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*Bodily memory and emotional expressions of male members of the army with direct experience of war*

Abstract

L'articolo analizza la memoria del corpo e l'espressione delle emozioni dei militari russi di sesso maschile che parteciparono alla guerra in Afghanistan. La ricerca punta a indagare la struttura basilare della memoria del corpo e ad analizzare gli elementi strutturali di tipo emozionale riscontrabili nelle narrazioni dei veterani di quella guerra. L'Autrice riflette sui luoghi fisici nei quali si concentra la memoria del corpo, quali segni e tatuaggi impressi nel corpo, che sono visibili, percepibili e indelebili. Queste iscrizioni assumono il valore della "verità" sul passato, impressa nel corpo maschile. L'articolo si interroga sulle seguenti questioni: che funzione ha la memoria del corpo nei racconti di guerra maschili? Quali sono gli esiti del lavoro della memoria sul corpo? Quale ruolo giocano le emozioni durante il processo del ricordare? Che tipo di emozioni esprimono i veterani nei loro racconti? Che tipo di connessione esiste tra memoria del corpo ed espressione delle emozioni?

Keywords: memoria del corpo, corpo maschile, memorie di guerra

In memory of my friend Nikita L.

From my rotting body,  
flowers shall grow and I  
am in them and that is  
eternity.

Edvard Munch

*Building the analytical framework: concepts of bodily memory and emotional expressions*

This article is created to interweave bodily memory and expression of emotions contextualized by the discourse of the local war, military actions and interactions<sup>1</sup>. Its focus is on bodily and emotional experience of Russian male militaries who participated in the Afghanistan war in 1979 – 1989 and whose age ranges from 44 to 49<sup>2</sup>. This war was represented in Soviet media in the light of ideology promoted by the government.

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<sup>2</sup> The empirical data comprises eleven in-depth biographical interviews with Russian male militaries carried out by the researchers from the Dept. for Qualitative Research of Social Changes at Russian Academy of Sciences in 2010/ 2011. The author thanks them for providing these materials.

At the begging of the military actions there was a strong policy of censorship in the Soviet Union (Reuveny and Prakash 1999: 705). And only in 1983 articles about soldiers' deaths in Afghanistan began to appear in some Soviet newspapers. Western journalists had more freedom in reporting the Afghan war. In spite of that they had also made biased assessment. According to Lanine, "Western professional journalists adopt and echo government statements as their own, as self-evidently true, without subjecting them to rational analysis and challenge" (Lanine 2007). Thereupon our research of bodily memory and emotions of Russian servicemen who took part in military actions in Afghanistan might reveal a different view on this local war.

In the article we think over complex and compound concepts which could be decomposed into simple conceptual elements that are the body, memory and emotions. From this place and moment we should organize the analytical framework that aids to collate and interpret empirical data. We appeal to the approaches of French analysts Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Maurice Halbwachs who provide us with the outline of the space of our reflection. The former one writes about the perceiving human body interflowing with consciousness. An existing body is viewed as an expressive unity of senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch, and in its activity the body intentionality orients on others, thus the living body becomes a subject of perception and at the same time an object of perceiving others (Merleau-Ponty 1999: 265, 274, 277). Merleau-Ponty pays attention to vision and the field of visibility from the perspective of senses. This point is of great importance for us because in their narratives male militaries often mentioned their experience of seeing and feeling enemies at a distance or near-hand, comrades' deaths and their own wounds.

Moving our gaze on memory and emotions we employ the sociological works of M.Halbwachs, the follower of the Durkheimian tradition, who writes about social frameworks of memory which determine remembrances through stable patterns, habits and systems of concepts corresponding to wider socio-historical and cultural contexts (Halbwachs 2007: 124). It means that social memory is collective and located in the society. We reproduce past events in our mind relying on the memory of others. The process of memorizing goes on because other people stimulate our remembrances now and here. Thus we could ask ourselves how memory and body are (inter)connected. Anyway, Halbwachs writes in the chapter on reconstructing the past: "The role of body is absolutely negative" (Halbwachs 2007: 128). According to this statement, we are not able to derive any remembrances from the body that serves as a barrier for mental remembering rooted in unconsciousness. Let's leave this subject aside till the next paragraph and discuss the question of emotions. In *L'expression des émotions et la société* Halbwachs continues the Durkheimian line and writes about social influence on expressing emotions. Our emotions are subject to tough social discipline and it is the society that indicates how we should react to particular events (Halbwachs 1947: 5). Thus we can speak about specific emotional techniques learnt by children and used by adults during their life. In the case of male participants of the Afghan war emotions and the ways of expressing them have collective nature. This collective emotionality is sustained by the memory culture of the veteran's community that has a network of

relations, particular rituals, important places (e.g. monuments, cemeteries) and memorable dates.

Returning to the question of correspondence between body, memory and emotions, we appeal to sociological research by Alois Hahn who divides memory and remembrances defining the first one as the permanency of events that could be activated through repeating remembrances in discourse (Hahn 2010: 8). Developing this idea we can see memory as a constant continuous flow consisting of fragmented parts – past events reproduced in imagination. In the interviews with Afghanistan veterans first of all we dealt with separate remembrances throughout male militaries' narrations which could be characterized as incoherent and fragmentary, whereas during their interviews they also create more or less well-composed pictures of the past which could be referred to as memory. This memory is being brought to life with the help of the interviewer who stimulates respondents to reproduce past events in their mind and discourse. Hahn links abovementioned points with the body through the theory of *habitus* worked out by Pierre Bourdieu and operates with the concept of *habitual memory* which refers to the embodied structures of thinking and corporeal competences gained during socialization, education and professionalization (Hahn 2010: 105–106). It implies the routine forms of behaviour and automatically applying skills that the body remembers unconsciously, without any conscious remembering. This habitual memory becomes apparent in male militaries' postures, tattoos, scars, wounds and bodily traumas, it can also be concentrated in the system of manual labour and army institution. It's important to note that eight out of eleven of our respondents served as soldiers during the war and worked as blue-collars at plants. Three out of eleven served as officers and were professional militaries. Bodily memory and bodily knowledge are concentrated in disciplinary institutions and passed from one generation of workers or soldiers to another. We observed this phenomenon in the case of male Afghanistan soldiers as well as in studying the production of bodily knowledge of male blue-collars in disciplinary regimes of Russian plants and building areas (Vanke 2011a).

In one of his article Hahn writes about *memory of emotional habits* which actualizes the past and at the same time connects current emotional experience with future expectations (Hahn 2011: 127). Developing this thesis we could speak about *habitual* and *emotional memory* and pose a question of the role of emotions in remembering. While analyzing interviews we found out that emotions accompany and support the process of recollecting. Separated pieces of memory touched upon by the interviewer prompt male veterans to express feelings and motivate them to continue their narrations in spite of self-normalization and self-restriction which could be explained as normative regulations of emotionality in the sphere of personal identity (Hahn 2011: 128). In the light of this, we should also note some gender peculiarities concerning the masculine emotional expressing being different from the feminine one. It's not a secret that dominant masculinity defines itself as self-sufficient and independent, whereas men could have problems with acknowledging their emotional needs in fear of being seen as weak or experiencing their male identity being threatened (Seidler 2007: 1, 16). In our everyday life we often meet stereotypes referring to masculine emotionality and corporality (e.g. men should endure pain and should not weep) leading to mental and

bodily traumas of men, and the case of male Afghanistan militaries is not an exception here.

Another German researcher Dietmar Kamper looks at bodily memory from the perspective of scars as signs and graphism of pain. It means that our body exists in the universe of cultural-natural inscriptions such as tracteries, images, notches and cuts endowed with senses applied on the body surface – i.e. human skin. Therefore the body can never be clean. It always serves as a memorial tablet for pre-historical, historical and biographical inscriptions (Kamper 2010: 34, 41). Memory functions through mechanisms of pain, violence and suffering. People create memory with blood, torment and sacrifice. “A remembrance is tied to the place. It is so for body memory – wounds and scars, memory of images, memory of writing, and it is so for mental memory” (Kamper 2010: 101). Kamper catches the natural and the social in corporeality and his ideas could be successfully employed to the male military body that experienced the war. The joint article by Kamper and Christoph Wulf on senses of the body continues developing reflection in the following way. They focus on the metaphor of the human body as the semantic system (Kamper und Wulf 1984: 9–10). According to them the human body is a kind of “natural language” or “historical writing” and senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch are founded on socio-historical semantic basis.

Integrating approaches described earlier we define *bodily memory* as a kind of memory which is reactivated at the particular time and place by bodily remembrances such as wound pain, visible scars, posture or bodily hexis, embodied skills and competences. Bodily remembrances about past events are reactualized in the present and oriented to the future, they are localized: first, being tied up with geographical places, and secondly, being placed on the human body. We can also consider tattoos as a kind of bodily memory but in this article we will discuss military tattooing shortly because of the lack of empirical data on this particular subject. We study emotional expressions articulated in narrations through discursive statements when respondents told us about such feelings as fear, joy or sadness. It should be stressed that we don't try to find out the 'truth' about the Afghan war, instead we are interested in the means and mechanisms of memory reproduction. We aim to analyze the semantic structures of bodily memory and emotional expressions objectified in narrations produced by male militaries in in-depth interviews. We aim to achieve that by searching for answers to the following research questions: how are remembrances organized? How does bodily memory function in discourse? Where is bodily memory concentrated? What are the results of bodily memory work? What role do emotions play during the process of remembering? What kind of emotions do male veterans express in their interviews? What type of connection is there between bodily memory and emotional expressing? And finally in what correspondence is the level of corporal, emotional and memory practices with the level of disciplinary institutions (e.g. army, manual labor)?

*The palette of perception: death / life theme as the axis structure of bodily memory*

We start our description with the moment when Russian male militaries find themselves in the context of the war for the first time. They are airlifted from the Soviet Union to Afghanistan through transfer points by military planes, then transported by trucks or armoured carrier personnel across the Afghanistan territory. They don't understand what is happening there and don't believe the military actions are serious because of the wider context of concealing the objective information about the war in the USSR. But having found their bodies under the fire and having met with death, male militaries begin to realize where they really are. Their remembrances abound with statements describing constant transportations of bodies. That is not only moving living bodies but also dead ones, packed in zinc coffins and carried by plane back to the USSR.

“Nobody told me about the Afghan war. The government prohibited to publish this in press... nothing was known. Just short... coffins were coming back” (ASG, 43 years old, soldier // Author archive).

“The painful remembrance is when you lose your friends. They are packed in zinc, driven by wood boards, and they are carried to the airplane like furniture. And you don't even understand these are coffins...like furniture... (NMF, soldier // Author archive).

“During the first day we were brought ...to the terminal base... near Tashkent... where stores were supplied, weapons were supplied, ammo was supplied...”. “Far and by we were embarked in the “Ural”... in APC [armoured carrier personnel]... and went back... to the [state] border” (AMA, 48 years old, soldier // Author archive).

The fragments report a mix of living and dead bodies with hardware and vehicles, which means that the alienated human body there becomes an object among machines, for that matter it is becoming a fighting machine. It is possible to compare male militaries with professional boxers whose fighting bodies are also instrumentalized and mechanized. In both cases male fighters use bodily capital and exercise bodily work. If boxers could convert it into economic and symbolic capitals at the risk of their lives (Wacquant 1995: 66–67) militaries don't gain such profits, they are driven by the ideology of discharging their duty. From this point of view the comparison between the coffin and furniture is significant. The dead body doesn't give any profit. It is like a broken machine or furniture that is not able to function any longer. Hence, it is useless. In this circulation among objects male militaries always balance between death and life. They are not dead but they are so close to it that they become walking corpses. The second contextual level where male bodies of soldiers and officers found themselves is the military institution with its disciplinary system of bodily regulations, presupposed subordination and power exercised not only by the means of drills and punishments but also by mutual supportiveness. The war is characterized by the life threatening situations. Orientation in its context needs tough mental-corporal self-ordering (Foucault 2004 (1975)). In Afghanistan young soldiers (at the age of 18 – 20) could at

first get shocked or threatened by shooting attacks and bombing but later they accommodated themselves to such extreme events as death or wounding and began to accumulate fighting skills. In this case we observe the process of *habitualization* forming male military schemata of thinking, perceiving and appreciating (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), *habitual memory* is starting to work there.

Shifting our attention from the above-cited quotes to the whole corpus of narratives we have found out that the death theme is the key point of Afghan veterans in bodily memory narrating. The respondents' remembering is actualized mainly through their articulation of past events referring to their friends' or enemies' deaths in the war. And what is more interesting is that veterans organize their discourse about the war also involving the deaths that happened in the peaceful life after they returned home. It can be the death of a comrade-in-arms who survived in military actions but was killed as a businessman in the 90s, or of officers who did not participate in the Afghan war, but wrote books on these events, it can be the death of respondents' children or relatives who died in their daily life. Even though these remembrances are not related to Afghanistan directly they structure male veterans' memory about their lives. Death is always opposed to life, it is the flip side of the same coin, and this contraposition determines bodily memory narration. One respondent retells the story of how he was "buried" beforehand by his comrades who thought him to have been killed<sup>3</sup>. Another respondent tells how an alive comrade of his was awarded the Medal for Bravery postmortem<sup>4</sup>. To this extent the comparison of the Afghan militaries with walking corpses is not coincidental. Besides, the speech of our respondents is full of such statements as "to be killed", "to kill", "to perish", "died", "a coffin", "a corpse" and in opposition to those - "to survive" or "to come out with life" as long as they mentioned cemeteries, memorial places and dates in their interviews.

Death vs life theme contextualizes bodily memory narration, and the event of death is one of the most memorable ones. The reason of this is deeply rooted in our social culture, this event is imbedded in male militaries' minds leading to bodily-mental worrying and fears that could be called traumas. From this perspective our sociological research may produce additional therapeutic effect through memory reactualization when veterans are able to rework and release to some extent their severe remembrances. From there we can make a preliminary conclusion that death is a core element in structuring bodily memory. When male militaries get in contact with dead bodies of other men they remember these moments clearly or – on the contrary – absolutely forget them, 'sponge' their memory, which is the reverse effect of memory work<sup>5</sup>. It

<sup>3</sup> AMA, 48 years old, soldier // Author archive.

<sup>4</sup> DEG, 46 years old, soldier // Author archive.

<sup>5</sup> There is an interview where the respondent tells about his memory loss after a cerebral concussion experienced after fighting. This is the fragment of his talk with doctors: "They say, it's a cerebral commotion, it's clear. And they begin to ask questions. (*remembering*) There were two Majors, doctors, and they began: Your surname? I say: Whose? – Yours! I say: I don't know. In general, my memory was absolutely lost. Neither name, nor anything else. – The number of your base? I say: The deuce knows. – Your grade title? I say: In what sense a grade title? – Who are you? – he says, – a soldier or a general? ...I say: Beats the shit out of me. And here I'm remembering, something has actuated in my brain, I'm



must be mentioned that most male deaths in Afghanistan were surprisingly caused not by military actions but, first of all, by insanitary conditions, spoiled water or harsh climate leading to illnesses (e.g. malaria, yellow plague, dysentery, hepatitis and etc.)<sup>6</sup>, or, secondly, by malnutrition<sup>7</sup>, or, thirdly, by the incorrect tactics of overhead personnel as well as frequent careless behaviour of soldiers themselves<sup>8</sup> – all these factors influenced body experience and are reflected in their bodily narratives. But there were a lot of deaths which took place in actual fights. Therefore male military narrations are filled with stories about exploded or dismembered bodies. The remembrances of those images are deeply retained in their memory. In the following fragment the respondent tells a story about the bloody fight and the cruelty of the enemies:

“...They are flesh and blood... And it was... a high-stress condition when we really appeared in a wild hack and slash, hmmm... it was a very difficult fight... wounded guys were captured by dushmans [Afghan guerillas – *author's note*], they captured them... and axed... we were looking for wounded guys... And we boldly gathered an old men, children and put them under the barrels. Maybe it's not nice and right but we said: “Return our guys or otherwise we kill everybody!” And then the old man brought a cart and showed us: we hadn't done this; that was guerillas... And there were... bones, blood, pieces of protective suits... with holes, it was warm... in other words, they axed them just in the hand cart...” (IKS, officer // Author archive).

“The most tragic one is of course the death of people. We had to pick up the pieces of our friends... flesh... pieces... parts of people were put into a ground sheet and brought to the base”. (ASG, 43 years old, soldier // Author archive).

Once you have seen it either you cannot forget it or such an experience sinks in the space of unconsciousness. To this extent the sense of vision is very important in memorizing. Most of respondents emphasize that they have seen awful things with their own eyes. And here the horizon of perception becomes another side of visual experience that is connected with bodily memory through practices of visual memorizing. In their interviews male veterans also remember picturesque sceneries of Afghanistan nature: valleys, mountains, deserts, forests, rivers, and some of them are coloured with the sense of fear – such as Kilagay Valley which was called by the Russian militaries ‘the Valley of Death’<sup>9</sup>.

In their statements the respondents also demonstrate the sense of smell that plays an important role in keeping events in memory, when they speak about the smell of rotting flesh of comrades' corpses<sup>10</sup>, or bad fish in military meal<sup>11</sup>, or the fresh Afghanistan

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taking out the military card and say: everything is written there”. (AMA, 48 years old, soldier // Author archive.)

<sup>6</sup> ITD, officer // Author archive.

<sup>7</sup> AMK, soldier // Author archive.

<sup>8</sup> ITE, soldier // Author archive.

<sup>9</sup> AMA, 48 years old, soldier // Author archive.

<sup>10</sup> IKS, officer // Author archive.

<sup>11</sup> ITD, officer // Author archive.

air<sup>12</sup>. Analyzing narrations we also noticed the sense of hear resulting in remembrances about bomb explosions and whiz of bullets. When some of our respondents hear the sound of petards in the New Year Eve they remember Afghanistan events<sup>13</sup>. According to the above stated, on the one hand, the senses of perception can be seen as the key point in the process of memory production and reproduction. On the other hand, in the male veterans' discourse we observe the death vs life theme directly framing bodily memory; the death vs life opposition serves as structuring element of narrations.

*Loci of concentrated bodily memory: corporal inscriptions and skin writings*

Continuing the reflection by addressing the sense of touch we come closer to human skin and consequently closer to bodily memory. Male militaries remember the Afghanistan climate: day dry heat and night cold, gasping for clean water and food. They talk about bodily contacts with their comrades, local population and enemies. These cooperation or antagonistic relations of 'our' vs 'other' unite and set all senses of perception, being like a multi-coloured varying ensemble of sight, smell, hear, taste and touch. Focusing our attention on male militaries' skin we see it as a natural material for writing down war events and therefore as a material for memory inscriptions and embodiments. The respondents often concern the subject of physical traumas and disabilities. In their interviews they articulate detailed descriptions of their friends' and their own injuries that happened during military actions, consequently these events are deeply saved in their memory but in quite a particular manner. In the following fragment the respondent who served as a de-miner during the Afghanistan war remembers bomb explosion and his injury:

“...[the mine] exploded under the first wheel of the APC, and I set on the APC... the torso... in short, the whole face, on the chest, on the legs... The guys asked if I could see with my own eyes. I'm here, of course, it's fine, I don't know what was with my skin; it has scarred now. But at those times there was not a clean spot” (ASG, 43 years old, soldier // Author archive).

The second injure of the above-cited respondent is related to his tripping a mine when he lost his foot and got his disability. The next passage is articulated by the veteran who served as a pipe fitter, who describes the situation of car striking and his experiencing a cerebral concussion:

“In general, the first stroke, I remember everything, the first stroke was made on my hip by the bumper, I was turned around by the car side... and on my back, at the level of my spinal column, well, and now I have some problems with my back...” (AMA, 48 years old, soldier // Author archive).

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<sup>12</sup> “It is breathed there in another way, it is unexplainable, it seems you got to another planet” (AAV, 47 years old, soldier // Author archive.)

<sup>13</sup> NMF, soldier // Author archive.)



These fragments demonstrate that functioning of bodily memory is closely interweaved with mental processes as well as with the work of perception. At present the respondents have some health problems, not only physical ones but mental ones as well, which result in the local war syndrome caused by the horrors of the war. According to the above-cited passages, wounds and scars absorb memory about past events through current physical pain or lacking parts of the body. During the analysis we found out that some soldiers inflicted wounds to themselves when they didn't want to take part in military actions:

“Do you know how many self-injuries there were? ...Do you know how many self-inflicted wounds were in the army? They are poor fools. He doesn't want to serve; he shoots himself and he's brought to hospital and then he goes home.” (DEG, 46 years old, soldier // Author archive).

“[They] wanted to escape, some of them shot themselves in their hand or there were detonators exploded in their hands... well, that was it.” (ASG, 43 years old, soldier // Author archive).

Self-injuries are natural inscriptions but male militaries make them on their own will. The cause for experiencing such traumas doesn't influence the inscription of memory function. In this way, it doesn't matter how the male military gained the wound, the main role of it is to remember about the event of wounding through past or current pain.

Wounds and scars are embodied and incorporated, but also inscribed in the body and on the body. If we deal with skin writings, we should ask ourselves how we could read them to analyze them. What operations should we exercise to produce a discursive analysis of bodily memory that is a kind of habitual and social memory? We let this question stand over for the future reflection and turn to the theme of unnatural inscriptions such as tattoos. It should be mentioned that there was not much information in the interviews about tattooing. The following quote belonged to one of our respondents. We extract it from our colleagues' article devoted to the subject of memorization practices exercised by the Afghan veterans:

“Everything was taken away...Just the tattoo left from this...” (Rozhdestvenskaya and Semenova 2011: 40).

The quote refers to the situation of troops withdrawal, when male militaries were leaving Afghanistan and lots of their private things were confiscated in order to prevent spreading true information about the war. Photographs, notes, clothes and other materials were taken away at the moment of crossing the state border. In this way, tattooing becomes an element of prompting remembrances that couldn't be confiscated or censored by the authorities (Rozhdestvenskaya and Semenova 2011: 40), and they act as memory reactivators. According to Hahn, military tattoos obtain other social functions such as self-identification and representation, self-manifestation and recognition. They are “techniques of self production”. Tattoos take active part in

communicative processes and work as a peculiar bodily language (Hahn 2010: 113, 123).

We can say that the male body becomes a natural surface that keeps and reflects symbolic senses acquired during the whole life. The body turns into the record machine in the most literal way. Developing our reflection we transfer the problem into the field of interpretation of bodily senses by the others: not only by other people in daily interactions but also by researchers who as human beings have senses of perception and try to deconstruct symbolic bodily signs. Male veterans with the similar experience recognize particular bodily writings and their meaning better than others because their mental schemata are predisposed to do that, and it is the reason why Afghan veterans try not to talk about the war to people who don't have such living knowledge. Drawing up the intermediate results we distinguish, firstly, natural wounds, disabilities and scars received by the influence of external circumstances connected with fighting, carelessness of soldiers or their comrades; secondly, social-natural self-injuries made by soldiers voluntary because they didn't want to serve in Afghanistan; thirdly, unnatural tattoos made willingly by male militaries. Comparing natural wounds, social-natural self-injuries and social tattoos we should elicit common basement for these phenomena of bodily inscriptions. In all three cases it deals with writings concentrated on human skin whereby we can view these inscriptions as loci of bodily memory and at the same time as loci of sense concentrations. In all three cases these inscriptions function as bodily remembrances that couldn't be removed and could be observed. Bodily memory loci are framed by the space of experience and visibility. At present visible bodily signs reproduce the past in imagination and have a capacity to prolong memory organizing the horizon of future expectations. If we elicit differences in three cases, then we should emphasize various reasons for having these bodily inscriptions. Wounds have external natural character, their sociality only lies in the actions of others (e.g. when enemies traumatize our respondents). Self-injuries are motivated by social and natural factors, they are real wounds but they have social roots and are connected with the sense of fear or unwillingness to take part in the war. Finally, tattoos have social origins; they reflect the work of social institutions (e.g. army) bleeding through the male military body.

#### *Emotional expressions as accompanying bodily remembrances*

Drawing our attention to the multi-coloured palette of emotions we turn to one more perspective of speculation on bodily memory processes. In the light of emotionality we return once more to feelings and perception. To this extent emotions are closely interrelated with senses, they are derived from senses; they accompany bodily remembering and serve as its supportive and expressive means, but we should keep in mind their collective and social character. From this point we start our description of the Afghan veterans' emotions articulated discursively and objectified in statements observed in the interviews. During our analysis we found out that the most frequent emotion mentioned by the respondents was *fear* – *the fear of death* that is marked by the following statements: “to be/ not to be afraid of”, “to have cold feet” or “to be

frightened”. This emotion is organized in discourse from the perspective of overcoming the fear, on the one hand, and by the sense of self-preservation, on the other<sup>14</sup>:

“...everybody was afraid and I was too. At first it was difficult to contain myself; there were soldiers nearby and it allowed me to take a grip on myself, I was ashamed of myself before them.” (IKS, officer // Author archive).

“...It was shameful to fear... but there was somebody who was afraid...” (ASR, 44 years old, soldier // Author archive).

Two fragments demonstrate mechanisms of emotional self-normalizing. In the case of the first respondent the reasons of normalization lay, firstly, in his hierarchical position, he is an officer who commands and inspires soldiers to attacks; he finds himself in the disciplinary regime of the army institution that regulates not only male bodies but also their emotional expressions. Secondly, he has a special form of ideology referring to the duty to his country. Finally, he is a male military who has a particular form of masculine identity that doesn't allow him to express his fears in public. If you overcome the fear of death you can be called a real man, a true hero. Thus the emotion of fear is closely interrelated with the emotion of shame both being classical masculine characteristics. In spite of this there are some fragments showing practices of caring for oneself from the standpoint of fear:

“...Of course there was fear in Afghan... I experienced three explosions... of course there was fear. After the second explosion I couldn't continue de-mining, in other words, fear is one of life components. And only a fool doesn't have fear. So fear restrains, as they say it doesn't allow emotions to... so fear must always exist, if there is no fear, something will happen to you.” (ASG, 43 years old, soldier // Author archive).

Here the sense of fear performs its restrictive function, it induces male militaries to be careful and sensible. In many respects army discipline aims to regulate militaries' emotionality because with well-organized emotional system they are able to remain cool-headed in dangerous situations and come to rational decisions in fighting. Thus militaries should have the sense of fear but should know how to use it reasonably. Emotional self-restriction provides and increases chances for surviving but creates problems for veterans in their further peaceful life. It must be noted that the narrations on death are often accompanied by respondents' laughing. This bodily reaction is explained here by the tension that happens in the process of remembering war events. Laugh serves as a means of relief.

Another emotion frequently articulated by the Afghan veterans is *joy – the joy of life* that is expressed discursively and related to the moments of receiving letters from

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<sup>14</sup> “When the period of adaptation passed, dare-devilry began. But one month... to go before a rotation they begin to save themselves. They feel that coming home is close. (*Laughing*) In other words, there is an understanding, an awareness that “I can return alive, I should take care of myself just a little bit more”. (IKS, officer // Author archive).

home, returning home alive, meeting with relatives and some funny episodes from the times of military service. As the Afghan veterans say, when they meet together they try not to touch upon any severe remembrances but rather retell some funny stories that happened during the war, so their interviews are also full of amusing episodes, jokes and anecdotes accompanied by laughing. Here laugh performs as expressional tool of joyfulness and liveliness. Friendly embraces and kisses at meetings and celebrations are one more way for expressing positive feelings:

“When we meet together, some people don’t understand that, they think we are gay. We are kissing. ...it impresses the outside public when two strong and grey-haired men are osculating.” (ITD, officer // Author archive).

Obscene words are another kind of expressive tool that re-contextualizes remembering, male veterans can demonstrate their feelings of injustice of the state or compassion from relatives after the war through them. But it is not unusual that obscene words are used in describing extreme and nervous situations. Beside that, the respondents speak about tears which in most cases are attributed to mothers, wives and children: those can be the tears of joy when a man comes back or the tears of sadness when a mother gets to know that her son has died.

Drawing up the intermediate results, we conclude that male militaries’ emotionality is structured by the opposition of death and life as well as their bodily memory. Negative emotions of fear, sadness and trouble are framed by the theme of death and corporal disabilities. Positive feelings of joy, fun and vivacity are associated with their active life. The means of emotional expression such as laugh, obscene words, embraces and kisses are formed by the Afghan veterans’ culture created in their community. Thus emotions could be called a language, similarly to their bodily language. The ways of their expression could be read and interpret by others. When people outside the community do not understand the meanings of male veterans’ gestures thinking of the veterans as gay, these outsiders demonstrate such incompetence because they are not acquainted with the Afghan veterans’ community culture. The articulation of severe remembrances that generate negative emotions is also viewed by the respondents as undesirable and it’s not typical to call upon them among others or even among themselves.

One more aspect of emotional and bodily regulation leads us to the institutional level in which context we can consider the disciplined masculine body which experienced the horrors of war. Army regulation aims to restrict emotional expressions in order to prevent affective decisions that may lead to unreasonable actions during fighting. The army institution also normalizes masculine emotionality because it is easier to operate with disciplined bodies and it is easier to send these bodies in attacks viewing them as “military personnel” or “food for powder”<sup>15</sup>. And the third level of emotional restriction is connected with the regulation exercised by the contemporary gender regime in Russia. Classical masculine identity constrains the demonstration of feelings, which

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<sup>15</sup> ITD, officer // Author archive

results in mental problems of Afghan veterans and difficulties with their coming back and embedding in their everyday life. In some cases it is caused by the compassion expressed by their relatives, especially women, who would like to support the veterans but simultaneously put under question their male identity influenced by war events. Returning to the subject of bodily memory we can state that emotions are generated by the process of remembering as well as support the process through the mechanism of narrating as a kind of a particular social therapy. In this way our research performs not only cognitive and sociological function but produces an additional therapeutical effect.

### *Conclusion*

Concluding the above-written we summarize that narrated bodily memory as well as emotional expressions objectified in discourse are organized by the *death vs life opposition* in the case of male militaries who experienced the Afghan war. This structuring element is performed by the working senses of perception such as sight, hear, smell, taste and touch that coincide in the human body. The senses of perception as well as emotions take an active part in production and reproduction of bodily memory – in the process of remembering carried out by the male veterans. In this article we described some places of concentrated bodily memory such as natural wounds got by fighters in the external conditions of military actions, social-natural self-injuries, i.e. real wounds made at soldiers' own will because of their unwillingness to participate in the war, and military tattoos that have collective socio-cultural origins and perform their communicative functions. We call these three kinds of bodily inscriptions the *loci of bodily memory* and at the same time the loci of bodily knowledge because they are signs with a particular semantic meaning located on male militaries' skin. In spite of different origins, these three sorts of loci are optical, perceptible and indelible; they activate bodily remembrances and serve as a kind of "truth" about the past. We briefly mentioned habitual skills and gestures that reflect habitual memory but we haven't discuss male military bearing, postures and bodily hexis that needs to be studied within further research on bodily memory.

In final part we considered male veterans' emotionality structured by the division of negative and positive feelings and at the same time by the death vs life opposition. The most frequent emotions in discourse are fear – *the fear of death* and joy – *the joy of life* - that we examined through the analysis of narrated episodes focusing our attention on laugh, obscene words and tension which appeared during remembering. According to interview analysis, Afghan veterans' emotionality is normalized in three regulative directions. First, there is the institutional level of the army where masculine bodies and emotional expressions are regulated by the disciplinary regime. The second one is the macro level of current gender regime in the contemporary Russian society which implies classical masculine identity characterized by such qualities as independence, strength, rationality and restraint. Thirdly, there is the level of Afghan male veterans' community with its specific militarized culture which presupposes particular ways of expressing emotions. To this extent, male Afghan militaries exercise bodily and emotional self-restriction and self-normalization under the invisible but perceivable control of army, gender and community. From the perspective of bodily memory their

emotional expressions act as the supportive means that accompanies remembering, they help to rework severe recollections and redefine someone's attitude to the past events at the present time in order to see them in the future.

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