contains a reference to a Supporter that is close to the reference used in (148) to represent an Opponent. While the beautiful female Supporter from St. Petersburg (148) is described as *s model'nymi dannymi* 'with fashion model makings', the anonymous girlfriend of a businessman (146) that was interpreted as an Opponent is described as *model'noi vneshnosti* 'of fashion model appearance'. The closeness of these references underlines that beauty is not enough for Rynska to consider a woman a Supporter.

In several instances, Rynska represents Self through reference to her own attractive appearance, as example (149) demonstrates:

- (149) Tak izmazat' i obezobrazit' moiu khoroshen'kuiu mordochku, èto nado sumet'.

'One must have a special talent to smear and disfigure my pretty face so.'
(February 12, 2009)

In (149), even though Rynska dislikes the make-up that was put on her for one of the television shows, in which Rynska participated, she manages to underline that naturally she is quite good-looking using *moia khoroshen'kaia mordochka* 'my pretty face'.

The author uses hair colour as a way to refer to both Opponents and Supporters. Example (150) illustrates references to both types of Others:

(150) A *blondinki* s sis'kami nraviatsia muzhchinam bol'she, chem dukhovno bogatye sutulye sharkaiushchie s volosami tsveta ia vyshe vashego glamura.

'Men like blonds with boobs more than spiritually rich stooping shuffling women whose hair colour is I'm above your glam.' (July 6, 2006, 02:10 pm)

In (150), Rynska refers to *blondinki* 'blonds' and represents them as women whom men prefer. This allows for the interpretation of these referents as Supporters, as they comply with Rynska's expectations for success. The Opponents are not even given any specific colour and represented as *s volosami tsveta ia vyshe vashego glamura* 'hair colour I'm above your glam'. Rynska combines reference to appearance with a short description of her Opponents' philosophy. The additional characteristics Rynska provides, such as *sutulye* 'stooping' and *sharkaiushchie* 'shuffling', further support the interpretation of the latter referents as Opponents.

Rynska employs references to style, including clothes, make-up and accessories, mainly to represent her Opponents, as example (151) illustrates:

(151) Pomnim kakuiu-to byvshuii putanu, debeluii, s dlinnoi' beloï grivoï, zatianutuii v atlas i s iskustvennoi' kladbishchenskoï rozoï na life.

‘We remember some former prostitute, buxom, with a long white mane, covered in satin, with an artificial cemetery-style rose on her bodice.’
(June 27, 2006, 05:29 pm)

In (151), a woman is described as *zatianutaia v atlas* ‘covered in satin’ and having *iskustvennuiu kladbishchenskuiu rozu na life* ‘an artificial cemetery-style rose on her bodice’. The choice of words to refer to the referent’s clothes and accessories is very peculiar. *Zatianutaia* ‘covered’ presupposes that the dress does not fit the woman very well and is too tight for her figure. While describing the flower pin the woman has on her dress, Rynska compares the rose to artificial flowers that are used on Russian cemeteries to decorate the graves. These flowers are usually of very bright colours and of low quality. Therefore, according to Rynska’s standards of style, the woman described in (151) is dressed in an extremely inappropriate and distasteful way, which definitely puts her into the Opponents camp. The lexical choice the author makes to underline the vulgar appearance of the woman, such as *debelaia* ‘buxom’ or *byvshaia putana* ‘former prostitute’, also signals that the referent in (151) can be identified as an Opponent.

Overall, the dominant of Appearance incorporates references to Self and both types of Others. While representing Others, Rynska uses references to weight and body features, such as *zhirnye* ‘fat’ and *gratsioznaia* ‘graceful’, beauty, such as *krasavitsy* ‘beauties’ and *model’noĭ vneshnosti* ‘of fashion model appearance’, hair colour, such as *blondinki* ‘blonds’, and style, such as *zatianutaia v atlas* ‘covered in satin’. The author mainly represents Self through references to her own attractive appearance, such as *moia khoroshen’kaia mordochka* ‘my pretty face’.

Twelve dominants are analyzed in Chapter 4. These dominants include Age, Fauna, Geographical Units, Gender, Character and Intellectual Features, Myth, Personal Names, Generalized Names, Nationality and Ethnicity, Status, Relationships, and Appearance. The author employs these dominants to represent Self, Supporters and Opponents. The dominant of Age consists only of representations of Others, such as *devushka* ‘young woman’, *mal’chik* ‘boy’ and *molodye* ‘young’. It focuses on the representation of female Opponents, as for Rynska age is more important for women than men, but also includes references to men and children. The author employs the dominant of Fauna through the use of both generic terms and names of specific types of animals, birds and insects, as well as specific breeds of dogs to refer to Others and Self. The dominant of Geographical Units mainly contains references to Moscow and St. Petersburg that Rynska uses to represent both Supporters and Opponents. Self is represented only through references to St. Petersburg in the past. Cities other than Moscow and St. Petersburg are also used to represent both types of Others. Rynska employs the dominant of Gender to represent Self and Others through references to generic terms for men and women, both literary and colloquial. The dominant of Character and Intellectual Features is used in reference to Self, Supporters and Opponents. The author represents Opponents only through moral features, while intelligence is frequently mentioned in reference to Supporters. The representation of Self through the dominant of Character and Intellectual Features is employed to promote Rynska’s system of values. The Myth dominant incorporates references to general non-existent creatures, such as ‘demons’ or ‘mermaids’, and Nymphs

which form a separate category of Rynska's Supporters. While references to general mythological creatures represent Self, Opponents and Supporters, Nymphs refer only to Supporters and Self. Rynska uses the dominant of Personal Names only for representation of Others. The Opponents are mainly referred to through their surnames, while the representation of Supporters contains first names only, or first and last names used together, with the exception of Political Supporters, who are referred to through their surnames only. The dominant of Generalized Names is used by the author to represent both Others and Self through reference to famous people, such as politicians or actors, and literary characters, and the use of generic names for abstract people. The dominant of Nationality and Ethnicity incorporates references to Supporters who are only Jews in the analyzed corpus and Opponents whose nationality and ethnicity is more diverse. Self is not represented through the Nationality and Ethnicity dominant. Rynska widely employs the dominant of Status to represent Others, but refers to Self through Status only twice in the same blog post. Representation of Others through the dominant of Status includes references to professions or other means of earning money, financial and social status, and position in a hierarchy. The dominant of Relationships incorporates references to Others through their marital and dating status and friendship, but no references to Self are found in this dominant. Rynska represents Others and Self through the dominant of Appearance using references to body features and weight, hair colour, attractiveness and style.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

This chapter discusses the results of the thesis. The study aims at answering the following research questions concerning the representation of Self and Others: 1) What image of Self does the author create in the blog and through which means? 2) What different Others does the author represent and through which means? 3) How is the choice of means of representation of Self and Others influenced by the general context of the blog entry? 4) What image of contemporary Russian society does the author construct in the blog?

First, particular attention is given to the representation of Self in the blog. Then, different groups of Supporters and Opponents and the author's use of dominants to represent these Others are addressed. Thirdly, the influence of the general thematic sphere of the entry on the choice of dominants for representation of Self and Others is discussed. Finally, the image of contemporary Russian society in the blog is investigated.

5.1 Self in the Blog

The first research question this thesis investigates focuses on the representation of Self and the means used to create the image of Self in the blog. Interestingly, the author omits several dominants or uses them only limitedly for representing Self. No instances of representation of Self through the dominants of Relationships and Personal Names are found in the analyzed corpus. While in a long-term relationship for a significant time within the analyzed part of the blog, Rynska mainly concentrates on representing her partner and not Self directly.

Only a few instances are found where Rynska's relations with the man are explicitly mentioned. One can explain this approach to representing personal life as protecting the privacy of the author and the people close to her, especially considering that she never posts pictures or names of men with whom she is in a relationship. However, Rynska often raises personal issues in the public entries of the blog and allows commenting on them, although to a strictly limited group. Therefore, it is possible to state that the boundaries of personal and private in the blog are relatively flexible and allow for certain variation. The absence of representation of Self through the dominant of Personal Names is peculiar, as even the first entry of the blog, in which the author introduces herself and describes the general philosophy of her journal, never mentions her real name and employs the nickname only. While this can be a privacy issue as well, another interpretation is also possible. Considering the fact that Bozhena Rynska is one of the most popular high-society journalists, it is inevitable that the name of the journal or Rynska's nickname should appear in other online and offline media. Therefore, it is easy for the potential readers to find this journal. At the same time, by representing herself as Becky Sharpe, Rynska distances herself from the blog and describes the life of a character, not her own.

As the question of authenticity and masquerade is among the most discussed when analyzing identity in the blog, it is necessary to underline the ambiguity Rynska creates in her journal. The use of the Generalized Names dominant, that is mainly, although not exclusively, exemplified by Rynska's nickname, is of particular interest here. The choice of the literary character (Becky

Sharpe) in many ways presupposes Rynska's representation of Self, especially at the beginning of her journal. The author states several times that the main similarities between herself and the character whose name she adopts are lack of love in childhood and a desire to get into the high society at any cost. The author thus forms a certain theme that the journal follows for several years. However, at a point when Rynska considers her status in the society already high enough, the theme of social transition loses its relevance. This situation explains the fact Becky Sharpe is rarely mentioned further in the blog. Her main presence is limited to the nickname and the user picture at the top of each entry and on the side of each comment Rynska makes.

Another dominant that is not used for representing Self here is that of Age. The importance of Age is very high in the blog, as Rynska considers youth a vital virtue for a woman. However, the fact that the age of the author is not mentioned in the analyzed part of the blog can be explained by the aforementioned ambiguity in the representation of Self. While many blogs are used to create a completely new identity, starting with gender, race and age, the blog in question is different as it has a specific face with which it is associated. While it is the author's choice to provide only limited personal information in the blog, she cannot control the readers' access to other sources of information. Therefore, the anonymity of the Internet that is often analyzed by researchers does not apply here due to the character of the blog. With the exception of her age and names of her partners, in many instances, Rynska chooses to give her readers more than what is available

online, as she claims that the other online media misrepresent her, and the readers should not trust them.

The author employs a similar approach while representing herself through the dominant of Gender. There are very few instances where Rynska refers to her Gender specifically, which can be explained by two main factors. First, as Russian has different grammatical gender forms for verbs,¹⁹ it is relatively easy for the reader to notice who is addressing him or her, as the language itself does not provide for any gender masking. Second, the fact that the author of the blog is known, combined with the author's nickname, also contributes to easier understanding of the gender. However, it is worth mentioning that while not representing Self through direct references to gender, Rynska manages to stress her femininity through the use of other dominants, such as Appearance. Through this dominant, Rynska mainly represents herself as a beautiful, feminine and graceful person. The only exceptions include cases when someone puts bad make-up on her or when Rynska talks about the past, when she was only learning how to be a 'real' woman. The same technique is used for representation through the tags of weight and style in the dominant of Appearance. The Self described in the blog is always thin and appropriately dressed in the present. However, since one of the themes of the blog is transition (from a *DBD* to a Nymph, from lower class to higher etc.), Self in the past is sometimes represented as unattractive compared to the current image of the author.

¹⁹ In the past tense, a female gender marker *-a* is added to verbs if the performer of the action is of the female gender.

The dominant of Status further contributes to the image of Self in transition. The move from low financial and social status in the past to high status in the present requires references to the image of Self as poor and unsuccessful in the past. Interestingly, Rynska does not try to avoid this image and refers to it relatively frequently, especially when compared to the instances of representation of Self in the past through the dominant of Appearance. When referring to the past, the author represents Self as unknown to the people, among which she lives now, unprofessional in journalism, lacking the connections and acquaintanceships necessary for achieving success, and, as a result of the previous characteristics, poor and unsuccessful. The image of Self in the present is different. Rynska frequently underlines her high professionalism among fellow high-society columnists. This focus on professional achievement can be explained by the importance of professionalism in Rynska's system of values and by the author's desire to prove that her transition from an unskilled writer to a popular journalist is now complete. With respect to financial status, Rynska still represents Self as poor, or, rather, insufficiently well provided for. Nevertheless, the author sees her financial status in the present as a step forward when compared to her past and attributes this to her professional success, as Rynska describes her profession as her main source of income. There are no direct and overt references to the social status of Self found in the present corpus. However, frequent pictures with celebrities, financial and political elite, as well as entries devoted to vacations or business trips to luxurious destinations, can further support the image of the

successful Self. It is important to note that in Rynska's system of values, being rich means having protection against social imperfections.

The image of Self represented through the dominant of Character and Intellectual features is very peculiar. With respect to intellectual abilities, Rynska creates a very critical image of Self as that of a dimwit who does not excel in acquiring new skills. However, this lack of intellectual abilities is limited to using technical devices only. There are no references to the general intelligence of Self in the corpus. The reason for such an approach to the representation of Self is unclear. It is possible to assume that technological ability is not an important part of Rynska's value system. The lack of references to the general intelligence of Self cannot be explained by unimportance, as Rynska values smart people very highly. A possible explanation of the author's choice can be Rynska's desire to represent Self as intelligent not by employing direct and overt references, but through references to the books she reads, music she listens to and intelligent discussions she has with her friends and acquaintances. The image of Self with respect to character and moral characteristics is also used by Rynska to promote the system of values she creates in her blog. The author underlines her honesty, persistence and combative spirit. She values these features very highly. The importance of honesty constitutes a significant theme in many blog entries. While the first group of features Rynska ascribes to Self creates a positive image, the author also represents Self as scandalous, unforgiving and unscrupulous. The image created by these features can be interpreted as negative if compared to the previously described image or the stereotypical values of Russian society.

However, in the context of the blog these features have a different meaning. Rynska underlines that she has a very negative attitude towards individuals who try to take advantage of her. The appearance of the scandalous, unforgiving and immoral image of Self is strictly limited by the context of opposing the mentioned individuals. Rynska appeals to her readers, urging them not to forgive those who treat them unfairly and not to tolerate insufficient service and an unjust and criminal government. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that in the context of Rynska's values the image of Self as scandalous, unforgiving and of low moral standards is not negative, but a necessary element for achieving a better society. Rynska sees Self as a fighter for social justice, whether in everyday life or in state matters.

The representation of Self through the dominant of Myth supports and develops the image of Self, which is created through the Character and Intellectual Features dominant. Rynska often represents Self as her zodiac sign, Capricorn, which stereotypically is a bearer of such characteristics as a combative spirit, persistence and honesty. The second component of the Myth dominant, reference to Nymph, contributes to the ambiguity of the representation of Self, which is discussed above in this section. As Rynska is a Nymph in transition, she does not fit into the ideal image of a Nymph that is feminine, happy, and indifferent to the imperfections of the world. Rynska represents Self as a fighter whose achievements in life are stipulated by her persistence and firmness. Nevertheless, Rynska underlines her desire to come as close as possible to her role models, the real Nymphs. In 2010, Rynska claims that she is not a Nymph

and her aspiration for reaching that state is unsuccessful. Starting from this point, Rynska represents Self as a hybrid: a Nymph in appearance but a fighter in character and attitude towards life. Therefore, the image of Self is ambiguous and not firmly established in the blog, which can be seen as proof of the transition process in which the author finds herself.

The dominant of Nationality and Ethnicity is not used by Rynska to represent Self in the blog. There is no clear explanation for this choice, as no reliable information is found on the author's ethnic origin either in the blog or in other sources. With respect to nationality, Rynska might be avoiding the representation of Self through this part of the dominant due to the state of transition that is discussed above in this section. On the one hand, Rynska claims that she is fascinated by many individual components of Soviet heritage, such as music, literature and cuisine. On the other hand, she attributes many problems of contemporary Russia to the remainders of the Soviet system and severely criticizes the Soviet period, as well as the contemporary social, political and economic situation in Russia. This ambiguity can explain the avoidance of references to Nationality in the blog, as the author does not fully associate herself with the Soviet Union or Russia. Another possible explanation is that Rynska writes in Russian and from Russia. Therefore, she does not need to underline her belonging to the country, as the context in which her blog appears is strongly connected with Russia.

Rynska does not frequently employ the dominant of Geographic Units to represent Self. Rynska lives in Moscow but does not refer to this city for representation of Self. Similarly to one of the explanations of the lack of references to nationality, the context from which most of Rynska's blog posts arise is strongly connected with Moscow. Therefore, there is no need for the author to emphasise it. Two geographic units Rynska uses to represent Self in the blog are Rublevo-Uspenskoe Highway and St. Petersburg. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Rublevo-Uspenskoe Highway is the location of luxurious residences of the Russian political, financial and high-society elite. Therefore, by attributing Self to this geographic unit, Rynska creates an image of a successful and rich woman of high social status. References to St. Petersburg, which is Rynska's birthplace, are very limited and only used for the representation of former Self. Rynska criticizes St. Petersburg's lifestyle and system of values due to its lack of perspective, sluggishness and backwardness. The author insists that the system of values that she follows now is based on Moscow standards and is the only way to success. Therefore, references to St. Petersburg are used only for the creation of an image of the unsuccessful Self in the past.

The dominant of Fauna is the last dominant that is discussed with respect to representation of Self in this blog. The image that is created through the Fauna dominant is of interest. Rynska represents Self as a viper, a toad, an insect, and a mole. The character features Rynska ascribes to Self in the blog can explain references to a viper and a toad. While representing Self as a viper, Rynska addresses the individuals who try to illegally use her intellectual property, i.e.

copy and republish posts from her blog. By creating the image of Self as a viper, Rynska warns her offenders that she is a dangerous and powerful enemy. In the context of the blog, toads represent stingy people. Rynska does not value stinginess and considers this feature typical of the residents of St. Petersburg. Referring to Self as a toad, Rynska states that she had decided to stop being one and change her lifestyle. Therefore, the state of transition of the author in the blog is accentuated by the image of Self as a toad. References to an insect and a mole do not contribute to the creation of the general image of Self, as they both refer to short stages of Rynska's life, when she was either inactive or behaved awkwardly towards others. Since these stages did not last longer than several hours, the images created through references to a mole and an insect are not considered to be significant for the image of Self in the blog.

Overall, the image of Self that Rynska creates through the use or avoidance of specific dominants is based on her own value system that is in transition. She represents both her current and her former Self trying to underline the process of change that she goes through while documenting this process in her blog. The state of transition explains ambiguity and flexibility of the image of Self in the analyzed blog.

5.2 Others in the Blog

The second research question of the current study deals with the Others in the blog and focuses on who they are and what dominants are used to create their images. The Others are divided into Opponents and Supporters based on the data.

For the purposes of this project, Supporters are defined as those who share Rynska's system of values, support her in financial, moral or any other way, and are supported by her. Opponents are defined as Others who are in opposition to the author's system of beliefs and values or Rynska's competitors in different spheres of life. While Reisigl and Wodak (2001) concentrate on negative representation of Others, the analyzed blog shows that there are different groups of Others that are represented similarly. This section first discusses which groups of Supporters and Opponents are found in the blog and what images of Supporters and Opponents Rynska creates. Then, particular attention is given to the use of dominants for creating the image of Others in the blog.

5.2.1. Supporters in the Blog

Based on the analysis, the following groups of Supporters are singled out in this blog: a) friends and acquaintances; b) males who comply with Rynska's standards for a potential partner or a 'real' man; c) females who share Rynska's values and/or are worth being imitated; d) partners, whether current or former; e) readers of the blog; f) children of close friends; g) professionals; h) political teammates.

The first group, friends and acquaintances, includes people Rynska knows personally and her friends, both male and female. Female friends and acquaintances certainly have the advantage of quantity in the corpus under analysis. They lead a life similar to Rynska's, share her interests and values, have goals that Rynska supports and are always ready to help and be helped. Overall,

Rynska represents her female Supporters in this group as beautiful, graceful and stylish. They value luxury and financial stability, prefer rich and successful men, aspire to have a family or a sponsor. Importantly, Rynska does not see her successful female friends and acquaintances as rivals. On the contrary, the author uses their success stories as a model and does not hesitate to learn from these women. Male friends and acquaintances, although not as frequently mentioned, are significant representatives of this group of Supporters. They support Rynska when she needs their help and do not ask for anything in return. They are successful, powerful and generous. They value family and always keep their word. They are well-educated, have broad interests and behave properly in the society. In general, the author often uses the representatives of the first group of Supporters to illustrate and promote her system of values.

The aforementioned group overlaps with the following groups of Supporters: males who meet Rynska's expectations for men in general and her potential partners in particular, and females sharing Rynska's values and whom Rynska considers to be effective role models. These groups incorporate Supporters that Rynska does not know personally and those that are ideal images, which do not exist in reality. The interaction between men and women is one of the main themes in the blog. Therefore, the description of the author's system of features each gender should possess is very elaborate. While Rynska demonstrates the success of this system through references to her friends and acquaintances, she also mentions people whom she has not met, but who fit into her system. Rynska frequently constructs images of a perfect man and a perfect woman as a guideline

for herself and her readers. The image of an ideal man is dual in the blog. It incorporates Rynska's conception of a potential partner and her notion of an ideal man in general. While these images are very close and include many similar characteristics, such as honesty, generosity, intelligence, and high status in the society, Rynska's ideal partner possesses certain nuances. For instance, one of the key features of an ideal man as described in the blog is a high financial status. Rynska sees success as a result of underlined masculinity and firmness and values these characteristics highly. On the other hand, the author frequently states that she is intimidated by strong and powerful men and avoids having serious relationships with them. Therefore, the image of an ideal partner incorporates success but does not include strength.

The group of females who follow Rynska's standards for a woman and/or are worth being like includes references to an abstract perfect woman and women who are close to this ideal or want to become close to it but whom Rynska does not know personally. The image of an ideal woman coincides with the image of Rynska's female friends, because the ideal image is based on the author's successful friends. In Rynska's opinion, an ideal woman is beautiful, thin, elegant, well provided for, has a family or is in a serious relationship with a rich man. The author praises and supports women who strive to achieve this ideal and sees them as both her followers, as Rynska shares her knowledge with them, and her role models, as they inspire the author with their persistence. Interestingly, Rynska frequently addresses her female followers with advice on how to become an ideal woman whose image is promoted in the blog, but never addresses the male part of

her audience with advice on how to approach the image of an ideal man she describes.

Rynska's partners, both current and former, form the next group of Supporters. This group does not contain as many instances from the corpus as the previous groups. However, the most prominent and frequently mentioned partner is the so-called *barsuk* (badger). Rynska attributes to him all the positive characteristics (for instance, generosity, success, integrity, and intelligence) she finds important in men. In many instances, she sees him as the realization of the image of an ideal man and ideal partner that she constructs in the blog, discussed previously in this section. Occasionally, Rynska also describes the positive features that her former partners have. In this respect, the author mainly mentions their generosity to her in the present, which further contributes to the importance of this characteristic for the image of an ideal man in the blog. Therefore, if the partners comply with Rynska's standards, they definitely belong to the Supporters.

The following four groups are relatively small in terms of the number of examples in the data. However, they are of great interest for the image of Supporters in the blog. One of these groups is Rynska's readers who respect and highly value her work. Rynska represents her readers as intelligent and well-educated, honest and eager to learn, with a wide range of interests, many of which she shares. Another small group of Supporters consists of children who do not annoy Rynska, but, on the contrary, amaze her with their good manners and

independence. These children illustrate the integral elements of the image of an ideal child for Rynska. At the same time, they comply with standards the author sets for people in general and thus further contribute to promoting the author's system of values. It is worth mentioning that the children who belong to this group are, without exception, children of Rynska's close friends. The next group that did not account for many examples is made up of professionals who excel at their job. Professionalism is a very important concept for Rynska. The image of a true professional incorporates a high level of education, skills in specific sphere, a good attitude towards colleagues, clients and subordinates, and success. To illustrate the image of the ideal professional, Rynska employs references to her friends and acquaintances, as well as famous people she considers successful. Lack of such values as beauty, style, or youth does not diminish Rynska's positive attitude towards true professionals. The last group of Supporters is constituted by political teammates: those who share Rynska's opposition to the current government in the Russian Federation. Rynska splits her Supporters within this group into two entities. The first one is those who fight against the system, such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky and readers of her blog that participate in flashmobs against the government and sign petitions in support of anti-government initiatives. The second one is those who are the victims of the current political power in Russia, such as Vasily Aleksanian, whose unfortunate fate is discussed throughout the analyzed part of the blog. Interestingly, while Rynska values persistence and activity in the fight against the injustice in the world, the victims

in this group are also Supporters, even though they do not correspond to the author's ideal of a person.

This classification of Supporters is incomplete, as it is based only on a small part of the blog. However, these are the main tendencies that can be seen not only in the analyzed part of the blog, but also in the rest of the entries. The proportions that are mentioned here are true only for the corpus of the project as the remaining, bigger part of the blog can contain larger amounts of the proposed groups.

5.2.2. Opponents in the Blog

The second large segment of Others is the Opponents. They are defined as those who are in opposition to the author in their system of beliefs and values or are Rynska's competitors in private or professional life. The following groups are identified as the most common among the Opponents: a) friends and acquaintances; b) men who are far from Rynska's ideal images for a potential partner or a 'real' man; c) females who do not satisfy Rynska's standards; d) current and former partners; e) readers; f) children who annoy or disturb the author; g) people lacking professionalism; h) political opponents; i) actual or potential competitors; j) people of low moral standards; k) people who are of lower status and should be avoided.

The first group, friends and acquaintances, corresponds to the same group within the segment of Supporters and consists of people whom Rynska considers her friends or knows personally but who in some way or other violate her system

of rules for appropriate behaviour. Rynska uses references to both friends and acquaintances to illustrate the importance of her value system. The image of an Opponent in this group is mainly constructed through concentrating on one specific negative characteristic (such as dishonesty, indolence or rudeness) this person possesses or on an action that Rynska disapproves of (such as not keeping a promise or criticizing without serious grounds). References to friends in this group are particularly interesting, as they show the flexibility of borders between Supporters and Opponents. In her blog, Rynska underlines the importance of her system of values and can move Supporters to the Opponents camp based on their behaviour and regardless of friendly relationships offline.

The next category, the unpromising men, includes references to male individuals whom Rynska considers either not 'real' men in general, as they do not possess essential qualities, or not good enough to qualify for the role of her potential partner. This category of Opponents is thus the direct opposite of the second category of Supporters discussed above, which included references to the perfect men. The decisions the author makes do not have a constant basis. For example, references to rich men are found in both categories. Visually attractive and unattractive individuals are also both Supporters and Opponents. Therefore, the image of an imperfect man is not rigid and can include both characteristics of the ideal man or partner (such as high financial status, honesty, and generosity) and features that Rynska considers negative in men (such as passivity, cruelty and lack of intelligence). It can be claimed that Rynska plays with borders while

representing the Others in her blog and makes her readers rely on the specific context of each blog entry.

Females who are far from Rynska's standards constitute a large segment of her Opponents. This category includes women who do not share the author's standards of appearance, age, style, behaviour and attitude towards men. The general image of an Opponent of this group incorporates such characteristics as old, unattractive, unintelligent, vulgar, unsuccessful, and not striving for rich partners. Rynska constructs a generic image of this type of Opponents and occasionally illustrates it through references to people she does not know personally.

The category of partners, both current and former, is peculiarly interesting, as in most cases the people assigned to the corresponding category of Supporters ended up being Opponents in certain contexts. *Barsuk* 'badger', a frequent character in the blog, is an excellent example of this group of Opponents. During difficult periods in their relationship, for instance, Rynska complains about his unworthy behaviour, his unpredictable temper, egocentrism, and stinginess. After the relationship is over, Rynska accuses this ex-partner, among others, of being responsible for her unhappiness in private life and disappointment in men in general. Other ex-partners mentioned in the blog are also treated without sentimentality or respect. Rynska describes them as persons of a lower social and financial status who are not worth spending time with and as absolute opposites to the image of her ideal partner. Thus, this category shows that in reference to a

particular person the borders between Supporters and Opponents are flexible and it is easy to move from one group to another. It also demonstrates that the borders between ideal Supporters and ideal Opponents are clear.

The group of readers seen as Opponents illustrates the division of the audience based on their attitude to the author of the blog and her work. These people can be roughly split into two types: those who are not intelligent enough and those who want to harm Rynska through illegal actions. This image, if compared to the image of readers-Supporters, shows how the author differentiates between her readers and how any reader-Supporter can be relocated to the Opponents camp if his or her behaviour endangers Rynska's well-being.

Children that annoy Rynska form a relatively small group of Opponents. As opposed to the children of her friends discussed in the corresponding group of Supporters, these children do not know how to behave appropriately and do not respect other people's privacy. Interestingly, the parents of these children are people of some wealth, as they are either referred to as oligarchs or stay at the same expensive and luxurious hotels Rynska uses. Nevertheless, this high social and financial position does not make these children the author's Supporters. The main reason for seeing these children as Opponents is the fact that they do not follow Rynska's rules and understanding of appropriate social behaviour. High social origin or belonging to a wealthy family does not guarantee Rynska's predisposition.

The next group, unprofessional people, contains two main images of Opponents. The first image is ascribed to Rynska's colleagues, including writers, journalists and bloggers. They either lack talent or use unverified facts. This, in Rynska's opinion, can be not only misleading for readers, but also offensive to the subject of an article. The second image is formed by the representation of people of all other professions who do not do their job well enough. They cause problems for people in general and Rynska in particular. Interestingly, Rynska disregards many other characteristics, which she values in people (such as age, social or financial status, appearance), while representing unprofessional individuals. This approach again demonstrates the flexibility of borders between Opponents and Supporters.

Rynska's political Opponents in the analyzed part of the blog are mainly Vladimir Putin and his followers. These are the people involved in the aforementioned Khodorkovsky and Aleksanian affairs, considered by Rynska to be crucial moments in the development of the Russian society. These Opponents are mentioned in most Political entries of the blog. Putin and his followers are represented as criminals, scoundrels and anti-humans that lack any positive moral characteristics. This group of Opponents is the most consistently represented one of all discussed up to this point. Based on the present data, Putin has no chance of becoming a Supporter in any shape or form. The same is true for his followers. For Rynska, their illegal and inhuman actions deprive them of the right to ever be accepted in any decent society. The author's criteria for identifying her Political

Opponents are rigid. Other characteristics, such as appropriate age or status, cannot move a person out of this group of Opponents.

The group of female competitors, actual and potential, is of a special interest. In many ways it overlaps with the group of Supporters that is constituted by references to females who comply with Rynska's standards for a woman. It is possible to single out three main trends among competitors. The first trend is concerned with younger women. Generally, being young or looking young is represented as a virtue in the blog. Here, Rynska already sees the possibility of competition, which she does not appreciate. The same is true for being beautiful according to certain standards of glamour referred to in the blog. While referring to beautiful competitors, Rynska does not consider compliance with these beauty standards a reason for treating these women as Supporters. They pose a danger to Rynska on her path to finding a potential partner, and therefore they are Opponents. The women who are already successfully married are also treated as Opponents, although marriage is one of the goals Rynska considers essential for a woman. The lives of these women are described as unhappy and meaningless. To summarize, even being an absolute personification of all of Rynska's requirements does not allow a potential competitor to enter the Supporters.

The next group of Opponents consists of people of low moral standards. This group includes general references to individuals without specifics or reference to groups instead of individuals. Rynska frequently represents common people as vandals, scoundrels and criminals. She does not provide any additional

information on their financial or social status, education or profession. The focus in creating the image of this group of Opponents is on the moral characteristics. Moral characteristics that do not comply with Rynska's standards render all the other features irrelevant. The representatives of this group of Opponents are never treated as Supporters in the analyzed part of the blog. Together with the Political Opponents, this group is not fluid with respect to allowing people in and out of it.

The last group of Opponents partially overlaps with the previous one, as it contains references to common or lower status people. These people, in Rynska's opinion, should be avoided, as nothing good can come of them. The author clearly states that not seeing this type of people is one of the main goals of her life. An uneducated, unintelligent, unattractive and unsuccessful person is the main image created in the blog within this group. The life of the largest part of the population of Russia and several representatives of lower classes in foreign countries is shown to be coarse, meaningless, and dead-end. For Rynska, the best way to co-exist with this part of reality is to avoid it whenever possible. It can also be reshaped by force when linked with bad service, impolite and disrespectful behaviour or illegal actions. This group is also inflexible in the analyzed part of the blog. These Opponents are qualified as such based on appearance, manners, intelligence, education and many other components that are too important to Rynska to allow any exceptions.

To conclude the discussion of the types of Others in the blog, it is necessary to note that certain groups of Supporters and Opponents contain

references to the same people or groups of people, which demonstrates a certain flexibility of borders between the two Others. However, several groups are found to be completely inflexible (such as Political Opponents, people of low moral standards and people of lower social status), which can be explained by the author's strict viewpoint on certain values.

5.2.3. Use of Dominants for the Representation of Others

The differences and similarities in the representation of two types of Others are discussed based on the use of dominants shown in the previous chapter.

The dominant of Age demonstrates that the author does not distinguish between two types of Others. Both Opponents and Supporters are represented through this dominant. References to male Others constitute only a small part of this dominant. While success in one's profession, intelligence, education and moral characteristics are important for Rynska's potential ideal partner or her image of an ideal man, age is never mentioned specifically. Female Others, however, are frequently represented through their age in the corpus. Regardless of the fact that in Rynska's promoted value system being young is the ultimate virtue in women, both types of female Others are described through references to their age. Interestingly, the ambiguity in the representation of young females follows a relatively stable trend. If a woman is a potential competitor of the author, whether in private, social or professional life, being young and thus complying with Rynska's standards for a woman does not make her Rynska's Supporter. Other

dominants, such as Appearance or Character and Intellectual Features, are employed by the author to diminish the significance of the young age. The same approach explains the ambiguity of representation of older women. They are supposed to be Opponents, as they do not fit into the image of ideal women. However, since they do not pose any danger to the author, they are represented as Supporters as well. In the latter case, other dominants underlining their intelligence, beauty or high financial, social or professional status come into play to compensate for the age. Therefore, the boundaries between Supporters and Opponents are extremely flexible in this dominant. The importance of youth can be seen as a result of influence of the part of society, to which Rynska belongs, and a necessary feature to achieve her goals in this society. At the same time, Rynska deliberately plays with the readers of her blog, creating a variable image of the Other that can be older but still valuable, or young but not valuable at all.

A separate group that includes references to children is singled out in this dominant. While generally in the blog Rynska considers children to be an unfortunate obstacle, they can also be Supporters, if they follow her rules. It is worth mentioning that the children identified as Supporters are mainly children of Rynska's close friends, whom she praises for bringing up their children very well. The status of children who are Opponents is also strongly connected with their parents. For Rynska, the parents are those who are responsible for making their children as unnoticeable to the people around them as possible. Therefore, for this separate group of Others, age is not an ultimate value, as compared to the appropriateness of behaviour in public.

The Fauna dominant also incorporates references to both types of Others. Both Supporters and Opponents are represented as different mammals and birds. However, references to insects are found only for Opponents. The choice of species seems to be based on the personal preferences of the author and her judgements about some animals being more attractive and pleasant than the others. No definite tendencies are singled out in this respect. However, in isolated cases appearance and intelligence influence the author's decision. There is a more important difference in the representation of Opponents and Supporters. The Opponents are frequently referred to as generic animals or represented as groups of animals, such as a herd or a flock. This approach is not found in instances where Supporters are represented. It does not only unite the Opponents in a group, but also makes them lose individuality, as they do not possess any specific qualities. Rynska stresses that the Opponents are not interesting, are all similar and thus are not really worth looking at or getting to know better. Not only are they not quite human, they are one huge crowd. They do not have feelings or thoughts that are worth taking into consideration. This estrangement may potentially allow for destroying these Others. Rynska often promotes the use of rather aggressive means in social or everyday life battles. For example, she mentions pouring boiling water on people who make excessive noise near her windows at night or leave trash in the building's hallways. Taking all of this into account, it is possible to conclude that de-individualizing of Opponents can have the power to motivate her readers towards similar actions, as the Others are not seen as individuals and are thus easier to harm and punish.

The dominant of Geographic Units is connected with the discourse of competitors discussed above while looking at the Age dominant. While other cities are also employed in the representation of both Opponents and Supporters, the main dichotomy in this dominant is between Moscow and St. Petersburg. Rynska is originally from St. Petersburg. She often refers to her friends and acquaintances from this city, as well as successful people she respects or wants to imitate. However, the author sees the Northern Capital of Russia as a city that has no future. The main reason for this is the lifestyle that is common among young female residents of St. Petersburg. Using other dominants, Rynska describes St. Petersburg women as lazy, unattractive and passive, which puts these women into the Opponents camp. However, the young female Muscovites are role models for Rynska. She has learned a lot from them since moving to the capital. They represent the only appropriate lifestyle a successful woman can lead: always active, healthy and attractive, dressed appropriately etc. Young female Muscovites are definite Supporters, as long as they do not get in Rynska's way. In the case that they do, they become Opponents as potentially dangerous competitors. Dealing with them as Opponents, Rynska employs a variety of dominants to diminish the Muscovites who were just recently represented as Supporters. Consequently, the context is crucial for the readers. Rynska varies the boundaries between the Others. This creates ambiguity that underlines the importance of her value system and the security of her own position.

The dominant of Gender further contributes to the flexibility of borders between Others in the blog. Male Opponents and Supporters are represented

similarly in most cases. The main technique the author employs is the use of both formal and colloquial generic words for men. Importantly, in a few instances where Opponents are represented, the author turns to colloquial equivalents of formal words used in the representation of Supporters. These variants have additional connotations, such as age or belonging to a criminal circle. These references thus involve another dominant, such as Age or Status, into the image of an Opponent. A similar trend can be seen in the representation of female Others. Both Opponents and Supporters are referred to using the same generic words for women. Notably, the word *zhenshchina* ‘woman’ was found only twice in the corpus, both times in reference to Supporters. Rynska refers to her Supporters and Opponents mainly as *devushki* ‘young girls’. It is possible to assume that Rynska tries to create a younger image of her social circle, as being or looking young is one of the most important values Rynska describes in her blog. Therefore, the dominant of Gender overlaps with the dominant of Age. It is used by the author to create a more detailed image of the Others.

The author employs the dominant of Character and Intellectual Features to represent both Supporters and Opponents. The differentiation between the two types of Others is very strict. Supporters are described as smart and decent people of high moral standards and kind nature. Opponents, in turn, are not intelligent, mean, unfair and simply evil. A possible explanation of this is that Rynska has a really strict moral code that, unlike age, appearance or status, does not allow anyone to move to the other side unless they entirely comply with the code.

The dominant of Myth follows both trends discussed above. The group of general myth references incorporates images of both Opponents and Supporters. No differences in representation are found. As with the Fauna dominant, the choice of creatures can mainly be explained by personal preferences the author has, as no rigid system is found in the corpus. The second group of references in the dominant of Myth, the Nymphs, are always Supporters. The Nymphs are the perfect women and the ultimate role models for Rynska. It is peculiar that the Nymphs are never seen as competitors of the author, unlike young women represented through the Age or Appearance dominant. As Rynska considers herself a novice Nymph and Nymph-in-transition for most of the journal, it is possible to state that the Nymphs are not competitors due to their absolute superiority. It is also worth mentioning that at some point Rynska declares that she is not only a non-Nymph, but is also the Nymph opposite, a *DBD* 'spiritually rich girl'. This shift (or lack thereof) does not change the dichotomy: Nymphs are still represented as Supporters only, and *DBDs* stay Opponents. This peculiar situation can be partially explained by the fact that Rynska continues to promote the value system of the Nymphs and in many ways keeps following it. Therefore, the author supports the Nymphs and differentiates herself from *DBDs* through assigning them to Opponents. The dominant of Myth demonstrates the flexibility and strictness of borders between Opponents and Supporters.

The dominant of Personal Names consists of references to both Opponents and Supporters as well. While the Opponents, in most instances, are referred to through their last name only, Supporters enjoy relative diversity. The author uses

first names only, often in a diminutive or endearment form, or both last and first name, when referring to Supporters. Importantly, most Supporters Rynska mentions in this dominant are her close friends or acquaintances. Therefore, the way she refers to them offline can interfere with their online representation. The Opponents, on the other hand, are often people the author either does not know personally or is not in a close relationship with. This accounts for her choice to address the Opponents in an impersonal and impolite way. Nevertheless, Rynska refers to her two main political Supporters in the blog, Khodorkovsky and Aleksanian, through their last names only. While this choice can be explained by the fact that Rynska does not know these men personally, it further contributes to the instability in the use of dominants in the blog.

The Generalized Name dominant also includes instances of representation of both Opponents and Supporters. No significant variance is found in the corpus for this dominant. Both Others are represented through images of literary characters, celebrities, politicians and generic names. The author's personal judgments and preferences play the key role in describing Supporters and Opponents through this dominant. There is no strict border between the Others here, as same type of references is used for Opponents and Supporters. The only exception can be found where Rynska describes common people she prefers to avoid using a diminutive form of a popular Russian name *Vasiliĭ*, *Vasya*. This type of reference is unique in the corpus and is employed only for the representation of Opponents. In the discussed blog, reference through a generic name can be seen as similar to referring to Opponents as a flock or a herd in the

Fauna dominant. It can serve to eliminate any individual characteristics the Opponents may have and to picture them as one big crowd.

The dominant of Nationality and Ethnicity is especially interesting. While both Others are represented through this dominant, the only Supporters found in the corpus for this dominant are Jews. The author never represents Jews as Opponents in the analyzed part of the blog. It is unclear why there is only one nationality through which Supporters are represented. The Opponents, on the other hand, come from different national backgrounds: Russians, Dutch, French, Germans etc. Interestingly, the Opponents that belong to this dominant are considered Opponents mainly due to their unprofessionalism or inappropriate and disturbing behaviour. It is thus possible to conclude that nationality is not of great importance for the author of the blog. The key factors are underlined through other dominants, such as Character and Intellectual Features, Appearance and others, as the author creates an elaborate context to represent the Opponents of different ethnic and national backgrounds.

The dominant of Status is diverse in terms of tendencies used to represent the Others. Two tendencies through which both Opponents and Supporters are represented incorporate references to wealth and profession. Being professional is one of virtues Rynska values very highly. The boundaries in the dominant of Status are very strict: no unprofessional individual can be a Supporter. It is not as straightforward when it comes to wealth. While being wealthy and thus successful is one of the key features in Rynska's value system, wealth does not necessarily

guarantee the status of a Supporter. Rynska criticizes rich people for not complying with her standards of moral level and intelligence. Therefore, the context and use of other dominants is of vital importance for the readers. The financial status of a represented individual is not enough to assign a person to either group of the Others. It is worth mentioning that while there are a lot of instances where rich Opponents are discussed, only one reference to poor (in the author's opinion) Supporters is present in the analyzed corpus. Therefore, while boundaries here are relatively flexible and Others can move from one camp to another based on the use of other dominants, wealth is shown as important in the change of status from Supporter to Opponent. The author assigns explicit categories to Opponents: first- or second-class, for instance. Only Opponents are represented through this approach. The presence of a strict hierarchy further contributes to the inflexibility of boundaries between different types of Others.

The dominant of Relationships stresses the ambiguous character of some Others due to their potential competition with Rynska. One of the main groups represented through this dominant is wives. The Supporters in this category are mainly Rynska's role models. They achieved all the author is struggling for: happy family, financial stability etc. She describes several happy families of her close friends and praises their ability to be good wives, fulfilling one of the main feminine predestinations. Nevertheless, some women in a similar marital situation are represented as Opponents. They are also married and have financial stability, but through other dominants, such as Age or Appearance, their families are shown to be unhappy and their lives meaningless. The reason for such treatment lies in

the fact that these women are Rynska's competitors. They either stand in her way or possess something she only struggles for. Rynska's desire to diminish their success in the eyes of her readers leads to the elaborate use of other dominants. The context here again plays a crucial role in distinguishing between two types of Others.

Only one instance where husbands are mentioned is found in the corpus. It is a reference to an Opponent, as the husband is seen as a betrayer. The small number of references to husbands can partially be explained by the fact that Rynska is divorced and has limited positive experience with being married. A positive reference to an ex-husband that sponsored her vacation and thus is a Supporter is also found in the corpus. This instance follows the main trend of this dominant for representing partners. They are mainly referred to as financial resources, while the actual choice of lexical items is quite diverse. Therefore, references to male partners overlap with the dominant of Status. It can be concluded that the main value is not the marital status per se, but the ability of a partner to provide for an appropriate level of life. This overlaps with and further contributes to the importance of wealth for the author of the blog, as discussed above.

The dominant of Appearance is diverse and supports both flexibility and strictness of boundaries between Supporters and Opponents. While representing people through their weight and body type, Rynska adheres to a simple strategy. References to excess weight are used to represent female Opponents only, which

is linked to the aggressive promotion of the image of an ideal woman in the blog. References to thin people are not as strict. While referring to them, Rynska mentions the weight directly ('thin') only in regards to Supporters, the women she wants to imitate. When mentioning the general model-like appearance, which includes being rather thin, the author often talks about actual or potential competitors and thus Opponents. The same ambiguity is true for the representation of Others through their beauty. While being beautiful is of vital importance in Rynska's world, many of the beautiful women described in the blog are the author's competitors. The boundaries between the Others are thus very flexible for this dominant. The author often uses Appearance, along with other dominants, as means to diminish women who are beautiful by nature. They are described as either vulgarly dressed, or too old, or not very intelligent.

It is necessary to state that the author does not give preference to any specific dominant to represent Supporters and Opponents. She often uses several dominants to make her message clear and create a context on which her readers can rely. Two main peculiarities are seen in the representation of the Others: 1) the Others are malleable, they easily shift from one camp of Others to another; 2) the Others are strongly attached to one camp, there is no flexibility of borders between the two camps. The corpus has significant evidence to substantiate both points. It is difficult to tell whether one dominates over the other. The author deliberately plays with the readers, making them compare contexts and make judgments about the Others based on the results of their comparisons. At the same time, some Others can never move to another type. It is possible to assume that

the instances where the boundaries are strict show the values of the greatest importance to the author. While mixing Others and frequently representing them through the same dominants and even similar linguistic means, Rynska creates a system of her most important expectations of the world.

5.3. Influence of the Thematic Sphere of the Blog Entry

The third research question of this study concerns the importance of general thematic sphere of the blog post for the choice of dominants the author uses to represent Self and Others. With respect to the general thematic spheres, two types of blog entries are singled out in the current study: Political and Non-Political. Political posts incorporate discussion of political issues or social activism matters. The Non-Political posts include entries that discuss such topics as personal life, fashion, travel, acquaintances, gossip, books, and movie premieres. It is important to note that only 58 out of 300 blog entries analyzed for this study are identified as Political. Therefore, the conclusions are made based on a very limited scope of data.

While in Non-Political posts the author employs all dominants, Political posts incorporated only a few out of the twelve dominants: Personal Names, Character and Intellectual Features, Generalized Names and Fauna. The author's choice to use the dominant of Personal Names can be explained by the fact that Rynska criticizes the general political system in Russia based on specific events, such as the trials of Khodorkovsky and Aleksanian. The discussion of these two affairs and persons involved in them constitutes the content of all Political entries

in the blog. Interestingly, Rynska singles out Vladimir Putin as the major evil and uses his name to construct the image of an unfair, immoral and criminal politician. The names of Khodorkovsky and Aleksanian are used to illustrate victims of the political system that are powerless against the authorities despite their high social and financial status. Interestingly, Rynska mainly concentrates on the use of the dominant of Character and Intellectual Features in the Political blog posts. The author justifies her opposition to the current government of Russia based on the disparity between her system of values and the actions of the high-ranking officials of the country. Putin and his followers are represented as people of low moral standards and even criminals. Through elaborate descriptions of immorality and unintelligence of the specific individuals and their actions, Rynska constructs an image of an unfair society governed by these criminals. The use of Generalized Names and Fauna dominants further contributes to the general concentration of the author on the system of values. Generalized Names and Fauna dominants are employed to illustrate the wrong system of values of Rynska's political Opponents and to underline the rightness of her own.

The avoidance of use of such dominants as Age, Gender, Appearance, Status, Relationships and others with respect to political Opponents and Supporters can be explained by the following factors. Firstly, Rynska mainly represents persons known to the audience. Therefore, she does not need to provide any specifics to help her readers see the general image of the Others. As a result, Rynska can concentrate on the value systems of these Others. Secondly, the author represents Political Others in the context of their political and social

activities, not in their private life. This signals that Rynska is interested in their public images only and sees Political Others as representatives of ideologies of certain political groups, not necessarily their own.

Based on the author's use or avoidance of certain dominants in Political blog posts, she does not treat the Political Others as individuals per se. Rynska does not know them personally (or does not indicate a personal connection with them) but uses publicly available information about these Others. At the same time, the Non-Political Others are first and foremost interesting to the author as personalities with their own positive and negative sides and actions. The Political Others thus have no age or financial status or gender in her system because what is important about them is their moral and intellectual system of values that is contradictory to Rynska's. Thus, the individual names of those in power may change, but if they follow the same system of values as their predecessors, they will remain Opponents of the author.

5.4. The Described Society

The conducted analysis points to a new way of looking at data at hand that does not focus on positive Self-representation and negative Other-representation but reveals a complex system of interrelations between social participants. This system allows for multifaceted representations of Self and Others that participate in the creation of a larger image of a person in a particular society.

The breakdown of analyzed discourse into references to Self, Supporters and Opponents allows to look at the image of society at large constructed in

Rynska's blog. The special format of the blog, which allows for immediate discussion of everything written, makes it a medium of co-construction of the social image. The numerous readership serves as a certain degree of verification of the information posted by the blog author. While readers' comments are beyond this thesis's scope of analysis, this legitimizing presence of the readers may disallow the bloggers to misrepresent the society to a greater extent.

The society that Rynska describes in the blog is a complex phenomenon that consists of two disproportionate classes: the elite and the rest of the people. The majority of the people are shown to lead a dead-end and senseless life. The author points them out as vandals or brutes that can either be disciplined or avoided. The purpose of life of this majority is shown to be sustaining the lifestyle of the upper class. Hence the representatives of the lower class only appear in the blog in the context of disturbing the normal lifestyle of the author and her social circle. Rynska has no interest in this group. It is impossible for the current thesis to verify whether the blogger agrees with the attitude described. However, the fact that such references are accepted by the blog's readership may indicate that they approximate the offline attitude of Rynska's social circle to the people of lower social status. Importantly, the division Rynska draws serves as a manifestation of transition in Post-Soviet Russia from an officially classless society to a rigidly stratified one.

Rynska builds an image of the social structure on three pillars: the images of the ideal man and the ideal woman, and her personal value system. The

author's system of values frequently intersects and even conflicts with the two ideal images.

As the man and the woman are idealized, they are constructed around a rigid system of requirements. The society that Rynska depicts through these images places paramount importance on the role of gender. Men and women are shown to have different required levels of success, appearance and status. They have specific roles that must be adhered to, which relates the blogger's system to older traditional and stereotypical values. The main role of the woman, for example, is described as being attractive and capable of sustaining the attention of men. She is thus dependent on the men while being mainly focused on assuring her own livelihood through them. At the same time, a woman, in Rynska's system, must strive for financial independence either through engaging in business or through a well-written marriage contract. Rynska points out that this is necessary due to the absence of a civil society in Russia that is able to protect the woman. The latter assertion suggests that the author steps away from the stereotypical and traditional values within the Russian culture and towards the official Soviet values of the absolute equality of men and women. Rynska's double-minded approach to this system, as well as the fact that the author herself does not live by the described standard, points to a phenomenon where a person in transition is living within a society at large in transition.

The moral code that Rynska creates is of great importance to a comprehensive view of the described society. Being a high-society columnist,

Rynska discussed the lifestyle of the Russian elite. Importantly, being part of this economic elite does not mean being respected in the constructed society. While being wealthy and successful are important criteria for joining the elite in the society described in the blog, these criteria do not mean automatic inclusion in the high society. The society about which Rynska talks includes such phenomena typical for societies in transition as ‘the new rich’ and the links of new-era politicians to the old regime. Note that with respect to references Rynska makes, most post-Soviet Russian politicians had started their careers within the Soviet system. Importantly, the author does not describe links to the Soviet period as necessarily negative. On the contrary, she points out her respect for some people that came out of that period and directs the readers to the fact that contemporary Russian society at large does not oppose certain features remaining from the country’s past. Thus joining the elite, in Rynska’s opinion, is not immediately connected with either wealth or past connections, but first and foremost with adherence to the moral code. In the blog, great personal wealth and Soviet-era ties are shown as useless if a person is, for example, dishonest. This point is underlined by Rynska’s references to Vladimir Putin and his supporters through references strictly to their low moral values and not their political actions. Importantly, Rynska mentions that the majority of people in Russia think of her social circle as an assembly of thieves, liars and immoral individuals. The moral code thus inherently conflicts with the author’s perceived reality itself.

Notably, there is no middle class in the society Rynska describes, only the lower class and the elite. The author’s own status within this system is unclear, as

she describes herself as neither rich, nor poor. However, the fact that Rynska avoids the lower class and relates her own actions and attitudes to the moral code points to her self-identification closer to the elite. The blogger stresses that the moral code exists exclusively for the elite, as people in the lower class have no use of the values that the code includes and cannot escape their status. In addition, the elite is encouraged to be strict and even violent towards the lower classes. This appears to be a violation of the moral code and points to the fact that Rynska depicts the people outside the elite as subhuman, at least in the perception of her social circle.

The thesis allows to draw the described image of society and the rules by which it operates. It is important to keep in mind that this image is built through the words of one specific individual. While this individual reflects a certain segment of the society at large, her views cannot be regarded as an accurate depiction of general lifestyle and scope of opinions. The new medium of the blog allows for many people to access this information and discuss it, and the fact that the image Rynska constructs is not being consistently rejected by her blog's numerous followers makes it necessary to accept her views as "one of the truths" in describing contemporary Russian society. This study thus contributes to the understanding of the Russian society as portrayed online and underlines how this new format of the blog, due to the necessity of interaction and cooperation between the author and the readers, helps to construct a multifaceted image of the people in today's Russia.

The medium of the blog is seen at crossroads between personal philosophy, news journalism and creative text. The blogger ‘thinks aloud’ in the blog posts and talks to other people in an attempt to construct and validate her view of the world. At the same time, the posts are based on contemporary events and persons that are also the subject matter of traditional news media. The elements of creative text, such as the use of character names and fictional place-names, stress the fact that the blog sometimes makes it impossible for the readers and the current researcher to fully discern the real from the imagined.

5.5. Summary

The chapter above discusses the results of the analysis. The discussion is organized in four sections, which correspond to the research questions of the thesis. In the first section, the representation of Self in the blog is discussed. The second section is concerned with different groups of Supporters and Opponents and the use of dominants with respect to the representation of two types of Others. The third section addresses the importance of the general thematic sphere of the blog entry for the author’s choice of dominants. Finally, the image of contemporary Russian society in the blog is analyzed.

The discussion demonstrates a complex system of Self and Other representation constructed by the blog author. It shows that while the Self exists in various manifestations, some of which refer to the past or short periods in the life of the author, the Others, subdivided into Supporters and Opponents, are referenced to through a system of factors that vary in prominence. The system of

Self and Other representation is seen as both malleable, due to variation in the depicted image of the Self and the shifts between the Supporter and the Opponent camps of the others, and rigid, when the issue at stake is the deep underlying values that Bozhena Rynska has. The image of the Russian society, which Rynska constructs in her blog, is a society in transition. The following chapter points to the role these findings may play within the general context of online communication studies and provides suggestions for further research that could mitigate the shortcomings of the conducted analysis.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary of the Study and Findings

The current study has explored the representation of Self and Others in the blog becky-sharpe.livejournal.com. The author of the blog is Bozhena Rynska, Russian journalist and top-blogger in the Russian Internet. The blog does not have any declared general theme and discusses a variety of topics. The main focus was the creation of the image of Self and Others. This study used Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and Issers (1996) as its foundation. Reisigl and Wodak (2001) concentrate on forms of social discrimination in Austria. Issers (1996) focuses on the formation of images of politicians in Post-Soviet Russia. The current study applied the frameworks of Reisigl and Wodak (2001) and Issers (1996) to the new context of a blog, which is not concerned strictly with politics and discrimination.

The goal of the thesis was to answer the following research questions: 1) What image of Self does the author create in the blog and through which means? 2) What different Others does the author represent and through which means? 3) How is the choice of means of representation of Self and Others influenced by the general thematic sphere of the blog entry? 4) What image of contemporary Russian society does the author construct in the blog? For the purposes of the study the data was approached qualitatively.

The corpus of this study consisted of the first fifty blog entries from each year the blog had existed (2006 - 2011). The analysis concentrated on the use of twelve data-driven dominants (such as Age, Fauna, Geographic Units, Gender,

Character and Intellectual Features, Myth, Personal Names, Generalized Names, Nationality and Ethnicity, Status, Relationships, and Appearance) for the representation of Self and two types of Others: Opponents and Supporters. The blog entries were divided into Political and Non-Political based on the general thematic sphere of each entry. The corpus was analyzed using MAXQDA 10 qualitative analysis software. This software allows for creation of a system of codes on different levels, which was important for the analysis in this study.

The study revealed that the image of Self created by Rynska in the blog is based on her own value system that is in transition. The author does not employ all dominants to represent Self. The dominants of Age, Nationality and Ethnicity, Personal Name and Relationships are not incorporated in the construction of image of Self. The fact that the author of the blog is well-known limits the level of anonymity that Rynska can achieve in her blog. The choice of dominants for the representation of Self illustrates that the author's perception of herself or the way she constructs her image depends on Rynska's current mood, her successes and failures, attitude to the topics and people described. The image of Self in the blog is malleable and employs several dominants to underline the features most important to the author in each entry. The set of dominants changes as required for underlining different elements of Self.

The study illustrated that there are several groups of Supporters and Opponents in the blog. The boundaries between these groups are both flexible and strict. The author creates this ambiguity through the use of the same dominants to

represent both types of Others and through changing the level of transparency of borders between Supporters and Opponents. The context of each entry is often the main criterion that allows the readers to identify the Other that Rynska represents. The dual representation of Others demonstrates that the author's attitude towards the subject of communication in the new mass medium of the blog is significantly influenced by the events in the blogger's life.

The analysis of the influence of the general thematic sphere on dominants use showed that the author employs only four out of twelve dominants in Political entries. These dominants include Personal Names, Generalized Names, Fauna and Character and Intellectual features. Rynska mainly concentrates on the representation of Political Others as bearers of a certain ideology and ignores Age, Appearance or Status of the represented Supporters and Opponents. Notably, this is done regardless of the importance of these components in the representation of Others in Non-Political entries. Therefore, the comparison of the use of dominants in Political and Non-Political entries revealed that the author does not consider the Political Others individuals and only refers to them in the context of their political activities.

This thesis aimed at complementing existing research into the nature of online communication. Through the introduction of theoretical frameworks previously applied to other media into the study of the Russian blogosphere phenomenon, it broadened the scope of these theories' employment and filled the gaps found during the literature review conducted above. This study demonstrated

that the character of online identity and representation is often unpredictable. This phenomenon was shown worthy of further research that would take individual needs and approaches of bloggers into careful consideration.

Importantly, the thesis suggested a new approach to the data of the new media that would direct the researchers' attention towards the deeper system of social participants represented in the blog. Whereas prior studies had focused on the difference in reference to Self and one's Opponents, as well as to possible mutations of identity due to the anonymous character of online communication, this project pointed out that the unique character of blog writing, which completely relies on the blogger's own perceptions and attitudes, allows for the re-construction of the image of society at large as seen by one of its contemporaries. Rynska's blog was shown to be a realization of the Russian blogosphere's function as a "surrogate public sphere" (Konradova and Kaluzhskij 2010, 152), as the blogger uses the medium of the blog to deconstruct Post-Soviet politics, social structure and interpersonal relationships in a way that is currently impossible in traditional Russian media.

6.2 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Further Research

A few limitations of the study have to be acknowledged. Firstly, the study investigated the representation of Self and Others only in one blog. Secondly, only 300 entries were analyzed in this blog. A larger corpus, which would have included more entries from the analysed blog and other blogs, would have been more representative for the discussed issues. The current study concentrated on

the analysis of verbal text in the main entries only, excluding visual images, videos, readers' comments and author's responses to these comments. A multimodal analysis that incorporates the non-textual elements would have been helpful in revealing additional approaches to the construction of images of Self and Others. Finally, the blog under analysis is connected with a very specific lifestyle, glamour, which is not representative of the entire Russian blogosphere. Including blogs from different social contexts would have provided a more complete picture of representation of Self and Others. Such inclusion would also have provided additional viewpoints for the construction of the image of contemporary Russian society represented online.

The phenomenon of representation of Self and Others in the blogosphere offers wide venue for further research. Firstly, a cross-cultural study would be interesting to conduct to see if national or regional patterns in the construction of people's images would come to be revealed. Within the context of the Russian blogosphere, other blogs dealing with different subject matter could be considered, which may assist in the understanding of deeper cognitive and discursive processes at play in this new medium, especially given the socio-political significance of blogs in contemporary Russia, discussed above. At the Rynska blog level, the Russian national level or a multicultural level of study, it is possible to suggest a longitudinal study to discuss changes in the bloggers' perception of Self and Others, and the society at large, occurring over a protracted period of time. As is the case with many projects looking at data exclusively through the qualitative lens, this thesis' data can be approached quantitatively,

especially given the wide array of other research questions that could be set. To conclude, this thesis is seen as an invitation to a broad discussion regarding the significance and variety of blogs and new media in general in a context that limits the openness of traditional media. It also underlines the new perspectives of research into the inner workings of society in transition through the discourse of its members online.

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