

Introduction



Figure 1: An Azerbaijani postage stamp. The caption reads: “The Turkish national team won the bronze medal in the 2002 World Football Championship” (source: Mirzoyev 2002).

This 2002 Azerbaijani postage stamp (Fig. 1) depicts the Turkish men’s national football team in the center of a crowded stadium during that year’s World Cup. While Turkey finished third, the Azerbaijani team bowed out in the preliminaries. Yet here, the imposition of the Azerbaijani flag in the top left insists on this nation-state’s role in Turkey’s sporting success. Men’s football emerges as a thread inciting and legitimizing an alliance between the two nations and enabling the national fantasy of Azerbaijan’s brilliance in international sport events.

The sight of the stamp evokes, first, the joys of Azerbaijani nationalism. The bodies depicted on the stamp exemplify the ideal of Azerbaijani male bodies and these bodies perform successfully on an international stage. Bared thighs uncovering flexed muscles, extended arms and spread legs both demonstrate bodily tension and physical effort and signal virility and superiority – core markers of “a real man in Azerbaijan” (Abubekirova, 2019; see also Mahmudova, 2017). Thus and second, the stamp manifests

a “hegemonic masculinity” (Nagel, 1998: 247) of the Azerbaijani nation. Through the portrayal of male adult bodies in action and the World Cup competition itself as a masculinist space, the stamp produces a dominant representation of Azerbaijani national feelings of joy – feelings that promise a shared positive experience of national belonging and origin while at the same time remaining incomplete, inaccessible and partially at risk.

While the stamp is just one example illustrating the “masculinization of nationalism” (Dowler, 1998: 162) in Azerbaijan, the national enjoyment it seeks to evoke rests on gendered, sexist, racist and classed violence against bodies beyond idealized body norms. For example: “a ‘real man’ should be ‘homophobic, see women as a sexual object, necessarily love sports, use strength to solve problems and have sex with as many women as possible’” (Gulnara Mehdiyeva quoted in Abubekirova, 2019). Ethnically non-Azeri men, trans men, men who have sex with men or men who choose to groom themselves (Mehdizade and Babazade, 2019) remain invisible to official representations of national male bodies; while men, and also women, who openly oppose dominant gender norms and compulsory heterosexuality in Azerbaijan are often confronted with disapproval, hate crimes (Nəfəs, 2018) or imprisonment (Shahnazaryan et al., 2016).

Building on these aforementioned examples, I argue that national enjoyment is an inevitable manifestation of sexist, gendered, racist and classed nationalisms. For the often inarticulate and seemingly innocent installations of national joy in everyday life through which nationalisms reproduce themselves, reveal the unequal power relations upon which the nation is built and through which nationalisms legitimize themselves. First, only certain bodies promise national joy. At the same time, and second, passing as an ideally gendered, sexualized and racialized body, and feeling connected to representations of shared national joy, causes constant physical, emotional and economical costs.

The aim of this paper is to develop a feminist geographic critique of national enjoyment and to rethink the ways in which geographers have investigated how enjoyment and nationalism interact (Kingsbury, 2011b; Kong and Yeoh, 1997; Proudfoot, 2010). Specifically, I attend to spaces and experiences of the “national intimate” (Faria, 2014: 319), such as the ideal female body and heterosexual marriage in contrast to much conventional research on national enjoyment that explores masculinist spaces and practices such as international sport events. Inspired by feminist geographic work on joy (Kern et al., 2014) and feminist political geographic scholarship on the relationships between emotions and nationalisms (Nast, 2000; Wilkinson, 2017), I investigate the ambiguous modes of national enjoyment.

In asking about the bodies who get to (not) enjoy the nation, and at whose and what costs feelings of national enjoyment become possible, I mobilize Ahmed’s (2014: 225) figure of the feminist killjoy:

From the figure of the killjoy, we learn more about the sociality of emotion. It is not simply that feelings pass from one body to another. [...] Some feelings might not pass if we do not agree with them (which is not to say that feelings do not pass around that do not have our agreement). I might be enraged by your happiness, if I feel it is inappropriate, or I might,

in feeling happy, avoid you, in fear your sadness would get in the way of my happiness. The means by which emotions flow or are blocked take us back to fundamental social and political questions about how spaces are organised around certain bodies. If certain bodies come first, then their happiness comes first.

The figure of the killjoy teaches me about the ways in which national enjoyment moves between different bodies, connecting and disconnecting them. The killjoy helps me to expose the power relations that enable shared emotion, such as feeling joyful about a men's national football team victory, by asking: who feels joy and who *can* feel joyful about a national team's victory? What kinds of emotional and body work are required by whom to allow shared national feelings to come into being?

The killjoy also unmasks how emotions congregate in different ways around different bodies, practices and spaces. The killjoy asks: whose nation and which nation is (not) coming into being through experiencing joy in sporting and physical success? How does the privileging of certain feelings in examining national enjoyment (e.g. belonging), at the cost of other emotional experiences (e.g. insecurity), help to understand the ways in which power operates through nationalism?

I begin by defining the terms 'joy' and 'enjoyment' in relation to the national and by putting feminist geographic readings of joy into a conversation with psychoanalytic geographers' work on national enjoyment. I then take inspiration from feminist political geographic work on nationalism and the national intimate to unmask the power relations that enable and legitimize national sentiments, but often remain invisible. Drawing on ethnographic research in Azerbaijan conducted between 2012 and 2014, I investigate two sites of national enjoyment: I first attend to the ideal female body as the core site for national enjoyment. Here, I reveal people's often unarticulated practices and feelings in embodying and performing national ideals of femininity, to demonstrate how national enjoyment depends on gendering, sexualizing and racializing women's bodies. In a second step, I examine heterosexual marriage. I unravel the emotional and economic costs at stake in promising shared feelings of national joy from the process of getting heterosexually married. The analysis shows that national enjoyment depends on people's willingness and capacities to invest emotionally and economically in the right national objects – such as heterosexual marriage. In doing so, I contribute to geographers' understanding of the cruelty of nationalisms. The research reveals how national enjoyment is disruptive and ambiguous for differently positioned bodies.

Geographies of joy and national enjoyment

Joy is often understood as a positive bodily experience, a desired emotion. The online *Oxford English Dictionary* (2019b), for example, defines joy as a "vivid emotion" and a "pleasurable state or condition" related to well-being, satisfaction, delight and happiness. My feminist geographic understanding of joy follows Ahmed's (2010, 2014) spatial conceptualization of emotions. For Ahmed (2014), emotions circulate between

different bodies, objects and spaces. Rather than residing in individual bodies, emotions position different bodies, objects and spaces towards and away from each other, detaching and attaching them. In doing so, emotions, such as joy, are both embodied and spatial (Kern et al., 2014). Through encounters between different bodies and objects, emotions enable and disable spaces, as “it is through emotions, or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made” (Ahmed, 2014: 10).

Ahmed’s focus on the constitutive power of emotions in generating social spaces and in shaping relations between different bodies and objects makes clear that bodies, objects or places are not *per se* enjoyable, nor do they naturally cause joy. Rather, joy, for example as an experience of happiness, arises in and through encounters and relationships between different bodies, objects and spaces. Joyful attachments are learned or socially trained. Affirmation, when “you find the right things pleasing” (Ahmed, 2010: 212), or conversely, denial, when you find the wrong things pleasing, support the development of joyful attachments to some bodies, objects and spaces and not to others. To name one example: “the family as a happy object” (Ahmed, 2010: 21 ff.) is anything but self-evident. Yet the globally circulating idea of a promising connection between happiness, marriage and childbirth locates and normalizes joy in the heteronormative and genetically related family. Intimate spaces of this family, in turn, are often the target for nation-building projects (Caluya, 2011).

Drawing on Ahmed and others, feminist, queer and critical race scholars have begun to investigate the everyday geographies of joy (Dillard, 2019; Simmons, 2018) and related experiences, such as comfort (Johnson, 2017; Lane, 2015) or love (Morrison et al., 2013; Salih, 2017). This scholarship highlights the ways in which the power of joy to organize bodies and objects across space and time depends on its inherent ambiguity. Positively and thus joyfully connotated experiences of encounters between different bodies and objects often surface along with “feelings of guilt, shame and inadequacy” (Bondi, 2005: 239). Indeed, as Kern et al. (2014: 842) observe:

It is difficult to distil joy out of our experiences as a singular, clear, or unambiguous feeling. Rather, what we recognized as joy emerged as a kind of excess from what we came to call a turbulent set of conditions. These involved complex, messy, volatile interactions, and shifts among a variety of feelings, such as relief, celebration, contentment, gratitude, wonder, surprise, happiness, and confidence as well as fear, anxiety, anger, insecurity, disappointment, embarrassment, smugness, and dread.

In order to develop a feminist geographic critique of national enjoyment, I take two core ideas from centering joy as an ambiguous and space-effective experience. First, looking for comfort and identifying joy in bodies and practices constituting the national “might also mean being aware of one’s discomfort” (Johnson, 2017: 279) and of bodies’ unhappiness. Second, joy unfolds, moves bodies, takes place and makes space in and through everyday practices (Kern et al., 2014; Moss et al., 2018; Simmons, 2018).

The term ‘enjoyment’ becomes relevant in this connection of joy to different bodies, objects or places. While joy – the “vivid emotion” and “pleasurable state”

(*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2019b) – describes, first and foremost, a feeling or condition in and of itself, the online *OED* (2019a) defines enjoyment in relation to an object, to “something which gives pleasure”. If this “something” means the idea or the felt experience of a nation, enjoyment turns into a political force, into national enjoyment. National enjoyment then means the alignment of bodies that “are happily affected by the objects that are supposed to cause happiness” (Ahmed, 2010: 66): national objects supposed to cause national happiness.

In this paper I investigate two objects that are supposed to cause national happiness: gendered, sexualized, racialized and classed body ideals, and heterosexual marriage. Analyzing these objects and the conditions under which different people have access to national enjoyment “contribute[s] to understanding the contradictory experiences of deep, intimate emotional attachments” (Kern et al., 2014: 838), such as attachments to what becomes referred to as the national.

Psychoanalytic geographic scholarship makes important contributions to understanding these seemingly irreconcilable experiences of national feeling. Ranging in its analyses from the United States Army’s recruitment practices in schools (Shaw et al., 2014) to football fans during the World Cup (Kingsbury, 2011b; Proudfoot, 2010), psychoanalytic geography underlines that nationalism is enjoyable because it promises identity and belonging. “Enjoyment is what gels people together as it bonds the social and the psychological,” contends Kingsbury (2011b: 726), who has especially advanced the notion of enjoyment as a geographical factor (Kingsbury, 2011a). He has demonstrated how a nation, such as Jamaica, comes into being through people’s mundane “surplus enjoyment generated by the practices of singing, eating, dancing, worshipping, consuming, working, and so on” (Kingsbury, 2011a: 659). Kingsbury conceptualizes enjoyment not as a personal feeling of joy but as a social relation in the form of “an obdurate yet fleeting, exquisite yet threatening, agonizing pleasure” (*ibid.*: 651). Kingsbury (2008, 2011a) underlines the centrality of enjoyment to an understanding of people’s continuing emotional investment in exploitative and unjust social relations for the sake of the nation.

At the same time, psychoanalytic geographic studies often address certain bodies, feelings, practices and spaces more than others. While Kingsbury’s (2011b) and Proudfoot’s (2010) intriguing studies of national enjoyment in the context of celebrating the Men’s Football World Cup 2006 on Vancouver’s Commercial Drive, for example, attend to different bodies’ emotional and embodied responses, they analyze national enjoyment by attending primarily to male bodies and masculinist practices. They investigate people’s national enjoyment in male-dominated spaces such as crowded streets and bars. Research informants’ “torsos were bared and painted in the tri-color of the Italian flag” (Proudfoot, 2010: 511); the informants danced on top of cars, or wore Roman Gladiator costumes (Kingsbury, 2011b: 725–726). The research of Kingsbury and Proudfoot gives voice to a variety of male and a few female Vancouver-based football fans of European, Latin American, African and Indian descent. Yet questions about who might have felt unsafe or uncomfortable attending the public celebration of the World Cup, or about what kinds of (invisible) labor and/or emotional work were necessary for people on the street and in the bars to be exuberant and cheerful, remain unanswered.

Studies that explore the ways in which nationalism functions through enjoyment often take the masculinity, whiteness (in terms of skin color and/or class privilege) and heteronormativity of national enjoyment for granted. Overlooking differently positioned bodies' experiences of national enjoyment, though, conceals central power relations in reproducing nationalisms.

Killing national enjoyment: feminist political geographic interventions

Feminist scholarship and feminist political geographies unmask nationalism's inherent masculinist, heterosexist and racist logics, exposing the gendered, racist, sexist and classed power asymmetries that substantiate nation-building projects (McClintock, 1995; Nast, 1998; Radcliffe, 1996; Sharp, 1996; Stoler, 1992). Enloe argues that nationalism springs "from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope" (2014: 93). Prevailing ideas of *the Nation* turn female bodies into mothers instead of warriors in order to fulfill their reproductive – and not protective – duties for the national community (Dowler, 1998). And yet women – differently classed, racialized and sexualized – not only become the symbolic figure of the nation but also take part in maintaining national boundaries, propagating national ideologies and restating national and ethnic differences (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989). Women reproduce national bodies and cultivate national memories; they send "sons and husbands to war, wash and iron their uniforms, and remain behind to maintain the home front" (Mayer, 2012: 37). Nationalist narratives, however, often naturalize heterosexualized and gendered bodies. "Nationalism is emotively gendered, relying on a traditional gender regime that constructs women/land as objects to be saved and young men as patriotic, as heroes of the past struggle and as builders of a future [nation]" (Faria, 2013: 97).

Nationalist sentiments and politics are always already gendered, racist, sexist and classed, as when certain ways of performing straightness in a specific national context, such as Hindu India, are privileged over others (Puar, 2001), or when the fictional movie character of a white, heterosexual, female working-class recruit serves to promote United States patriotism and militarism (Cowen, 2004). Feminist work on nations and nationalism thus not only attends to the bodies that constitute nations (Salih, 2017); feminist geographies also scrutinize ways in which these bodies experience national belonging or alienation differently, precisely because power relations position and mark subjects in unequal ways (see Tolia-Kelly, 2010).

Feminist geographic work on the "national intimate" (Faria, 2014: 319) centers the marginalized subjects and spaces of nationalism, and understands nationalism as an *always* felt, often mundane experience and practice. To think intimacy with Ahmed, as a "proximity to somebody in particular, [...] where just a glance can remind you of an experience you shared" (Antwi et al., 2013: 113), means that the national intimate unfolds through encounters that activate bodily histories of becoming. This dismantles "political narratives [that] link women's bodies to the fate of territory and community,

but the day-to-day reality of getting by [...] and caring for the body shape how these strategies materialize on the ground” (Smith, 2012: 1524). Attending to intimate relations also enables criticism of the ways in which the often racist heterosexual family home becomes emblematic for a secure nation (Caluya, 2011). Lastly, the abstract and disembodied idea of the imagined national community rests on embodied and felt experiences of sharing and (dis)connecting, “where the most private and introspective experiences of embodied self meet with the multiscale processes for constructing social [national] identities” (Wright, 2010: 56).

In the opening example, bared thighs and flexed muscles evoke national intimacy through the connection between the bodies of athletes and fantasies of national victory in an international football championship. Likewise, the national intimate materializes through the felt experiences of differently positioned bodies with regard to compulsory heterosexuality in Azerbaijan. Power dynamics shape encounters between bodies and objects, allowing some bodies to feel closer and at ease with certain national representations, practices and places while others experience distance and unease. Feminist geographic scholarship unmasks power relations that enable and legitimize national sentiments but that often remain invisible and attends to the “connectedness and blending of spaces and scales within people’s lived, embodied and emotional experiences” (Feminist Geographies of Intimacy Course Handbook 2017, cited in Burke et al., 2017: 662).

Intimate spaces of experiencing the nation conflate categories of public and private or formal and informal and enable encounters between differently racialized, sexualized, gendered and classed bodies and objects. Bodily histories, contacts and mobility embed and shape experiences of national belonging when a veiled Muslim woman, celebrating a national holiday on a street in Istanbul, is prevented from waving a flag (Gökarıksel and Secor, 2015), or when the heteronormative and patriarchal United Kingdom nation feels unaccommodating for queer bodies and sex workers (Hubbard, 2001). Acknowledging that “home, identity, and multi-scale notions of belonging are interlaced” (Brickell, 2014: 525–526) helps to show how the promotion of intimacy can serve to maintain discrimination against national minority groups (Fortier, 2007). Intimate experiences of a shared belonging and/or invocation, however, can also enliven new spaces for national identification. Hawthorne (2017: 168) shows in the case of Black Italy that “young black Italians construct a future for themselves in Italy, a future in which their existence will no longer be confined to the realm of *fantascienza*, of the unthinkable.”

Feminist, queer and critical race scholars demonstrate that gendered, racist, sexist and classed *fantasies* of the homogenous nation, consisting of white (in terms of skin phenotype and/or class), heteronormative and (upper-)middle-class bodies, circulate around the globe (McClintock, 1995). Puar unmasks this global trend of national fantasies as an “ascendancy of whiteness”; in the case of the homo-national United States, for example, “whiteness [becomes] the queer norm and straightness [the] racial norm” (Puar, 2007: xxiv). The white nuclear family image turns into the core constituent of these “national imaginaries” (Hage, 1996), with “whiteness symbolically embodying a

(nonincestuous) purity set up structurally in need of protection, geographically and bodily, from incestuous blackness and nonpurity” (Nast, 2000: 218).

However, as in the opening example I ask with regard to the stamp, who can enjoy national fantasies turning the abstract idea of national belonging into a tangible object of desire? Some bodies’ enjoyment is privileged over other bodies’ enjoyment, as it is easier to enjoy the nation for white, heterosexual bodies than for non-white queer bodies, and “numerous conscious practices and disciplinary regimes [...] work to inform everyday socio-spatialities with heterosexualized racism” (Nast, 1998: 196). Hegemonic fantasies of the white hetero/homo-normative nation also point to experiences of the nation that produce and legitimate anxieties. After all, “the grip of the fantasy in structuring reality is an emotional grip” (Laketa, 2019: 159), be these emotions joy, affirmation or insecurity.

Intimate identity politics in post-Soviet Azerbaijan

Azerbaijan matters as an interesting case in which to explore national enjoyment since it is influenced at once by repercussions from its imperial and colonial past and by nationalist fervor in its everyday life. Cultural theorist Tlostanova (2012: 141) describes the current processes of “de-Sovietization” as follows:

Postsocialist, post-colonial and postimperial overtones constantly intersect and communicate in the complex imaginary of the ex-Soviet space, particularly in the conditions of the new massive void it has become, leading as much to nostalgia and recycled imperial and nationalist myths as to meaningful decolonial and de-Sovietized resistance and, eventually, re-existence.

A dominant “recycled” nationalist pattern in current-day Azerbaijan is, for example, “socialist paternalism” (Verdery, 1996: 63), when state authorities configure the independent nation state as a patriarchal nuclear family. In Azerbaijan, the leadership has installed former president Heydar Aliyev – who died in 2003 and has been succeeded by his son and incumbent president, Ilham Aliyev – as father figure. The focus on kinship justifies the continued father-worship. For example, a major public holiday, the so-called *Gül Bayramı* [Flower Holiday], celebrated annually on May 10, Heydar Aliyev’s birthday, is staged as a joyful celebration of the father. Yet, most people are not joyfully attached to the celebration of *Gül Bayramı*. Rather, research partners told me that they visit this day’s ostentatious flower arrangements from a sense of duty. People’s enjoyment of the flower arrangements and the free entertainment is paired with sentiments of despair and resignation about the autocratic leadership. Through spending most of the research time in intimate spaces of the family, I also realized that national joy often unfolds beyond expected forms of public national enjoyment. The overflow of flowers, the celebratory mood and the opportunities for entertainment on May 10 often disguise bodily histories of loss or injustice and experiences of pain or fear implicated in the celebrations.

I first got interested in people's everyday experiences in post-Soviet Azerbaijan through having inherited personal family stories of struggles against Soviet powers in the periphery of the Soviet Empire, in East Germany. I began periodically living and working in Azerbaijan's capital city, Baku, in 2007, and then between 2010 and 2011 in the country's second largest city, Ganja. While my positionality – problematically privileged through globally circulating white supremacy, as an unmarried, heterosexual, child-free, able-bodied, straight-sized young woman lecturer and researcher from Western Europe – enabled participation in intimate and often feminized spaces of everyday family lives, it also put me in touch with other transnationally placed young people and researchers. The people with whom I surrounded myself in Azerbaijan resembled the people with whom I have surrounded myself (and still do) at other places around the globe – mainly middle- and working-class, often university-educated people, aged between 18 and 57, and children.

The material for this article stems from eight months of ethnographic research between 2012 and 2014, including interviews and participant observation. I conducted 42 semi-structured interviews with social scientists, politicians, youth activists, NGO representatives, artists, journalists, entrepreneurs, teachers and representatives of faith communities. I lived with three different middle-class families in Baku and Ganja and participated in the families' everyday life and meeting their friends and relatives. I participated in celebration and commemoration events such as on public holidays and at private wedding ceremonies. I documented experiences in a field diary and through audio-recording and photography. I recruited the more than 60 participants for all the research activities through personal relations, family networks and NGO and youth activist networks. During 2012 and 2014, I returned to Baku and Ganja four times for one- to four-months long research stays and thus met most of the research partners several times, either at their home, work space, at a café or in a park. These research encounters turned me at times, in conversations with different people, into an emotionally covered researcher, an interested bystander or an empathetic friend. The majority of research partners identified as Azeris¹, one family identified as Lezgi, and a few research partners as Russian or Talysh. I analyzed the data using MaxQDA using inductive and deductive coding procedures.

The critical analysis of the different embodied experiences of national enjoyment and its physical, emotional and economic costs is made possible only through this kind of ethnographic research yielding rich and situated data. I follow Wimark, Lewis and Caretta in asserting that “in order to understand knowledge production in the field, it is vital to also understand the biographical, historical and social trajectories of the multiple individuals involved in fieldwork” (2017: 391). Understanding the power dynamics sustaining nationalism requires substantial time in which to engage, reflect, fail, learn and care, to allow relationships to grow.

Sites of national enjoyment I: the ideal female body

With her kindness and humanism, she elevates the name of Azerbaijan throughout the world, and by her example she demonstrates to the world a modern Azerbaijani woman – beauty, unlimited love for those in need of help and care, tolerance, humanity (Mammadov, 2019).

Seymur Mammadov, director of a pro-governmental think-tank, recently described the achievements of Mehriban Aliyeva in a blog post. Aliyeva – born in 1946, PhD holder, and, among many other things, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, Vice-president of the Republic of Azerbaijan, leader of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, Member of Parliament, mother, grandmother, and wife to incumbent president Ilham Aliyev – embodies the ideal of the Azerbaijani woman like no other. She hones the desired image of Azeri femininity by being everything at once: beautiful, educated, enduring, self-sacrificing, docile, subservient, hospitable and delicate (see Tohidi, 2000). Through “elevat[ing] the name of Azerbaijan throughout the world”, honoring and cultivating what “demarcate[s] Azeris from ‘others’” (Tohidi, 2000: 24–25), she brings joy to the idea and the felt experience of the Azerbaijani nation. As an “ambassador of beauty” (‘Lady’ Mail.ru, 2018) from Azerbaijan to the world, and from the world to Azerbaijan, her performance as the perfect Azeri and Azerbaijani woman, literally as Azerbaijan’s first woman, blends national politics, national enjoyment and desired femininity.

Mehriban Aliyeva is one among several first ladies celebrated as simultaneously a fashion icon, a politician and the personification of modernity in a Muslim-majority context. For example, Queen Rania and Asma al-Assad, first ladies of Jordan and Syria respectively, have been portrayed “as being modern, liberated, and empowered” (Sukarieh, 2015: 578). Yet, in contrast to both Queen Rania and Asma al-Assad, “iconic images of the ideal modern Arab and Muslim woman” (ibid.: 579), Aliyeva’s activities focus on Azerbaijan and target Azerbaijani people, rather than, for example, women of post-Soviet spaces in general (Esbey, 2015).

Mehriban Aliyeva’s public image signals the centrality of gendered, racialized, classed and sexualized bodies and the accompanying dominant ideals of female beauty for the national enjoyment of post-Soviet Azerbaijan. By presenting and performing female beauty as a combination of Western fashion and style and Muslim modesty and virtue, Aliyeva cares for the nation by being beautiful (see Najafizadeh, 2012). Indeed, she brings joy to the nation through physical beauty and that of character. Her shiny, straight long hair, her well-groomed appearance, her slender body and her elegant way of dressing up demonstrate glamor and the promise of the middle class. Her ideal female body takes center-stage for inciting national joy in Azerbaijan.

For many young women in Azerbaijan, beauty, fashion and self-care become a key path to the promised participation in the up-and-coming and growing middle class (Tohidi, 1996, 2000; for a similar example from South Sudan see Faria, 2014). This is mainly also because beauty is considered a guarantor to make a good match on the heterosexual marriage market, as Sevil² (conversation on 9 February 2014), a Baku-based, 30-year-old English-language editor, tells me:

With her [that of Aliyeva] behavior, she shows that much attention needs to be put on beauty, on your outfit. Because when you are beautiful, you can marry a rich person.

In our discussion of beauty standards in Azerbaijan, Sevil soon refers to Mehriban Aliyeva. She lists the bodily labor necessary to meet Aliyeva's standards: hair care, make-up, clothing, perhaps undergoing cosmetic surgery. Indeed, Sevil herself is considering a nose operation, a widespread form of cosmetic surgery among middle-class women in Azerbaijan. The joy promised by being able to join the group of beautiful and desired middle-class Azerbaijani women thus has different costs: the bodily costs that arise not only from "symbolic self-whitening" (Tlostanova, 2012: 135) but also from visceral self-whitening (see Suleymani, 2019); the economic costs for the consumption of cosmetic surgery, branded clothing and make-up; and the emotional costs of fulfilling these prevailing beauty ideals and gendered and sexualized expectations of national bodies.

The failure to perform Azerbaijani femininity, for the joys of the nation, often legitimizes misogyny and the denial of membership in the national community, as Azad's story illustrates (conversation on 17 July 2012):

With my wife, for example, we went to Turkey. It was her first time in Turkey. She was shocked when she saw veiled women smoking cigarettes. It's okay to smoke in Turkey. In Azerbaijan, only prostitutes smoke. But, even veiled women? Veiled women are considered to have, let's say, moral values [...]. Cigarettes are considered to be immoral. So, how can a veiled woman who does *namaz*³ smoke cigarettes? For my wife, it didn't make sense because for her these women smoking cigarettes are whores. My wife doesn't even smoke shisha, because it's considered – hwhuhff [he puckers his lips and draws in air] – to make smoke in the same way as with cigarettes. She doesn't want to make these kinds of associations [...]. A modern woman, a conservative woman in Azerbaijan would not smoke.

Azad, a Baku-based political scientist in his early forties, recalls a popular narrative about Azerbaijani women and their lifestyle choices that ties smoking to female prostitution and women's immorality. He invokes the figure of the prostitute – deviant and other by way of her smoking – to define Azerbaijani nationalism and the "good citizen" through "questions of sexual morality" (Hubbard, 2001: 53). Contrasting women not smoking in Azerbaijan with women smoking in Turkey makes this national narrative about Azerbaijani womanhood enjoyable. His differentiation asserts the prevailing national fantasy of the Azeri woman full of purity, respectability and obsequiousness. In fact, the fantasized Azeri woman evokes joy through her uniqueness. She differs from the Turkish woman, who – akin to the Azeri woman – is Muslim and emancipated, yet morally controversial, as Azad makes explicit by referencing veiled Turkish women and their alleged immorality. Smoking excludes a woman from national membership in Azerbaijan.

Hence the enjoyment of Azerbaijani womanhood and, in consequence, Azerbaijani nationalism depends on gendering, sexualizing and racialising women's bodies. Since "cigarette-smoking is a highly masculinised activity in Azerbaijan" (Heyat, 2002: 158), the equation of smoking with immorality applies only to women. Following Azad's story, immorality, the threat to national joy, becomes most tangible through the figure of the smoking Turkish woman and the smoking sex worker. Through smoking, female sex workers, who are mainly poor and/or women with a non-Azeri ethnic background, become unhealthy, distasteful outsiders in relation to the national community (Tan, 2012). Moreover, by smoking they deprive the national community of its joys. Turkish women, sex workers and smoking women become "illegitimate others" (Ahmed, 2014: 108) as they "are shaming by proxy: they do not approximate the form of the good citizen" (ibid.). The non-smoking ethnic Azeri woman is turned into the only possible female body promising national enjoyment.

Arguably, Azad's equation of smoking women with sex workers and Turkish women originates in the Russian colonization of the Caucasus. The idea of the pure, sexually unavailable and pious middle-class Azeri woman, as opposed to the impure and sexually available European woman and/or modern Russian woman and/or the local poor woman, characterizes colonial resistance up to the present day, since

what is at work here is a peculiar reversal of roles and projection of negative gender characteristics onto the Europeans and Russians [...] a way of positive marking of the native morality as opposed to the alien new one (Tlostanova, 2010: 82).

Following the classed and racist logic of this form of colonial resistance in Azerbaijan, only certain women, differentiated by class, ethnicity and sexuality counteract the ideal of Azeri femininity by smoking. For ethnic Azeri and middle-class women, smoking can, on the contrary, become "a sign of ultra-modernity" (Heyat, 2002: 158).

The examples of female bodies' beauty standards and female smoking in Azerbaijan demonstrate that ethnically, sexually and class-privileged women in Azerbaijan have the choice if and how to embody idealized femininity for national enjoyment. Or, to put it with the figure of the killjoy: if certain sexualized, racialized and classed women come first, then their national belonging comes first. At the same time, the non-Azeri, non-middle-class women and the ones who not adhere to heteronormativity are "rejected in order to preserve [national] happiness" (Ahmed, 2010: 98).

Sites of national enjoyment II: heterosexual marriage



Figure 2: At a heterosexual wedding in April 2011 in Ganja. A male waiter waves the Azerbaijani national flag above the head of the bride (right) and one of her cousins (left), posing for pictures behind the wedding altar (source: author, 2011).

Arguably, a heterosexual wedding is the most important event that creates ideal national bodies (see Mahmudova, 2017). Heterosexual marriage shows not only ideal gender, class and sexuality performances on the part of women and men, but also the centrality of the nuclear family as dominant social form. The heterosexual marriage of one's own child marks the successful completion of parenthood, or, as unmarried Sevil (conversation on 9 February 2014) puts it:

It is good to marry, because then parents have accomplished their tasks.
[...] Unmarried people are not viewed as complete people.

At the same time, weddings that usually involve several hundred guests become events of national enjoyment. The space of the wedding event itself, usually a large ornate hall in a wedding palace, often becomes a space to celebrate the nation. For

example, towards the end of the wedding of a friend's brother in 2011, a waiter walked in a circle through the wedding hall and waved a large national flag made of heavy fabric (Fig. 2). While the flag marked out the wedding event's room as the Azerbaijani nation's room, it also reminded the party community that the wedding is an occasion to celebrate the nation, because the marital union between bride and groom initiates the joyful continuation of the nation by founding a new Azerbaijani family.

Here, the marital union between two ethnic *Azeris*, founding a new Azerbaijani family, in particular, promises national enjoyment. This is especially true for the mostly urban, middle- and upper-middle class, to whom Heyat (2002: 178) ascribes a desire for "continuity in the endogamous marriage practice; daughters are expected to marry only Azeri men from wealthy and reputable families." Although racially mixed marriages might mean socially upward mobility and/or greater economic stability for poor women, Azeris who decide to marry a person who does not (or does only a little) identify as Azeri, whether ethnically or culturally, face disapproval from relatives and neighbors (Abbasova, 2017).

Marriage is also understood to be heterosexual, firstly, because a majority in Azerbaijan today feels that "homosexuality is against our national mentality" (Shahnazaryan et al., 2016: 13); and secondly, because the constitution of Azerbaijan neither prohibits nor permits and/or protects the freedom of sexual orientation and the legality of same-sex marriage. Rather, in Azerbaijani law both sexual orientation and same-sex marriage remain absent, as if they were irrelevant for the legal organization of society. To opt for homosexual marriage thus becomes a non-option. National enjoyment through marriage becomes possible only by means of expected heterosexuality. National enjoyment through marriage thus unfolds at the cost of gender, sexual and ethnic diversity in Azerbaijan.

The promise of national enjoyment through "national heterosexuality" (Berlant and Warner, 1998: 549), however, requires more than privileging certain ethnic and sexual identities – it also requires privileging certain lifestyle choices and feelings. For example, Fuad (conversation on 27 February 2014), a 32-year-old, Baku-based, unmarried environmental scientist, explains that gendered and heterosexist ideals of masculinity, in particular, expect a man to be economically stable and prosperous in order to become marriageable:

In this country you are expected to value that you are Azerbaijani. You are expected to comply with the rules of the society, which means for example that you marry. I mean, if you are a woman, you really need to marry. If you are a man, you really need to get a good job, money and then marry; and marry an Azeri [woman].

Economic responsibilities intertwine with emotional responsibilities when, according to Fuad, "as a man you are not allowed to be weak and share your problems with your wife". At the same time, however, "many men are jealous of their women [...] because I marry her and I say to her 'you sit at home, you don't go to parties, you don't dress like that'". Thus, while signs of insecurity damage the masculinity ideal, jealousy in

heterosexual marriages proves desired dominance and control. To align with this national ideal of masculinity – the prerequisite for heterosexual marriage promising national enjoyment – requires men to cultivate emotional experiences and practices that normalize a “toxic masculinity” (Abubekirova, 2019).

The expectation to secure national membership through heterosexual marriage shows the ways in which national enjoyment depends on people’s willingness and capacities to invest economically and emotionally in the right national objects, in getting a “good job, money and then marry” and in “not being weak, but jealous”. Heterosexually marrying turns into what Ahmed (2010: 204) calls a “moral obligation” for the sake of the preservation of the nation: the individual becomes responsible for enabling national enjoyment and dealing with its conditions and constraints.

Even before marriage, the hosting of the wedding celebration itself often means financial trouble (Yalçın-Heckmann, 2008). Zara (conversation on 12 July 2012), a 35-year-old, unmarried, Baku-based project manager, explains why:

Let’s say, someone, my neighbors, for example, organize the wedding for their son or their daughter. There will be so many things: the food on the table, fireworks, I don’t know, cars, and the cars should all be foreign, BMW, etc. And now, let’s say I want to do a wedding for my children, too. I think, OK, everyone does a big wedding, why not me? Even if I don’t have money. I will lend money from someone. I will do that. And I will burden myself with this obligation. But, I mean, nobody obligates you to do that. Why should we have ten different salads, five different main courses?! But my neighbours will come, or my relatives will come, or people in general will say that, “oh, that was only a mediocre kind of wedding”. Instead, I should have had fireworks, and the dress should have been the best wedding dress, etc. But we would need to borrow the money for all these things!

People’s willingness to take on financial debts in order to organize lavish wedding celebrations demonstrates the ways in which national enjoyment intersects with classism and culturalism. At the same time, Zara’s hesitation about burdening her hypothetical self with the financial expenses of a wedding through luxury, abundance and self-whitening also indicates resistance to what Tlostanova (2010: 203) calls the “colonial modernity” of post-Soviet spaces – “a cheap throw-back of the culture of Western modernity” marked by exaggerated consumerism and swank.

The importance of heterosexual marriage for the preservation of the national idea demonstrates the gendered, sexualized, racialized and classed conditions of national enjoyment. “The promising nature of [national] happiness suggests [national] happiness lies ahead of us, at least if we do the right thing” (Ahmed, 2010: 29). Investing in the right national objects reveals how power operates through nationalism. To just name two examples: the expectation of masculine jealousy in heterosexual marriage legitimates gender-based violence; and, the expectation to organize a costly wedding event deepens

economic inequalities. But, an increasing economic marginalization goes hand in hand with an increasing distance to national enjoyment, too.

Conclusion

This paper has developed a feminist geographic critique of national enjoyment. While much conventional research on nationalism that has been interested in enjoyment explores masculinist practices and spaces such as international sport events, I attend to spaces of the national intimate, such as the ideal female body and heterosexual marriage. The ethnographic research with people in Azerbaijan shows the different ways in which national enjoyment becomes an exclusive experience for the white, heteronormative middle class. In conclusion, I highlight three main findings:

First, the research reveals that women's bodily appearance and lifestyle choices, in particular, are placed under scrutiny for the sake of national joy. The ideal national woman contributes to national enjoyment by investing in specific corporeal beauty standards and by adhering to a disciplined comportment. Deviating from these norms through an unacknowledged ethnic identity, a specific type of labor, or an ordinary activity such as smoking means to fail with respect to the national ideal. Specifically gendered, sexualized, racialized and classed bodies are burdened with the responsibility to enable national enjoyment.

Second, these naturalized heterosexist and racialized narratives about women's comportment and beauty turn women's bodies into objects of the nationalist masculinist gaze. Mechanisms for disciplining and policing women's bodies, in particular, are crucial to maintain nationalist difference and enjoyable national imaginaries. These powerful narratives about women's morality and femininity, accepted lifestyle options and forms of behavior, however, are productive of racism and sexism precisely because they rely on degrading women in Azerbaijan in general and devaluing poor and ethnic non-Azeri women in particular.

Third, compulsory heterosexuality make heterosexual marriage a core requirement to participate in Azerbaijani feelings of national joy. Access to national joy through heterosexual marriage, however, is problematic not only for non-heterosexual couples, singles, or people who do not want to marry. The dominant expectation to organize generous and consumer-intensive weddings also marginalizes poor heterosexual couples who want to marry. Practices of enjoying the nation thus rely on the affirmation and strengthening of a heteronormative social order in everyday life.

Overall, this research contributes to a better understanding of the geographies of national enjoyment by highlighting the inherent ambiguity and thus the instability and vulnerability of national enjoyment and by addressing the power relations that enable national enjoyment. The examination of different people's feelings and practices involved in reproducing and experiencing national belonging demonstrates how emotions of desire, confirmation and valence are as productive of national joy as are contempt,

insecurity and inadequacy. Moreover, a feminist geographic critique of national enjoyment that attends to these different and often contradictory feelings makes the gendered, sexist, racist and classed structures upon which the nation is built and that legitimize nationalisms, visible.

The research findings also expand feminist political geographic work on the national intimate. On the one hand, I show that performances of idealized femininity and heteronormativity, promising national joy, strengthen the legitimacy, the preservation and the alleged neutrality of nationalist practices and feelings in everyday life; for who does not seek happiness and joy? Besides, the focus on the ways in which enjoyment materializes through everyday spaces of the national intimate allows for a more nuanced understanding of how embodied practices such as make-up and grooming, ordinary objects such as a cigarette, feelings such as jealousy, social relations such as the comparison of wedding celebrations between neighbors or a male athletic body all become charged with national meaning.

In echoing Wilkinson's (2017: 58) plea to consider love as a political concept "even in its most charitable and benevolent form [...] [as] a source of power, domination, and exclusion", I thus call for an understanding of national enjoyment that takes its inherent injustice and power seriously. Unravelling the costs, exclusions and inherent ambiguities of national enjoyment helps to understand the ways in which nationalist practices maintain and strengthen heterosexist, racist and classed world orders.

Notes

¹I use the term *Azerbaijani* to indicate citizenship identity and *Azeri* to indicate the ethnonational majority identity in Azerbaijan.

²All names have been changed.

³*Namaz* is the term people in Azerbaijan use to refer to the Muslim prayer.

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