Editorial: Masculinities in Russia and East Central Europe

By Roland Clark

Abstract

The study of men and masculinities is a vibrant and complex field with researchers working from a wide variety of methodological and theoretical approaches. In recent years scholars have worked to establish a global history of masculinities and to integrate the study of gender into other stories about power and identity. Few scholars still believe in a male/female binary, and creative attempts are being made to transcend the either/or distinction between gender as grounded either in the body or in discourse. Zachary Doleshal's article shows that even while trying to transcend their local and national context, Czech men created an ideal-type that was uniquely East Central European. Similarly, Katalin Kis' research uncovers homophobia masquerading as tolerance that emerges directly out of the situation contemporary Hungarian men find themselves in. Finally, Marina Yusupova's contribution emphasizes how discourses about masculinity can emerge out of the lived realities of much earlier periods and are not always accurate representations of the challenges and opportunities available to men in the present.

Keywords: masculinities, Russia, Eastern Europe, gender, sexuality

The study of "men's places and practices in gender relations" (Connell, 1993: 601) as a scholarly discipline emerged in the mid-1970s, crystalizing during the 1990s around theoretical works by a handful of influential literary critics, sociologists, and historians, including Eve Sedgewick (1985), Raewyn Connell ([1995] 2005a), Michael Kimmel (1996), and George Mosse (1996). Scholars moved from thinking of masculinity as a psychological essence or as a sex role to treating it as a cultural discourse that may or may not have anything to do with men's bodies and sexual practices (Connell, 1993). No longer limited to the social sciences, the study of men and masculinities now includes theoretical, clinical, and practice-based research from a wide variety of disciplines (Cohen and Maurino, 2013). After a brief period of explosive growth, the study of men and masculinities has stabilized over the last decade with a steady stream of new studies appearing each year. A search for "Masculinity" or "Masculinities" in the Gender Watch database, for example, yields 1,087 books, dissertations, peer-reviewed articles, and working papers between 2001 and 2005 alone. That number increased to 1,439 between 2006 and 2010, and evened out at 1,302 between 2011 and May 2015. The field also boasts an impressive array of reputable journals such as *The Journal of Men's Studies* (1992-Present), *Men and Masculinities* (1999-Present), *The Journal of African American Men* (1999-2002), *The Psychology of Men and Masculinity* (2000-Present), *The Journal of Men, Masculinities, and Spirituality* (2007-Present), *Culture, Society, and Masculinities* (2009-Present), and *Masculinities: A Journal of Identity and Culture* (2014-Present).

Two developments deserve particular mention insofar as they reflect how decisively the field has impacted academia in general. The first is the extent to which the study of men and masculinities is no longer limited to white middle-class Americans. Connell complained in 1993 that overwhelmingly the academic "discourse on masculinity is constructed out of the lives of (at most) 5 percent of the world's population of men, in one culture-area, at one moment in history" (1993: 600). That is no longer true. Some areas are still better covered than others, of course, but careful research now exists on men and masculinities in the ancient, medieval, early modern, modern, and contemporary worlds, and on every corner of the globe. Connell (2005b) then worried in 2005 that the field was stuck in local studies instead of paying attention to global trends, flows, and inequalities. Thanks in part to her own work with Julian Wood on global business masculinities (Connell and Wood, 2005), this too has changed. Collected volumes such as *Dislocating Masculinity* (Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994) had already challenged the idea that individual gendered subjectivities and the male/female binary can be found in all societies. Approaches to globalization and transnationalism have evolved significantly since then, bringing with them useful insights about power relations in cross-cultural appropriation, the ability of migration and reverse migration to establish transnational communities, and emphasizing environmental factors in the establishment of geographical boundaries. A 2014 special issue of *Men and Masculinities* included studies dealing with comparative, transnational, and supranational frames (Hearn, 2014), and another of *Gender and*

History reminded us of the enormous influence industrial capitalism has had on structuring gender relationships around the globe over the past 200 years (Mitchell, Shibusawa, and Miescher, 2014).

The second major development in the field, which in a different context Dagmar Herzog (2009: 1287) has labelled an "intergrationalist" approach, concerns the extent to which scholars now recognize that almost any historical, political, or sociological study can be enriched by paying attention to how gender is being constructed and performed. Including discussions of masculinities within other stories has alerted us to the fact that not only are masculinities contingent on time, place, class, politics, religion, and personality, they also intersect with other identities and are more or less salient depending on the circumstances (Cohen and Marino, 2014). George Mosse's pioneering work on nationalism and sexuality (1985), for example, is so useful to think with because it emerged from his ongoing engagement with the study of fascism, and Ann Laura Stoler's *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (2002) is as much a history of Dutch racism and imperialism in Indonesia as it is a reflection on gendered power relations. It should be obvious after forty years of research on men and masculinities that one cannot separate gender from other stories about power and identity, and yet dismissive comments from colleagues at conferences or talks suggests that not everyone feels this way. More works that integrate gender analysis into other research agendas promise to enrich not only gender studies but academic scholarship as a whole.

Researchers have approached men and the construction of manhood from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives, and the contributions to this volume are no exception. Each author draws on very different types of sources and each reads them differently. Zachary Doleshal writes out of Business History, Katalin Kis grounds her study in Film Studies, and Marina Yusupova's work intersects with Criminology among other things. Doleshal focuses on the ability of management to dictate the masculinities of employees and to categorize people accordingly, whereas Kis' analysis assumes that viewers are able to creatively resist sexualized stereotypes presented in films, and Yusupova notes that class, education, biography, and relationships mediate how men appropriate the gendered ideals of the Russian criminal world. Doleshal's managers define masculinity through clothing and leisure activities, while Kis' filmmakers consider masculinity as a reflection of male agency and men's ability to control their relationships and destinies. In contrast, Yusupova's men relate to masculine ideals with a discursive distance that may have little relationship to their physical bodies or social power. Debates over embodiment versus discourse, performativity versus representation, or whether sexuality is a precondition of gender have wracked the field for several decades now (Whitehead, 2002: 8-44), but what Doleshal, Kis, and Yusupova show is that men are multifaceted and multilayered creatures whose relationships to masculinity demand interdisciplinary, intersectional analysis. No one approach can satisfactorily explain how or why men identify as men, and the contributions in this issue represent a cross-section of the different ways scholars have approached masculinities in Russia and East Central Europe.

Masculinities are, in Todd Reeser's (2010: 3) words, "unstable," because gender manifestations are often ambiguous, ironic, and pointed. Masculinities are also "inconsistent" and malleable; the fact that more men are taking on an increased role in childcare, for example, means that relations between men and women are continually being renegotiated in light of changing circumstances, not that there is some sort of new "crisis" in contemporary masculinities (Lengersdorf, 2014). The idea that a simple binary separates men from women is increasingly difficult to believe. Becky Francis (2012: 5) notes that "the gender binary ... is built on the delineation of attributes as male/masculine and female/feminine, in relation to Western enlightenment (masculinized) values. Hence characteristics valorised within this value system are attributed to the male Subject, and denigrated antitheses to these values are projected to the female Other". All three of the papers in this issue challenge that assumption, and with good reason.

Whereas for many years the field was torn between approaches that thought of gender in terms of representation and performance and those which insisted that bodies were connected to gender, recent scholars have been looking for innovative ways to move beyond this binary. Mikael Carleheden, for example, draws on communitarian philosophers such as Charles Taylor to overcome the poststructuralist conundrum that we are

products of discourse and therefore powerless to overcome our own socialization. He writes that,

> If we can develop a theory of the social where intersubjectivity plays at least some role, then we have opened an avenue which is neither linked to the subject-object model of classic liberalism, nor to the object-subject model of postmodernism. According to this third way, society can never be entirely understood as subject-less sociality. Participation – that is a subject-subject relation – is seen rather as one of the fundamental conditions that make sociality possible. ... [The] pre-established social world provides us with the symbolic material we use when we try to understand ourselves. Hence, through such narratives, for example narratives about our sexed body, we become persons. Gender is thus a part of our social or cultural situatedness (Carleheden, 2003: 57, 60).

A more creative approach comes from Becky Francis (2012: 4), who uses Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of monoglossia and heteroglossia to rethink how gender maps onto bodies. "For Bakhtin language is never static or fixed," she explains, "but is instead diverse, and inherently dialogic. Different meanings and readings constantly jostle in assertions or subversions as subjects use language in different ways. Hence, while at the macro-linguistic level there may appear to be stability (monoglossia), at the micro level there is plasticity, contradiction and resistance: heteroglossia". Applying this concept to gender studies, she (2012: 9) shows that whereas "gender monoglossia" assumes a direct relationship between the body and gender, heteroglossic practices allow for an infinite array of exceptions that nonetheless do not overturn the monoglossic convention because performances and interpretations of gender are always "positioned within, and informed by, diverse historic discourses". Despite their differences, both Carleheden and Francis insist that gender is contingent on the subjectivity of the individual as a barber, a Christian, or a sportsman, as well as upon time, place, and social position.

Time and Place

The theme of this special issue begs the question of whether there are masculinities that are specifically Russian or East Central European. There is no word for "gender" in Russian or in most East Central European languages, but this is not a reason to stop using it as an analytical category. Certain ways of thinking about and performing masculinity have thrived in the region while others remain hidden and unacknowledged. The idea that men should be autonomous individuals whose bodies and actions reflect a commonly-accepted and implicitly superior moral and aesthetic code is widespread in the region, while the idea that men should be defined as nurturers, or in terms of how they serve those who have power over them, has gained little traction despite the commitment of both fascism and state socialism to collective subjectivities. It is the differences rather than the similarities that stand out in these papers. Businessmen in interwar Czechoslovakia performed masculinity very differently to family men in twenty-first century Hungary or southeastern Russia. To a significant extent these divergences reflect the influence of local historical contexts in producing masculinities.

Should Russia and East Central Europe even be talked about in the same breath? Milan Kundera (1984: 35) famously defined Central Europe as "a culture or a fate." He wrote, "its' borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn with each new historical situation". The business world of interwar Czechoslovakia that Zachary Doleshal describes in this issue might have seemed peripheral from the perspective of London, Paris, or New York, but he notes that the Bat'a Shoe Company's international orientation pushed it to the very heart of global capitalist culture and shaped the corporate masculinities of its employees accordingly. Doleshal's article "'Only the Clean are Strong': The Bat'a Company's Project to Remake Masculinity in the Dřevnice Valley" provides us with an example of a company that remade local men precisely by trying to reimagine what it meant to be East Central European. Doleshal comments that Bat'a modeled his "internationalism" not on the ideal Austro-Hungarian man – for such a man did not exist – but on Henry Ford's ideal American worker. Raewyn Connell and Julien Wood (2005) have argued that what they call "transnational business masculinity" spread across the globe after the Second World War, but in the Bat'a Shoe Company, Doleshal has found an early example of Czechs experimenting with American ideals in the name of internationalism.

Internationalism was a popular slogan during the interwar period, providing the catalyst for peace movements, ecumenical movements, sporting associations, and a host of other initiatives

(Sluga, 2013). When Tomáš Bat'a (1876-1932), the owner of the Bat'a Shoe Company, spoke about internationalism, however, he meant Americanization in particular, for he saw America as the multiethnic melting pot par excellence (cf. De Grazia, 2005). Bat'a imposed strict standards of hygiene, dress, behavior, and temperance on his workers in order to replace what he saw as their substandard local habits with the "international" habits of the Americans. Sarah Steinbock-Pratt (2014) has observed that Filipino students adopted American fashions during the first half of the twentieth century in order to demonstrate that they were civilized moderns who no longer needed to be colonized. In much the same way, Doleshal argues, Bat'a believed that changing how Moravians dressed would allow them to transcend their national context and become competitive in a global marketplace. Austria-Hungary was indeed a multiethnic empire, but it was one where ethnicity was highly visible even though it did not always translate directly into political platforms (Sayer, 1998; King, 2002; Zahra, 2008). Bat'a considered his local Moravian employees to be "fat, drunk, and dirty," and worked to transform them into businessmen who looked and behaved like their American counterparts.

Produced by both global and national contexts, Bat'a's technologies of biopower were applied locally. As Doleshal notes, nationalists had been grooming Czech bodies and lifestyles through the Sokols for decades, and socialists established the Spartakiada for similar purposes after the First World War. The ideal of healthy, muscular men, temperate in their habits and patriarchs over their families, was shared by Bat'a, nationalists, and socialists alike (cf. Mosse, 1996; Kimmel, 1996). While nationalists shaped men in the name of the nation, Bat'a pursued a parallel agenda using the rhetoric of capitalism. Both were effectively seeking the same thing – to establish their dominance over as broad a field as possible through displays of strength and self-discipline. Bat'a sought to dominate two distinct arenas: the global shoe market and the Moravian town of Zlín. Americanized salesmen were the key to winning global markets, but biopower, exercised first during Bat'a's time as mayor of Zlín and then after his death by the company's Personnel Department, gave him and his colleagues control over the bodies and lives of thousands of people. As mayor, Bat'a introduced temperance leagues, established schools and sporting associations, and gave his workers advice on how to dress. The Personnel Department went much further, dictating who could live where, how many showers employees had each day, where children went to school and what they learned, and keeping married women out of the workforce. By taking Taylorism and the rationalization of management further than Ford ever had, Bat'a manufactured a form of business masculinity that was unique to Zlín, even if it was established with an international model in mind.

The operations of power that Doleshal describes were those of industrial capitalism, with its ability to commodify and alienate workers from the means of production. Capitalist masculinity limits men's options by forcing them to live in certain ways and subjecting them to corporate cultures, sporting injuries, and other stresses that reduce men's life expectancies, sometimes significantly (Sunderland, 2004). As Victoria Robinson (2010) notes, most men live repetitive, boring lives, and they perform masculinities within a very limited range of locations and activities. The Bat'a company's ability to produce residential communities structured around the workplace limited these options even more. Despite the company's economic success, Doleshal's story is thus a pessimistic one that turns Bat'a employees into the passive victims of an ambitious experiment in social engineering and submerged regional specificities under the bland, corporate image of the global businessman.

National Identity and Postsocialism

Kundera's Central Europe disappeared as a geographic entity once Churchill's iron curtain descended, surviving only in the dim cultural memory of a West that no longer thought about itself as a unified whole. Although the region was heavily influenced by Russian history and culture, Kundera (1984: 34) argued that in Central Europe, "on the eastern border of the West, ... Russia is seen not just as one more European power but as a singular civilization, an other civilization". How much has changed in the quarter of a century since the collapse of state socialism? Is Central Europe still defined by its troubled relationship to Russia? Not according to Katalin Kis' account of masculinities in Hungarian film in "Behind Straight Men's Back: Queer Encounters and the Epic Crisis of Straight Male Masculinity in Contemporary LGBTQ-Themed Hungarian Cinema."

Kis explores the curious fact that the majority of Hungarian films produced since 2000 that include LGBTQ characters have portrayed heterosexual men as victims. The dual focus on sexuality and male identity grounds Kis' analysis in embodied male performances rather than in abstract representation. Straight men are not just victims of queer men in these films, but also of their particular historical moment. Kis notes that Socialist-era Hungarian films portrayed gay men as tragic heroes, struggling against regimes that policed both their actions and their feelings. Gay men were to be pitied because they had no hope of winning, but there was also something admirable about their Sisyphic battles because at least they were resisting oppression – something that many straight men could not pride themselves on. Memories of the 1956 Uprising and the decade of reform that followed meant that any resistance to state socialism in Hungary was praiseworthy (Péter and Rady, 2008). But gay men became a joke in Hungarian cinema once the fall of the Hungarian People's Republic in 1989 made resistance to a democratic government seem frivolous and unnecessary. While LGBTQ-identified characters appeared much more often in films and on television, they were portrayed as ridiculous. Straight men were often "mistaken" as gay in comedy that Kis describes as "infantile" and "anachronistic."

Hegemonic masculinity does not have to be tough and muscular, and Elizabeth Heineman's (2001) discussion of the relationships between Nazis and their mothers shows that it has its tender side as well. Even college fraternities and men's sporting teams, which are famous for promoting hegemonic masculinities, allow for emotional intimacy and sometimes respect for women, gay men, and people of color (Anderson, 2009). Kis' research signals an important warning about optimistic studies that consider "inclusive masculinity" to be the norm. She shows that even when filmmakers are willing to tolerate gay men, they do so in half-hearted ways that undermine tolerance altogether. Sexual politics still matters because however "blind" we may be to sexualities, they still structure systemic inequalities for people who identify or are identified as LGBTQ (O'Neill, 2015).

No longer influenced by Soviet imperialism, contemporary Hungarian homophobia is a reaction to *Western* gender norms. As Gerald W. Creed (2011) argues about postsocialist Bulgaria, East Central European homophobia has emerged out of a complex assimilation and adaptation of Western capitalist ideology that frames what used to be acceptable homosocial practices as erotic and taboo. Assertions of masculinity in the region over the last hundred years have frequently been articulated in terms of Western, orientalist tropes characterizing the region as passive, backward, and despotic. Homophobic rhetoric can thus be read in part as an attempt to assert male dignity by disrespecting and abusing people whose masculinities are less popular or respectable. Western racism produces Eastern homophobia as East Central European men turn to hatred in order to deny their own disempowerment, a phenomenon made all the more obvious since the rise of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz Party to power, bringing with it nationalist rhetoric, xenophobic policies, censorship, and authoritarian practices (Lendvai, 2012).

Nationalists in a variety of contexts frequently identify their nations with the men who constitute them and with the masculine virtues they claim the nation embodies (Nagel, 2005). Nineteenth century Hungarian nationalism imagined the nation as a fraternal community of (noble)men who seduced women, children, and Others into their paternal embrace (Maxwell, 2015). In the nationalist imagination, therefore, fears about the nation were simultaneously concerns about the manhood of those who constituted it. As postsocialist Hungary struggled to define itself on its own terms – not as "post" something or as "east" of somewhere – Hungarian men worried that they might be mistaken as Other when in fact they – and by extension, the Hungarian nation – were the very definition of normalcy (Kovács, 2011). As László Kürti pointed out as early as 1991, these concerns became concrete when the democratic state relegated women to the status of second class citizens whose job was to sustain the nation by cooking food and raising children.

The more time passed after the 1989 revolution, the more Hungarian ideologues began worrying that no positive national identity was emerging, and the trope of the barren straight man appeared in Hungarian LGBTQ-themed cinema. Feminism and LGBTQ-rights movements entered Hungary together with the imposition of neo-liberal capitalism and the marginalization of Hungary as a minor economy within the European Union, linking

challenges to hegemonic masculinity with their economic disenfranchisement in the minds of many men (Ghodsee, 2004; Woodcock, 2004). When women's sexual liberal spread through Western Europe during the economically prosperous 1960s and 1970s, misogynists such as the British pornographer Paul Raymond complained that "as woman's public sensuality blossoms and spreads, so man's correspondingly withers and shrivels." The West German media charged that "the women's movement has reduced our horniness to zero" (Herzog, 2011: 165). State socialism meant that second-wave feminism by-passed East Central Europe as a social movement, however, allowing men in the region to ignore its implications until after the 1989 revolutions (Marsh, 2013: 190). The backlash against feminism during the 1990s was especially pronounced because it was coupled with a series of economic disappointments. Hungarians have faced increasing poverty over the past twenty years, with the 2008 financial crisis coming after over a decade of failed financial reforms and restructuring (Gorka, 2010). In a study of poverty-stricken Hungarian households in 2001-02, Éva Fodor (2006: 15) found that "one of the major gender differences in the experience of poverty is that men often find themselves in a gender crisis when they are too poor to function as successful breadwinners". It should come as no surprise that films produced during a period of economic hardship and nationalist insecurity might portray men as disempowered and vulnerable.

Contemporary insecurities also map onto much older concerns about the place of Hungary within the European imagination. Most of the films Kis discusses can be characterized as Loser Films, a genre which she says "maintains as its most characteristic tone an otherwise improbable mixture of self-irony and sentimentality embedded in an identity of self-acknowledged Eastern European 'smallness' and dispossession." Concern about being perceived as "backward" has plagued the region since at least the eighteenth century, and political rhetoric about a glorified East contrasted with a decadent and dangerous West has only increased in recent years (Rac, 2014). Rather than speaking in the terms of center-periphery that were popular during the 1970s, these films approach the problem of power relations in terms of hierarchy. Thinking of national identities and masculinities in hierarchical terms makes it each to equate the struggles faced by Hungarians as a national community dominated by European cultural and economic interests with those of a husband cuckolded by a gay artist. Hierarchy is performed as well as imposed, and positioning oneself or one's nation as subaltern has certain advantages. These films explain violence against women or homosexuals as an understandable reaction to disempowerment, for example. Male violence has often been interpreted as a product of postcolonialism (Morrell and Swart, 2005: 104-106), and attacking someone to make oneself feel better is excusable according to the logic of these films because straight men are victims too.

Abandoned Places of Empire

The common experience of being what Margaret McKenna calls "abandoned places of empire" (2005) links the stories Kis tells about Hungary with Marina Yusupova's Samaran men. The subjects in both articles wrestle with legacies of dispossession, degradation, and uncertainty about the future. In *How the Soviet Man was Unmade* (2008), Lilya Kaganovksy has argued that it was the everyday reality of living under state socialism, not its collapse, that emasculated and disempowered Russian men. As Yusupova shows in "Masculinity, Criminality, and Russian Men", Russian postsocialism gave birth to new forms of hegemonic masculinity that men performed in order to survive the chaos of the 1990s. Whereas the collapse of the People's Republic in Hungary meant the exodus of Russian troops and the establishment of a stable parliamentary democracy, in Russia Boris Yeltsin's revolution heralded in a period of political, economic, and social instability. As street gangs proliferated and the informal economy became the norm, Russians developed new forms of morality and personhood appropriate to the new era (McCann, 2004; Zigon, 2010). Vadim Volkov (2002) and Svetlana Stephenson (2011) in particular have described how widespread street violence was in Russia between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s, when roughly one in three male teenagers were gang members. Stephenson argues that these gangs and their moral codes are becoming a thing of the past as the state reestablishes its authority (2011: 341), but Yusupova calls our attention to the fact that in 2013 many Russian men still refer to criminal quasi-law (*poniatiia*) or "lad's rules" (*patsanskie pravila*) when discussing masculinity. As Pierre Bourdieu argues, "it is only after a formidable collective labour of diffuse

and continuous socialization that the distinctive identities instituted by the cultural arbitrary are embodied in habitus" (2001: 23). Masculinities are often belated, therefore, remnants or ghosts of earlier hierarchies of power that no longer quite reflect the lived realities encountered by most men in their day to day lives (Buchbinder, 2013: 177). Masculinities in contemporary Russia draw on criminal codes developed during the 1990s and preserved today in men's prisons, but they also perpetuate systems of domination from that era as men behave in ways that they consider appropriate for "real men" to act. It is also worth asking to what extent these vestiges from the 1990s are actually products of Putin's Russia, in which people who identity or are identified as LGBTQ are heavily persecuted, and nationalist and pro-nativist discourses have replaced liberalism in the public sphere.

The extent to which the masculinities Yusupova describes are products of the post-Soviet transition in European Russia becomes evident from her fascinating discussion of Russian homophobia. Whereas Michael Kimmel (1994: 119) argues that American homophobia is rooted in "the fear of being seen as a sissy," Yusupova suggests that homophobia in Russia is associated much more strongly with a fear of homosexual experiences because of the ways in which Russian governments criminalized, medicalized, and marked male-to-male sex acts throughout the twentieth century. A long history of Russian men being the objects of violence and persecution because others identified them as gay also means that being labelled a "fag" or a "rooster" (a man who takes the passive role in the sex act) has serious and long term consequences for Russian men. "Once converted there is no way back," Yusupova writes. In prison "a rooster becomes the target of extreme daily violence for the rest of his time in prison." Extrapolating this discourse outside of the prison environment, one of her informants stated that "I will not kill them [gays], but I don't want to have anything to do with them." Whereas the Hungarian experience of liberalism has led to a somewhat forced toleration of homosexuality in LGBTQ-themed films, Russian attitudes towards homo-, trans-, and bisexuality are much more extreme because of the specific historical conditions in which they were produced.

While explaining why Russian men embrace hegemonic masculinities, Yusupova's research highlights some of the costs that men face for doing so. While adopting criminal discourses might make them better men, it also marks them as people who are marginalized socially and live outside the law. Fighting might make one a man, but one can get arrested or killed in fights as well. Similarly, while abusing and excluding women works inside male prisons, it can isolate men who work in environments dominated by women or whose households are run by matriarchs. It is tempting to imagine that Russian men could refuse to define themselves in the terms of hegemonic masculinity, but this would involve renouncing their claims to power and privilege, which is something that many men are reticent to do within an uncertain world.

No unified picture of a generic Russian and East European masculinity emerges from these three articles. Rather, we see men grappling with the cultural and ideological tools available to them as they attempt to establish themselves as respectable individuals. Some of these tools – such as patriarchy, homophobia, or slander – are common to all three countries being studied, while others – such as prison discourses or the importance of the right footwear – are unique to their times and places. As they are in many other places around the world, masculinities in this region are slippery, intangible, but breathtakingly powerful.

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