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Tuuli Lähdesmäki (ed.)

Gender, Nation, Narration

Critical Readings of Cultural Phenomena

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PREFACE

During the past decades, gender has become one of the focal interests in academia. Research on gendered systems and practices has established its position in the disciplines of humanities and social sciences. However, gender issues still produce both public and academic discussions on their points of departure and aims. Due to the fact that issues of gender have been in the interests of researchers already for decades, it follows that gender aspects by now have a tradition in the academic fields. Further, gender issues and their main focuses have changed during the decades. Today several theoretical discourses of gender research exist across the academic fields, meaning that points of departure, focuses and aims of these discourses vary greatly.

The roots of gender focused research rest in Western feminist movements. As an ideological and political movement, feminist activism of the 1960s and 70s is seen as forming the point of departure for the second wave of feminism. During this wave, various activist and academic enterprises aimed at making women and their roles more visible in cultural and societal practices. In addition, the previous biological approach to gender was challenged by the understanding of gender as a social phenomenon. A decade later, poststructuralist and postmodern ideas influenced feminist thinking. These ideas are interpreted as the third wave of feminism. The shift of feminism from political activism to postmodern philosophy has also changed the interests and approaches to gender in academic research. In postmodern discussion, gender was and is often approached in the frame of French post-structuralism. In general, semiotic, linguistic and psychological influences orientated the research of gender towards new dimensions. One of the consequences of the new influences was a renewed interest in language and the gendered practices of language use. The change of approach towards being more critical and analytical has implied that views within gender focused research have become more diverse. In addition, the bipolarised views of biological sex and social gender have been replaced in recent gender focused approaches by more complex and plural understandings of human beings. Particularly, queer-theoretical and intersectional approaches have stressed plurality, diversity and complexity in understanding the construction of womanhood, manhood, femininity, masculinity, as well as gender and sexual identities.

This publication illustrates gender issues from various contemporary approaches, in addition to theoretical and methodological points of view. A uniting factor in the articles of the publication is the understanding of gender as a cultural and historical product which is being manifested in various cultural and social practices, imageries and texts. Cultural and social manifestations are gendered, and moreover, are gendering our understanding. The manifestations of gender not only reflect the surrounding reality, but they also actively produce it. The articles of the publication are related to several disciplines: history, cultural history, art history, literature, women studies, cultural studies,

and Hungarian studies. However, the point of departure in several articles is profoundly multidisciplinary.

The articles in the publication are based on papers presented in the conference Gender, Cultural Identities and Politics, which was organized by the Institute of Hungarian Studies on April 3rd, 2009, at the Department of Art and Culture Studies, University of Jyväskylä. The conference focused on some particular issues which have been actively discussed in the disciplines of history and culture during the past years. These issues are: the gendered structures of the notion of nation; nationalism and national identities; as well as the gendered and gendering practices of narration, narratives and writing. Since the 1990s, the study of nations and nationalism has been reviewed from the gender acknowledging perspectives. Various scholars have indicated how both the nationalist rhetoric and the rhetoric of the study of nationalism have been gendered in men-centred practices, history writing and research. During the 1980s, similar movements also occurred in narrative study, in which gender as a critical and theoretical view point started to challenge previous approaches.

The core themes – gender, nation and narration – are closely linked, as can be observed in the articles of the publication. Nations and various national issues are gendered in narratives and narration. However, narration is not just gendering – it may itself be gendered. The temporal focus of the articles is on the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as on the present day. The national focus varies from Finland to Hungary, and even Zimbabwe. In addition, the national themes are viewed in several articles in a supranational, European or even global context. The writers of the anthology utilize various methodological approaches in the analysis of diverse data. Different orientations of narrative research, close reading, source criticism and visual analysis are used in the articles. In one article statistical methods are combined with the qualitative interpretation of the data. In general, the plurality of approaches reflects the multifaceted nature of the methods used in contemporary gender oriented or feminist research.

I want to thank Senior Assistant Urpo Kovala for collaboration in the editing process, and Doctoral Students Rebekah Rousi and Veera Rautavuoma for proofreading the articles of the publication.

Jyväskylä 29 December, 2009
Tuuli Lähdesmäki

AUTHORS

Ph.D Gábor Gýani is a senior research fellow at the Institute of History, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, professor at Eötvös Loránd University, and visiting professor at the Central European University. His work focuses on Hungary's social and urban history in the 19th and 20th century and the theory of recent historical scholarship.

Ph.D Tuuli Lähdesmäki is a researcher in Art History at the Department of Art and Culture Studies, University of Jyväskylä. Her research interests focus on meaning-making processes of public art and monument sculpture, as well as identity politics in contemporary art, including art and culture events.

MA Rebekah Rousi is a doctoral student at the Research Centre of Contemporary Culture, University of Jyväskylä. In her doctoral dissertation, she researches the leadership rhetoric and narrations of the Marimekko Corporation. Other research interests include user psychology and user perception of design language, as well as contemporary art by Indigenous Australian artists and postcolonial identity politics.

Ph.D Tuija Saresma is a lecturer of the University Network for Women's Studies in Finland. In her research on autobiographical texts as performatives, she combines sociological and humanistic approaches with cultural studies and feminist theory.

Phil. Lic. Anna-Leena Toivanen is a doctoral student in Literature at the Department of Art and Culture Studies, University of Jyväskylä. In her research, she has discussed the work and authorship of the Zimbabwean writers Yvonne Vera and Dambudzo Marechera within the framework of postcolonial studies.

MA Ildikó Váradi is a doctoral student in Hungarian Studies at the University of Jyväskylä. In her doctoral dissertation, she explores the cultural exchange between Hungary and Finland in the 1930s through the travelogues and articles of Hungarian writer János Kodolányi.

GENDER, NATIONALISM AND INDIVIDUALISATION

Gábor Gyáni

Abstract

Within historical scholarship, the issues of the nation, nationalism, or feminism were for a long time totally isolated from each other. The conceptual scheme devised to properly grasp the inherently gendered characteristics of the nation-building process includes a distinction between the level of the state, the civil society and the family. Central role may or should be attributed in analysis to the growth and actual level of individualisation and the construction of a female subjectivity that took various forms. In Hungary, the process started in the 1830s and 1840s within the domain of the semi-private, semi-public sphere of female sociability. This has been shown in a recent paper through an example of a young girl keeping a diary in the late 1830s. In adopting the method of a psychology informed historical anthropology one may discern her insistence on enforcing her own intellectual and emotional autonomy in many of her face-to-face contacts with young men. The advance of female emancipation in the second half of the 19th century was unambiguous. Ambitious middle-class ladies could already then capitalise on various forms of public sphere including the literary public life. This has here been exemplified by a female writer, journal editor and activist in various charity organisations, who wrote her memoirs several decades later.

The emergence of the welfare state following World War I brought with it not only the inclusion of women in political life by granting them voting rights, but also the apparent re-establishment of the ideal of family patriarchy. The desirability of the re-strengthening of paternal authority within the family was articulated in part by the public discourse in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s on. This was a reaction to the spreading of a wide-scale practice of the one-child system pursued by some part of the peasantry in particular regions of the country. There was an attempt to put into practice the newly adopted

patriarchal ideals through the so called productive social policy which focused solely on poor relief and which started to take form from the early 1930s.

Keywords: civil society, emancipation, family, Hungary, individualisation, nationalism.

1 Individualisation and citizenship constructing modern nationhood

Most of the theorisations providing new insights into the nation and nationalism brought about by the works especially of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson and not the least Anthony D. Smith wholly ignored gender relations. In addition, the problematic of nationalism and the nation-building process was and remained unknown for contemporary feminist scholarship. The main reason for this could have been, as Nira Yuval-Davis has asserted in her pioneering work, that the nation and nationalism were automatically identified with the public, the political sphere in particular, in which women had no proper place for themselves.[1]

However, the feminist critique concerning Habermas's well-known concept of the public sphere[2] advanced by Nancy Fraser in 1987, contended: "It becomes clear that feminine and masculine gender identity run like pink and blue threads through the areas of paid work, state administration and citizenship as well as through the domains of familial and sexual relations. This is to say that gender identity is lived out in all arenas of life."[3] The concept of bourgeois public domain was thus proposed to be revised by taking into consideration the gendered notion of the nation. In her book *Sexual Contract* (1988), Carol Pateman raised the question of the mutual constitution of discourses both of the national and modern gender identities in arguing that "the public realm cannot be fully understood in the absence of the private sphere", because "civil freedom depends on patriarchal right".[4]

The notion of the classical, the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century type of liberal public sphere embodied by the world of politics and full citizenship was thus finally targeted by the feminist critique. The criticism led to the statement that "the nations have been and are constituted around culturally specific constructions of gender difference".[5] This necessarily resulted in a thorough deconstruction and reassembling of the well-established concept of the nation by elaborating the theories of sexuality and subjectivity, and the ideologies of domesticity and motherhood. They all now seem to be indispensable for a

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1 Yuval-Davis 1997, 2.
2 Habermas 1962/1989.
3 Fraser 1987, 45.
4 Quoted by Yuval-Davis 1997, 2. See also Fraser 1994, 110.
5 Sinha 2004, 230.

better understanding of nationalism and the nation-building processes in the past. This approach ”systematically politicises the personal dimension of social relations in a way that transforms the public/private distinction in terms of the family, sexuality, and self subjectivity”.[6]

In seeking and finding a more nuanced view of the historically defined modern nationhood, shaped and even closely determined by several gendered characteristics, Nira Yuval-Davis has made a clear distinction among level of the state, the civil society and the family. She thus endeavored to provide an adequate conceptual framework for interpreting the historical trajectory of women's changing ways of integration in a modern nation-state.[7]

Central role may or should be ascribed in this analysis to the process of growing individualism. The legal development of constructing individuals imposed as usual by the state through declaring and implementing the principle of legal equality of every member of society irrespective of gender, nationality, confession and race is relevant indeed. That process of individualisation was actually opened up in Hungary in 1848 as an outcome of the revolution of 15th of March. This historical event had established or at least anticipated the creation of a modern Hungary. One of the most endurable results of the March revolution was that the so called April Laws passed several weeks following 15th of March made taxation general (previously the nobility had paid no taxes), and that all serfs (peasants) were given their personal freedom and the former urbarial peasants were granted full ownership of the lands they held.

The following step was taken in that direction several decades later only in 1867, at the moment when the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had been established through the Compromise (Ausgleich). The idea of the individuals being equal to each other and linked to the state as such was sanctioned by legal definition of the concept of citizenship. Hungarian legislation decided to settle the issue of citizenship, more or less parallel to many other European countries, in 1879. The analogues that may be cited are the Italian Civil Code of 1865, the German Act of 1870, the Great Britain Act of 1870 and the Switzerland Act of 1876.

Citizenship had formerly been based on the right of lineage, according to which children automatically inherited their fathers' citizenship. The law passed in 1876 was to modify this by declaring that Hungarian citizenship could be acquired either by *descent* or *legitimisation* or *naturalisation* or *marriage*.[8] There were, however, no other ways of obtaining citizenship. From a specific gender point of view the law on citizenship persistently maintained the rule of the legal inferiority of women as compared to men. It stated that Hungarian citizenship could be obtained by way of marriage if a foreign woman married a man of Hungarian citizenship. It meant that any change in the marital status of the foreign woman led without much ado to the change in her own citizenship,

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6 Eley 1994, 318.
7 Yuval-Davis 1997.
8 Cf. Varga 2004, 127–151.

too. Furthermore, if a man of Hungarian citizenship married a foreign woman, their children were Hungarian citizens, and the wife thereby lost her original citizenship by reason of the marriage.

The obviously unequal access to the right of citizenship, the unending legal disparity created and maintained between men and women in terms of their full membership of the nation had a lot to do with imagination of the nation articulated by the metaphor of the family. Women were continuously held to perform not productive but reproductive, biological and educating role only, as they were associated with the image of the mothers of the nation; women were thus considered and handled more as objects of protection rather than agents in their own right.[9]

The fact that women were lacking for political rights (a male privilege) seems to have been a general European pattern in the age of the classical liberal constitutional period. The first law on the voting rights passed in Hungary in 1848 had already declared that women could not be voters. The law brought in 1874 remained in force until the end of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1918), providing voting rights for those over the age of twenty-four who paid the tax required and/or had graduated from at least the secondary school or university. Women, however, were not included even in such cases when they actually paid the amount of the tax needed or had acquired the school degree expected. In addition, the wife's property was counted as enriching the male's fortune, the base of his political privilege to vote.[10] Wealthy unmarried (single, widowed or divorced) women were only to obtain some political rights when classified as great taxpayers (virilists as they were called at that time); they could become member of the local legislating bodies both on municipal and county level, although they were not allowed to be present on the discussions of these bodies, but were instead represented by deputies only.[11]

Andor Máday, a historian and analyst of women's rights was wholly right in arguing at the outset of the 20th century that the political reforms in terms of the voting rights both in 1848 and 1874 did no more than abolish the basic differences between the noble and servant women. Since all these measures led to depriving noble women of their previous political privileges, the ones enjoyed by their male counterparts. They were thus made very similar to the servant (lower-class) unprivileged women who were always devoid of such rights.[12] In addition, until the mid-1890s, women were also refused to have a free access to higher education, secondary school (the *gimnázium*) and university. Even thereafter the law faculty - a requirement to any civil servant post - remained beyond the reach of women well into the mid-20th century. In the aftermath of the Great War, this privilege of men was even re-enforced and perpetuated by the law passed in 1920. It introduced the practice of the so

9 Eley 2000, 32–33.
10 Szegvári 1981, 116.
11 Csekő 2003, 200.
12 Máday 1913, 124.

called *numerus clausus*, barring both the Jews and women to enroll freely and indiscriminately into universities of any kind.[13]

The events mentioned before clearly demonstrate the many internal contradictions laying at the bottom of the European nation-building process in the long nineteenth century. In viewing the gendered boundaries of exclusion and inclusion mechanisms in this process, Geoff Eley pointed to the *constraints* in which *inventedness* of national identity was allowed to move. Here, one has to register the great relevance of *primordialism* that played a fundamental role in shaping the process of creation of a new ″imagined community″, the modern nation. It derived not only from the unambiguous ethnic and state continuity; nor the place that collective memory held: one relied on common ancestry and shared lineage which also implied a patriarchal overtone.[14] All these factors combined were indisputably necessary to the survival of the relational field of the family and the nation, the ultimate base of the gender regimes of men.

2 Writing female subjectivity

The highly intricate problem of individualisation cannot, however, be limited to the legal aspect of past nation-building processes. The ″cult of sensibility″[15], the epiphenomenon of a ″culture″ of sensibility which came to affect, permeate and guide both males and females right before the age of any legal institutionalisation of a bourgeois social development, also significantly contributed to the construction of a new subjectivity. This development that took place in England as early as the 18th century[16] in and the Continental countries (including Hungary) as late as the first half of the 19th century[17] was plainly evidenced by the spread of diary keeping by a growing number of common people. They thus were induced to acquire a deep and better understanding of their internal (psychic) impulses and their own self. The same incentive had driven many to perform and act out their subjectivity before the public as freely as possible. The latter might take the form of either live sociability (talking to an audience or writing to an unknown reading public), or presenting the self in everyday life with the aim of articulating one's supposed unique human quality, one's true *personality*.[18] All these developments were in part to anticipate and in part to follow the legal process of bourgeois individualisation.

The late Mihály Lackó has revealed through a textual analysis of count István Széchenyi’s political writings the proper individualist impulses which

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13 Szegvári 1988.
14 Smith 1991, esp. 21.
15 Barker-Benfield 1992.
16 Ibid.
17 In terms of the German lands see Kaschuba 1993, 392–422.
18 To the modern notion and analysis of that kind of public behavior of the individual see Goffman 1959/1976.

informed and guided the attitude of the great Hungarian reformist thinker and politician of the first half of the 19th century. Lackó insisted that becoming a genuinely ″modern personality″ requires more than simply proposing substantial social and political reforms and struggling for them at the Estate Diet or in the county political life as was the case in Hungary in the 1830s and 1840s. The awareness of this contemporary challenge may only be revealed by analysing the rhetoric of Széchenyi's writings. Lackó has demonstrated that the ″greatest Magyar″, as Széchenyi was once called by his great opponent, Lajos Kossuth, claimed to address the public exclusively on his own behalf instead of representing only somebody else, a body or social group, incarnated by himself. Széchenyi, Lackó suggests, was fully aware of this demand for transforming himself into an autonomous individual, using the publicly available textual self-expression for that particular purpose.[19]

The real prospect for advancing a female subjectivity as opposed to male subjectivity was, however, always heavily restricted during the entire period in question. Going back to the 18th century, an early advance of woman's egotism at least in England followed merely from the spread of both literacy, and reading of sentimental fiction. The great extent to which the English sentimental novel could enrich the creation of a female subjectivity, an impact decisive in terms of women only, derived from the romantic themes the fictional stories usually addressed and the tone (rhetoric) encoded in them. Both of them strongly resembled or even corresponded to women's real and potential relationships with men. The reading audience of the novels, in addition, was mainly from among the middle-class women.[20]

In Hungary, a long-lasting public discourse around the issue of the ideal image of women and their place within society started in the 1820s.[21] This debate ended as late as around the close of the 1840s. A forty-year petty bourgeois woman, Éva Takács provoked the polemics by attempting to revise the well-established and still widely shared notion of women's inferior intellectual mental capabilities as compared to those of men. The main spokesmen of the conservative view, however, insisted that women were regularly lacking the same mental disposition owned by men; and even when women had acquired such a talent, they were unable to articulate it in public. This argument was deduced from the Bible.[22]

If we compare the aforementioned debate with the already existing and gradually evolving female individualism of the day, a more nuanced image of contemporary womanhood may be discerned. One possible way of examining the question is to analyse various subjective historical sources produced by women. Etelka Schlachta's recently published diary that she kept at the end of

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19 Lackó 2001, 17–25.

20 Davidoff & Hall 1987, 155–162; Barker-Benfield 1992, esp. 162.

21 The texts of the debate have been republished by Fábri 1999, 57–62, 69–77.

22 Fábri 1999, 83–106.

the 1830s provides an invaluable insight into the problem.[23] Etelka Schlachta, a 17 to 19 year old unmarried girl, was member of a middle- or even upper-middle-class family, who lived together with her widow mother in a provincial city of Hungary, Sopron, and occasionally spent some time in Vienna. She always made her best to enjoy the social life available and was thus engaged or even obsessed with her own personal appearance, and actual mental condition. This social life included formal as well as informal occasions: balls, theatres and concerts, and abundant personal meetings especially with young men.

Etelka's intense sociability may also account for the surprisingly frequent change and oscillation of her mood between an excessive self-confidence and desperate uneasiness. This psychic instability was both an outcome and source of Etelka's ambition of preserving at any price her hardly won autonomy in many of her abundant contacts with young men. She therefore seized every opportunity to emancipate herself from the tyranny of the bonds of womanhood; in so doing she always sought for genuine affections, the true love *per se*.

Personal identity in such instance as has been postulated by Richard Sennett in his influential book on the birth of a modern public man, always depends on the narcissistic drive and a well-grounded self-image. The latter, however, may result only from the multiplicity of face-to-face interactions. It is because "this desire to reveal one's personality in social dealings, and to measure social action itself in terms of what it shows of the personalities of others […] is a desire to authenticate oneself as a social actor through display of one's personal character".[24]

In her many contacts with young men Etelka Schlachta gave several conscious signs of her firm intention of carving out a new subjectivism accomplished by defining both the content and the form of her social dealings. This control, Erving Goffman suggests, is achieved mostly by redefining the situation which others, men in that case, want to formulate. It may be exercised only by expressing the self in a way that gives the partner(s) the sort of impression that will lead him (her or them) to act voluntarily in accordance with his or her own plan. Goffman finally concludes: "Thus, when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him [her] to mobilise his [her] activity that it will convey an impression to others which is in his [her] interests to convey."[25]

Etelka Schlachta's individualism, a special kind of feminine self-definition ran, however, against the then dominant ethos of the time ruled by paternalism. The ideal of contemporary womanhood, shaped at that time chiefly by the spirit of the so called Biedermeier, a Central-European phenomenon of the day, propagated and disseminated by poetry in particular, suggested that women

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23 Schlachta 2004. The diary was published in four separate volumes, but I use now only the first one. The following analysis has been based on the findings of a case study by Gyáni 2006b, 583–590.

24 Sennett 1978, 11.

25 Goffman 1959/1976, 15–16.

might only be appreciated as embodiment of beauty and as something engendering an image of a delicate infant innocence in male fantasy. Etelka Schachta, however, did not correspond to the model of the Biedermeier naive girl, who usually is totally surrendered to the male sentiments. Accordingly, she met in all cases insurmountable hardships in attempting to enforce her autonomy whilst facing the men she met in public.

The social and political context changed favourably in terms of the perspectives for female subjectivities in the second half of the 19th century. Etelka Schlachta's "silent revolution", pursued for emancipating herself from the emotional authority of men, was not just continued, but even raised to a much higher level by virtue of such a prominent public figure like Emília Kánya. Emília Kánya, who founded and edited the first true woman's journal in Hungary, the *Családi Kör* (Family Circle) that appeared between 1860 and 1880[26], provided the best model for widening true feminine agency. She was not just a writer and editor, but also a skilful entrepreneur; Emília showed an extraordinary talent for raising funds to finance her own journal over two decades, and was also engaged both in founding and operating several charity organisations. This looks to be surprising considering her relatively lower social standing.

The degree to which a woman could overcome the obvious barriers preventing her from participating in a male dominated public domain as an autonomous individual has been plainly demonstrated by Emília Kánya. The following case study focusing on Emília Kánya's personality has been based in part on the known facts of and in part on her own recollections on her life. This inquiry is to provide a paradigmatic case in view of the possible advance of female individualism in Hungary in the years of the 1860s, 1870s and the 1880s.

Emília Kánya was able to develop a new subjectivism although both her character and family status were not in favour of it. As Emília confessed in her memoirs (based on a diary kept for several years) that she was timid and somebody who thus preferred privacy; all this made her very similar to the ideal of an average woman of the day. "I loved my husband and my children. I was blessed by the sky with eight children. So, I had to focus all my strength primarily on meeting all the requirements of a mistress and mother. I tried, however, to find some time to establish charity organisations…"[27]

Still, even in cases when Emília Kánya got in contact with superiors like men, aristocrats, or persons whom she asked to support financially her literary undertaking, she proved to influence the definition of the situation which these superiors came to formulate. In her attempt to control these recurring situations she could safely recourse to a self-assertion and self-assurance made possible by the sense of a personal autonomy. In all of her multifold public activities and dealings she could capitalise on her close commitment to a national ethos. In commenting on the work she fulfilled in terms of the charity associations, she has explained: "I am only bound to fulfill this as an obligation felt towards my

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26 Kosáry & Németh 1985, 418.

27 Kánya 1998, 195.

native country". The same ethos worked behind her editorial activity. "I was ready to provide our women audience not only with entertainment, but win them over with every good and beautiful social ideas." She knew well from her own personal experiences that this would lead to the creation and strengthening of individuality. "If good ideas are disseminated in this way, they will be deeply embedded in woman's hearts; consequently, there is no need thereafter for a leader and propagandist to guide them. They will find already in themselves the right way and the best manner."[28]

Returning now for a moment to Nira Yuval-Davis's tripartite concept in which the family, the civil society and the state constitute the main pillars, one might conclude that Etelka Schlachta's revolt against the bonds of contemporary womanhood did not step over the boundaries of a widely meant privacy. In trying to achieve her specific ends she tended to use the forms of sociability, the realm of "polite society", the gentlemen's domain, which was no more than merely the antechamber of civil society. Etelka's principal aim was to get married as favourably as possible still in close conformity with her own personal tastes and intellectual needs.[29] Some time later, however, the prospect for establishing a true feminine subject capable of moving also in the actually existing public sphere was far more favourable. Emília Kánya, a settled married woman with many children of her own, was now allowed to carry an active public role in contemporary civil society. This, indeed, brought a qualitatively new phase in progressing the female individualisation process.

One has to add that majority of contemporary middle-class ladies still remained aloof from that kind of publicity. This derived partly from women's undisputed legal discrimination, but also had to do with their own cultural and moral inaptitude or passivity. Emília Kánya's case proves to have been paradigmatic in demonstrating that in addition to the unambiguous outdoor limitations, the internal, the subjective obstacles were also decisive in restricting the unfolding of a feminine agency. In explaining why she had been asked to be instructor of one of the daughters of Francis Joseph, the Habsburg emperor, a request she finally refused to undertake, Emília had remarked that Erzsébet, the queen, had been wholly informed about and impressed by her conscientiously fulfilled maternal role coupled with her ambition of "keeping pace with the age" by persistent self-education.[30]

The lesson that can be drawn from all this is that the deeply internalised cult of womanhood was as much responsible for the absence of a new feminine subjectivity as was any outward legal imposition. The utmost importance of any kind of female self-improvement achieved through permanent reading and the process of educating the senses. The basis for the ideal of bourgeois *Bildung* should also be emphasised in assessing the chances for women's integration in the public realm of the nation.

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28 Ibid., 193.
29 More about Etelka's case see Gyáni 2006b.
30 Kánya 1998, 203.

Etelka Schlachta's and particularly Emília Kánya's life-worlds are excellent evidence for the thesis advanced before. They both read a great deal, showing a lively interest especially in the classical national and European literature of the day, and also frequented theatres, opera houses and concert halls, even when staying at a longer distance to one of the two metropolises of the region (Budapest and Vienna).

3 Politics of emancipation in interwar Hungary

The decisive step taken towards a more complete integration of women into the political community happened as late as the inter-war period. This was brought about by revising the electoral order to the explicit demand of the Western powers. True, however, that while the measure issued in 1919 gave the right of suffrage to somewhat more than one and a half million women, the law passed in 1922 allowed only 610 thousand women to vote.[31] Still, it was the first occasion of granting political rights in Hungary to at least some portion of women. The partial withdrawal and further limiting of suffrage with special regard to women parallel to the restoration of open balloting (outside Budapest and the provincial cities) resulted from the deep-rooted conservative characteristics of the political regime reaching greater sovereignty in domestic political affairs only after 1920.

This development was more or less simultaneous with the initial establishment of welfare state in Hungary, a process accelerating at the end of the 1920s and continuing in the second half of the 1930s.[32] However, the public ethos sustaining and fueling the process appeared to be inconsistent with the notion of women's emancipation manifested by broadening their political rights. The emergence of welfare state amounted to stressing again the relevance of the patriarchal tone of human relationships. This was indirectly articulated by setting up maternity homes both in the cities and the villages, and establishing the institution of family allowance (from 1912 onwards). All this contributed to the growing force of a new-old ideology of womanhood in which symbolic importance attributed to the image of women as genuine biological source of the nation, was to define women's legitimate social role, one that should be fulfilled within the private, familial realm alone.

This reinvented unadulterated traditionalism was articulated in the form of a public discourse that started in the 1920s and focused on the burning issue of the one-child system. The debate actually anticipated the emergence of a half intellectual, half political and ideological movement of the populists. This group, made up of writers and scholars engaged in revealing the deep social problems both of the village and the peasants, became from the early 1930s onwards the main articulators of harsh contemporary social criticism. The

31 Szegvári 1981, 211–217.

32 Gyáni 2004, 474–489.

community-wide practice of rigorously controlled fertility with a comprehensive system of practices and backed up with an ethos characterised at that time not just the urban middle-classes, but even some part of the landholding peasantry in particular regions of the country.[33] The main incentive for restricting the number of births to one in numerous peasant households was to retain the landholding intact in case of inheritance as the dominant practice of equal inheritance hastened the process of cutting up of the peasant land property.

The fact that the reaction to peasant birth control could become so serious or even hysterical was due to the changes in the notion nationalism, which was becoming more ethnicity bound. These changes in the public spirit affected the officially sanctioned ideology. In Hungary and in Western Europe, the ideological cornerstone for enforcing integration and homogenisation of the subjects (who otherwise were equal to each other) in the political community of the nation, was the legitimating idea of a historically continuous state or statehood of the country. The nation-building process had taken place in the time bracket of the 19th century. The heroic age of this development was, accordingly, more state-centred rather than an ethnicity oriented project. With the advent of the 20th century, however, when the cultural or ethnicity bound nationalism came increasingly to define the notion and imaginary of a national identity, a new phase began in the whole story. This process is interconnected with concerned the issue of the gender in many ways.

The changed attitude towards the notion of the nation was further strengthened by the many bitter experiences of the Great War and especially its tragic consequences for Hungary (and Germany). As a result of the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary lost two-thirds of both her previous population and territory. That necessarily led to the reinterpretation of several values held to be important for the national community per se. The *neo-nationalist* ideological program, declared in the early 1920s, was devised to serve the explicit needs of Hungary's territorial revisionism, the politics of irredentism.

The new pattern of nationalism gave much room both for embracing and relying upon the mythical image and idealisation of Hungarian peasantry, the social formation held to embody the sole foundation of a healthy and renewed Hungarian nation that had previously been degenerated by the urban-bourgeois development. Seen from that particular angle, the image and ethos associated with the practice of peasant birth control could indeed be a shocking experience. The populist writers and ideologues found that the peasant one-child system was the most extreme manifestation of an unrelieved moral degradation, caused both by market economy and political liberalism, and its concommitant female emancipation. The whole matter was thus made into a symbol of the fear of the nation's death.[34]

In trying to find the probable reasons for the occurrence and fast spread of this peculiar development with the aim of remedying the anomaly, the

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33 Ibid., 275.

34 The discourse has been discussed in Vásáry 1989, 429–468.

populists were unanimous in condemning the bourgeois spirit. The latter was held especially to threaten, and even degenerate the authentic and allegedly pure peasant morality. The moral decline surfacing in the form of peasant birth control as János Kodolányi, the novelist, has advanced, originated from the emancipation of the serfs that had taken place in the mid-19th century. This was the event that paved the way for the irresistible bourgeoisfication of Hungarian peasantry by sowing the seed of egotism in them. Any further expansion of the one-child system was thus linked to the growing female supremacy within the family, replacing the formerly prevailing beneficial paternalism. Kodolányi and his fellows when seeking ways to defend the country from de-population, insisted on restoring the old peasant paternalism for the sake of extinguishing the disastrous birth control practiced by the agrarian population.[35]

The populists, however, were not alone with these ideas. Even the state run social policy was deeply permeated by the ethos of the new-old paternalism. In explaining this development it might be noted that the Horthy regime that existed between 1920 and 1944 in Hungary was an authoritarian political arrangement which, however, made some allowance for liberal constitutional rule and political institutions.

In many kinds of contemporary welfare policies one may easily find signs of the definite intention of both controlling and educating the poor. The social workers, usually unmarried women, were primarily commissioned to transmit the principles and morality of the middle class type patriarchal imagery to the lower classes they dealt with in the frameworks of charity. The aim, in this instance, was persuading poor women (wives and mothers) to adopt a morality allegedly shared and sustained by an average middle-class lady.[36] The poor targeted both by social care and educational concerns were thus directly exposed to an intervention in his or her private life. In fact, major part of the latter group was apparently emancipated to a great degree both within and outside their own family. However, the patriarchal imagery then vehemently propagated and enforced from above did not have much to do with the reality of contemporary middle-class life.[37] Accordingly, it was not more than merely an ideology, the ineffectiveness of which derived mainly from the obvious gap between the ideals and the actual social practice of the day.

The point I made has been that the burning issue of nationalism that emerged in Hungary in the 1830s and 1840s left the emancipation of women as a public question wholly untouched. Any effort of creating a distinct female identity was thus made possible only on an individual level, necessarily remaining within the boundaries of the widely defined private sphere. It was only in the second half of the 19th century that single women could finally successfully overcome the barriers that prevented them from carrying an active role in the public. Amidst fundamentally changed political circumstances following WW I, women's political rights were radically widened. This,

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35 Kodolányi 1927/2006, 903.

36 Hámori 2003, 45.

37 Gyáni 2006a, 72–73.

however, was in part counterbalanced by the obvious influence that the emerging welfare state, initiated and supported by a conservative, authoritarian political regime, had on contemporary gender relations. The patriarchalism that was then reinvigorated both as an ideology and practice (social policy) showed the unambiguous vitality of the family metaphor, as it has always been applied to the place of women in society.

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PERFORMING THE AUTHOR/MOTHER/ MERCHANT /WIFE – MOVING SUBJECT POSITIONS IN MINNA CANTH'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Tuija Saresma

Abstract

Reading autobiography as a performative act enables for the analysis of processes involved in constructing the self. It provides a space for analysing the ways in which gender, nationality, and other social locations of the subject are negotiated. In this article, I read the famous Finnish nineteenth-century playwright and author Minna Canth's concise autobiography, focusing on various locations of the autobiographical subject in this rather laconic matter-of-fact text. My reading follows current trends in feminist autobiographical theorising as well as feminist politics of reading. I strive to deconstruct the interpretation of autobiographies as dichotomously fixed texts. I suggest a more flexible reading that would take the ambiguities of the genre seriously, such as describing both the public and the private life of the author, constructing the subject of the narrative, both relational and autonomous, in addition to varying stylistically between mere factuality and decorative description. Such a reading takes into account the shifts of the subject positions as well as the styles of narration moving between feminine and masculine, rational and emotional, chronologically organised progress of the plot and a more vague way of organising the narrative according to the inner logic or the unconscious. In analysing the variations of narration, inspired by the theoretical and methodological discussion on intersectionality, I conceptualize autobiography as a site for negotiating and performing various subject positions, thus striving for a non-essential reading of autobiographies.

Keywords: autobiography, feminine and masculine style, gender, intersectionality, Minna Canth, narration, nationality, performativity, politics of reading, subject positions.

1 Minna Canth – a short biography

Minna Canth (1844–1897) has been canonised as one of Finland's national authors. Besides actively publishing novels, short stories, drama, and pamphlets, she was the pioneer of the suffragette movement and of women's education. As one of the key figures of the young nation, her effigies have been set up both in Jyväskylä, the town of her alma mater, and Kuopio, where she lived most of her life. There is no doubt about the value of Minna Canth for Finnish national identity, including the widely shared and cherished ideal of gender equality. In 2007, her birthday, March 19, was nominated as an official Flag Day and Equality day. Such a symbolic decision further strengthens her value as the representative of Finnish equality.

Both in her private and public life, Minna Canth encountered numerous vicissitudes. Born in Tampere, Ulrika Wilhelmina Johanson, to be known as Miss Miina and later as Minna Canth, was her father's favourite child. Growing up in a middle-class home that valued education also for girls, and inspired by the idea of popular enlightenment, she found her purpose in life through teaching. In 1863, she commenced her studies at the then brand-new teacher seminar in Jyväskylä. In contrast to her plans of dedicating her life to teaching, she married lecturer Johan Ferdinand Canth in 1865.

As a young wife and a mother with not many options, she gave up her career in education, raised children and took care of the household. Being a dedicated homemaker left her with a sense of life somewhat unfulfilled, and she grew tired of not being able to participate in intellectual conversations of the era. She then started subscribing to her husband's newspaper, and started writing fiction and drama. Suddenly, pregnant with their seventh child, she was widowed and plunged into economic insecurity.

Fighting poverty, Minna took the lead of her parents' shop in Kuopio to provide for the family. Besides mothering and homemaking, she also published articles of topical issues as well as drama, novels, and short stories. She soon became a celebrity of the time. However, some of her writings were received with hostility: strong opposition was expressed both toward her pamphlets on women's issues and abstinence, and her fiction, which was claimed to address what was considered inappropriate subjects, such as the rights of women or the proletariat. She was known to have had mental problems and most likely suffered from depression. After a turbulent life, Minna Canth died of a heart attack, on May 12th, 1897. Posthumously, her productions have been valued as being ahead of their time. She subsequently became a national celebrity and a token of equality between genders.

The biographical details have been constantly repeated by the media, educators, historians, politics and literary scholars, when narrating Minna Canth into the young nation's intellectual canon. Narrating is a powerful means of performing the nation. The shared and repeated narratives and myths about Finnishness and the national canon become naturalised, influencing the self-

understanding of the nation.[38] The biographical facts of Minna Canth's life, partly based on what she chooses to tell in her autobiography, bring forth the confrontation between the demands of private and public, between the educative vocation, the artistic desire, and the conventions of mothering. My emphasis in this article is not the referential factual value of the details about the narrator's life events[39], but the ways in which autobiography organises and constructs experiences whilst performing gender and nationality by repeating and undoing certain aspects of both in textual acts of narration, thus deconstructing their naturalness.[40]

Not surprisingly, gender seems to be one of the main principles of organising the life of Minna Canth. It is common to narrate the story of the emerging author in terms of hard work and striving for understanding, on top of having to constantly deal with economic insecurity. However, unlike most writers of the time, another great disadvantage experienced by Minna Canth was incurred by her gender. The editor of the volume featuring Minna Canth's writings in the influential series of books *Kodin suuret klassikot*, Ilpo Tiitinen, mentions that the greatest obstacle faced by Minna Canth in being a writer was gender:

> At that time, it was not thought that being a writer was something a woman could do; on the contrary, hers were the spheres of private, the somewhat closeted life of home, although incorporated with the broad obligations of a housewife and a mother. [41]

Tiitinen continues with his argument as follows:

> On the contrary, the life sphere of a writer was publicity. The upbringing of Minna Canth was leading her to privacy. Leaving the private sphere, natural-born for women, and moving to the public arena, was difficult also for the environment, for public opinion. It was not accepted.[42]

In the autobiography of Minna Canth (1891), this conflict between the roles – or, as I prefer, the various subject positions – become distinct. I read the autobiography to analyse the various subject positions that are possible for the writer, representative of a certain gender, class, or nationality, and how they interchange and collide. My purpose, thus, is not to find out who Minna Canth "really" was, but to make visible the performative power of autobiography and the way in which gender and other hierarchically organised social structures, such as nationality, are constructed not as monoliths but as shifting, negotiable positions in the text. In order to specify the various locations for the autobiographical subject, I highlight two alternative sub-plots in the autobiography, which are built on a variety of subject positions, such as: teacher, journalist, suffragette feminist, mother of seven, young widow, successful

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38 Gordon, Komulainen & Lempiäinen 2002a, 12.
39 The question of truth has been widely discussed in autobiography theory; see e. g. Roos 1994; Bauman 2000; Bertaux 2003; Liljeström 2004; Saresma 2005; Saresma 2009.
40 Butler 1999; Lempiäinen 2002, 19; Pulkkinen & Rossi 2006.
41 Tiitinen 1987, 6.
42 Ibid.

businesswoman, and opinion leader of the time. I am interested in how the subject positions confront one another, yet at the same time co-operate in the autobiography.

When I refer to the "real" historical figure, I use the name Minna Canth. When speaking of Minna, I refer to the autobiographical subject – the textual construction of the narrated 'I' – that can be read in the autobiography. The latter is the focus of this article. Before going into the narratives available in the autobiography, I take a brief look at the theoretical discussions about autobiography, gender and intersectionality.

2 Autobiographical acts as intersecting performances of gender

The literary production of Minna Canth has been widely researched. My article is not intended to be a contribution to research on her fiction. The autobiography of Minna Canth, a laconic 7-page-text, is a rather modest version of a "portrait of the artist", not an ambitious artistic piece like James Joyce's, *Portrait of the artist as a young man*.[43] Despite its conciseness, Minna Canth's autobiography is a touching narrative about a woman struggling with her duties as a wife and mother, and about the need for self-expression through writing. It is about a woman fighting for her right to take part in public discussions and intellectual arguments of the time. It can and has been read as a depiction of increasing equality in addition to women gaining independence and autonomy. Originally, the autobiography was published in a Norwegian journal *Samtiden*, and has been published in Finnish in several journals. It is also available on the Internet.[44]

I am interested in the subject positions available for the autobiographical 'I' on the textual level. My purpose is to use Minna Canth's autobiography to "raise a number of broad issues of interest to the study of (…) autobiography in general."[45] Autobiographical writing is in feminist reading often conceptualized as liberating for women[46], or making oneself seen and heard[47], and an act of conscious political statement[48]. Women's autobiographical writing "offers them an opportunity to express themselves as 'subjects' with their own selfhood", whereas "patriarchal cultures have categorized women as 'objects'", as feminist historian Marianne Liljeström suggests.[49] Choosing Minna Canth's autobiography as the material of my analysis also follows emancipatory and feminist epistemological, plus political ambitions. In my reading I strive for the idea that gender does not have to be constructed – or, studied – in a fixed way.

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43 See Kelly 2000, 64.
44 Canth 1891. http://fi.wikisource.org/wiki/Minna_Canth_(omael%C3%A4m%C3%A4kerta.
45 Kelly 2000, 63.
46 Jokinen 1996; Sääskilahti 2009.
47 Liljeström 2004.
48 Kaskisaari 1995.
49 Liljeström 2004, 67.

On the contrary, I want to emphasize the negotiating of the subject by highlighting the variety of (gendered) subject positions available for narration during the turn of the century, one hundred years ago. Thus, research should not limit itself to essential presuppositions, such as monolithic gender-specific ways of constructing the subject or organising narration.

I take autobiography as a genre and also this specific piece of text as "a representation of discourses of truth, gender and power", not "as evidence of historical facts and events."[50] Instead of taking the autobiography of Minna Canth as my "data" and analysing it thoroughly, I use it as an example of how gender and nationality are performed in autobiographical writing. Thus, I read the autobiography not as a final result or a work of art, but as an act. Autobiography is thus conceptualized as a process. To me, it is not a referential, documentary record of "what really happened" but a performative act that makes things happen, constructs the subject, produces the 'I' of the narrative. However, autobiography is never an isolated text. Instead, it is always in interplay with political, social and cultural factors of the time of its writing – as well as with the readers' communities and histories.

In autobiography, powerful ideological work is performed: autobiographies "have been assimilated into political agendas, have fostered the doctrine of individualism, and have participated in the construction and codification of gendered personhood." [51] In autobiographical studies, the autonomous subject of the narrative has been celebrated, and to contrast this individual masculine hero of the canonised, rationally constructed autobiography, a relational, fuzzy, feminine subject of a not-so-logical diary has been constructed[52]– even though this dichotomy has been widely criticized as well.[53]

Historically, autobiographical writing has been "a male domain, a genre where above all 'already known' or famous men write their reminiscences, positioning themselves in a *déjà lu*", as Marianne Liljeström has it.[54] This has meant that women writers have not only been exceptional, but that their character has been "presented on the basis of an interesting asymmetrical gender paradox: an exceptional man is essentially like other men. Other men can become exceptional. Exceptional women, however, are usually perceived as different from other women (see Miller 1994, 16)."[55] Due to an analogous mechanism, nationality is also, despite the universalistic and gender neutral surface, predefined as masculine. Thus, women's relation to nation state is problematic, as women are located on the margins of the nation state.[56] Discrepancies between assumed gender neutrality and experienced inequality become vividly illustrated in the way the subject of Minna Canth's

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50 Ibid., 78.
51 Ibid.
52 Gusdorf 1956/1980; Friedman 1988.
53 Hyvärinen, Peltonen & Vilkko 1998; Saresma 2010.
54 Liljeström 2004, 64.
55 Ibid.
56 Gordon, Komulainen & Lempiäinen 2002a, 13.

autobiography is represented through her gender: her braveness and strength as a successful shopkeeper due to her husband's death. Becoming a widow placed Minna Canth in an extraordinary position between the so-called masculine (public) and feminine (private) spheres of life: besides raising seven children, she made a career as a merchant, and was one of the time's leading intellectuals. Acting in so many fields of life is absolutely exceptional for a woman, thus, as a subject of the national narrative, Minna Canth is constructed as unique among women.

If we take the gendered nature of the autobiography as a given, then female writers have had to choose either the masculine way of representing themselves as "one of the men", or failing that, an extraordinary woman. This uncommonness is performed in Minna's narrative as well, although it does not feature as the entire story of the autobiography. The subject of the autobiography is also presented as any woman, feeling inadequate in her role as a wife and mother, yet coping with the everyday routines. The subject is depicted in relation to other people: she is a daughter, a wife, a mother. At the same time, there is additionally the individual facet of the creative genius fighting for the right to say what she perceives as being her obligation to say – the exceptional person willing to sacrifice her domestic peace and life for art and ideology.

The questions of the autonomy or relationality of the autobiographical subject, as well as the feminine or masculine style of the autobiography have been widely discussed[57] and are not the subject of this article. However, I would like to raise the question of whether gender – to be more specific, femaleness – is such a dominant feature of the subject, or would it be more fruitful to read the alteration of the gender positions in the text? In this, I follow the argumentation of Marianne Liljeström:

> In order to analyse gendered authority and hierarchy, interpretation must attend to the cultural and discursive histories of self-representation, rather than to some overarching explanation for the gender differences between autobiographies written by men or women (see Miller 1994 and Gilmore 1994).[58]

Thus, I am interested in autobiography as a site for negotiating the subject's positioning between feminine and masculine, between autonomous and relational, as well as between private and public. Through the shifts in the subject's positioning within the realms of private and public and in between, I strive to analyse the processes of negotiating gender as it is performed in relation to other social locations, such as nationality.

Gender, for me, is something else than a biological fact that divides us into two complementary categories: it is neither an innate quality, nor a dichotomous system based on rigid categories of either male or female, masculine or feminine. Following Marianne Liljeström's formulation, I understand gender "as a position or location, which is directly or indirectly

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57 See e. g. Chodorow 1978; Miller 1994.
58 Liljeström 2004, 67.

attached to certain values, advantages, mobility, etc., which constitute the preconditions of the positions of the identity categories."[59] Thus, the starting point of my analysis is not an essential gender difference in narrative style or the selection of spheres of life represented. In reading the autobiography of Minna Canth I hope to show that gender is not fixed but constantly negotiated in autobiographical writing.

Marianne Liljeström has criticized taking gender as the starting point of analysis and "generalizing and idealizing gendered expectations and conventions."[60] In this kind of reading, the danger is that the researcher takes "on the basis of generalized and idealized gendered expectations and conventions" – in the case of Minna Canth this could mean concluding that she was able to surpass gender division and become a national writer. However, this would leave half of the autobiography un-interpreted. There is the danger of circular arguments, if we do not take the need for careful close reading of our materials seriously. Instead, confining ourselves as researchers to the easy findings that reproduce stereotypes traditionally attached to men's and women's autobiographical stories.[61]

Bearing in mind Liljeström's warning, I try not to base my analysis "on a conventional understanding of the private, intimate sphere and emotionality as female and the public, work-related area and rationality as male" but to concentrate on the specific autobiographical text. I do not wish to "prove" that there are generalized differences, but to find out how performing gender contextually takes place in autobiographical writing. Thus, I am searching for the actual moments in narration which open up for multiple interpretations, intersections and variations.

Autobiography is a fruitful ground for analysing the ways in which public and private are negotiated, because as a genre, it transgresses the dichotomies between private and public, official and personal, fact and fiction.[62] Autobiography as a space in-between provides a meeting place for shifting identities, a place for negotiating these positions in the autobiographical act. In this sense, autobiography becomes the concrete intersection for changing identity positions. The concept of intersectionality refers to the "interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination", thus emphasizing that gender is not the only site for power and subordination, even though it may be one of the most important ones.[63] Considering the uneven organising of social structures and power hierarchies through gender and nationality reveals the sophisticated character of intersectional analysis. Both gender and nationality are complex themes for research, "simultaneously ordinary, present, sublime, and absent."[64] It is worth pondering whether the

59 Ibid., 65.
60 Ibid., 143–144.
61 Ibid., 143.
62 Saresma 2007.
63 Davis 2009.
64 Gordon, Komulainen & Lempiäinen 2002b, 312.

subject is "marked first and foremost by gender"[65] or by some other identity category. Moreover, how are the various and transforming subject positions hierarchically organised? Gender is, of course, only one of a vast list of changing locations, others being those such as class, nationality, religion, sexuality and bodily ability. In feminist studies, gender has been seen as one of the most important hierarchical categories that organise our everyday life. By contrast, sociologists have concentrated on class status, post-colonial critics in ethnicity, and so forth. However, as more and more scholars have emphasised, it is not any separate identity category but the intersections of these more or less negotiable locations that are of most interest.

I try to unwind the intersections of gender and nationality in a specific context, in an autobiographical text written at the dawn of the Finnish nation, when gender equality was only a vague idea, and nationality was forcefully produced in various narratives which were to construct the canon. I my reading, I wish to reach the processes of performing and constructing gender and nationality. My method of reading can be called "reading differences" or even "twisting" the text in order to analyse the articulations of gender[66], concentrating on the "gaps and slips to the ideal Woman, and look in the texts for incoherencies that break the logic of the masculine norm of the representations and phenomena that question polarized notions of gender."[67]

3 Alternative plots

The distinction of private and public spheres has been a prevalent feature of Western political thought, which thus

> has served to confine women, and typically Western female spheres of activity like housework, reproduction, and nurturance, and the care of the young, sick, and elderly, to the "private" domain and to keep them off the public agenda in the liberal state,

as Marianne Liljeström puts it.[68] The same gendered distinction influences academic readings of autobiographies. I will try to read Minna Canth's autobiography from another, more flexible perspective. First, for the sake of example, I present two alternative readings based on the autobiography. Roughly put, the former is a public story of a national heroine, and the latter is a private story of a mother and a breadwinner. Neither is more "right" or "wrong" than the other – and there are of course many other possibilities in which to organise the autobiography than just these two.

In constructing summation of Minna Canth's autobiography from these two perspectives, I try to preserve the tone of her writing by using plenty of

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[65] Liljeström 2004, 80.
[66] Rojola 2004.
[67] Liljeström 2004, 83.
[68] Ibid., 60, citing Seyla Benhabin 1998, 85.

quotes from the original text. I try not to interpret the events or the emotions described, but follow the narration in the original text as strictly as possible. Reading is always interpreting and attaching meanings to the text. My reading is done from the perspective of a feminist autobiography researcher, from a Finnish woman with an academic career, wife and mother, and this position influences my reading.

The story of the famous writer goes as follows:

> Minna was an exceptional child, whom her father thought to be "extremely talented," with a "peculiar emotional and fantasy life." Her moods shifted constantly between "utter melancholy" and "dedicating herself totally to dance and amusement." She found her vocation in the seminar for teachers, and was willing to sacrifice her whole life for education. She, however, soon got married, and it took some time before she continued contributing to public spirit. When writing passionate pamphlets, "it felt like she started living again" and was overwhelmed with her need to reform. While writing her first play, her husband died. Widowed, Minna was afraid that she was unable to write again. However, her play was published and rewarded a prize, which encouraged Minna to continue writing, which she did, despite economic problems. Studying the leading social and philosophical theorists of the time, she "freed herself from her earlier dogma and prejudices" and was inspired with ideas of reform. However, her work was received with severe critique, and the accusations of immorality threw her into depression. She "started feeling bitterness toward her country" so immense that she planned moving abroad. However, "the mission was still strong," and she "wanted to fight to the last on behalf of the oppressed and those who had been treated wrong." After the bashing critique and the death of three of her loved ones, Minna entered a new level in her life, and "got a clearer conception of life," as she rose above hitting and blows, and decided to give up fighting. Instead of acting in the vanguard, she decided to become a bystander. However, national circumstances "threatened to darken our people's future." As the gloomy national situation "made the remains of bitterness disappear," she did not want to leave the country but to work for it, instead. The fruit of this project was the play *Papin perhe*, highly appreciated and widely acted out. At the age of 47, Minna stated that she was not very satisfied with anything she had yet written, but added self-confidently that she hoped to be able to create something better, as there were many years to go before she reached 60 – the age at which the writers should have been killed, as the saying had it.

Based on the very same autobiography, the alternative narrative emphasises the personal experiences and relations of Minna:

> The daughter of a loving father, Minna was admired and guaranteed an education that included girls' school studies for three years, uncommon for girls at that era. Her mother, however, was not happy about the daughter who was eager to read, but whose talent in the household was nothing to be praised about. As a child, Minna contemplated God and religion, but later, she became interested in having fun, too. She also fell in love unhappily, and was afraid that it was impossible for her "to marry, as she was very frivolous by nature." However, she got engaged to Johan Ferdinand Canth, and interrupted her studies because of marriage – and had enormous qualms ever since for abandoning her calling in education and giving in to be a housemaker. She could never forget the words of the seminar supervisor, who told her to choose to become a teacher instead of marrying in order to be happy. Minna "gave up all her ideal desires" to "do needlework, to cook and to organize home and family, into which her nature was very unwilling to bend," and though it was very hard, she stopped reading anything but newspapers and "tried to stifle her longing", as she "realized unquestionably that she was to be subject to her husband". During the first years of marriage Minna tried to behave as an obedient wife, but as years ran by, she ventured to disagree. After keeping her mouth shut and "withering eight years in the lack of intellectual nourishment," Minna started subscribing to her

> husband's newspaper, and "it felt like she was born again." Besides her journalistic ambitions and eagerness to write, she also wrote fiction. During writing her first play, her husband suddenly died. She felt left totally alone with her seven children; she had no one to turn to, her father being dead, and mother not wealthy. Thus, Minna "finished the play and sent it to the theatre thinking that she was now forced to leave writing for ever." At this very dark moment as a new widow, after giving birth to their youngest, her "strength weakened exceedingly. The battle of life became too heavy, and she nearly collapsed. Insanity approached in a sinister way." Minna was depressed and was almost forced by an inner compulsion to kill her newborn. However, "the old being in me kept fighting with all its strength, and eventually won." Minna recovered slowly, started to work as a shopkeeper, and won prizes with her plays. She was very creative, but was badly hurt because of the harsh critique directed at her both as an indecent writer and an allegedly immoral mother. At times, in her creative period, she felt "powerful zest for life, courage, and strength," but intertwined with it was "pathological stimulation of the nervous system" that, with "excessive tension for the brain, several attacks against her, and grieving for losing friends because of the public opinion about her as immoral" drove Minna into depression again. Feeling "crippled in her brain," she decided to "retire on her laurels – a great advantage for both her home and her nerves". She did not stop writing, but had found a new freer, clearer vision of life after "losing to death her two best friends and her gently beloved adult daughter," and was now above fighting. Minna concluded her autobiography by pondering the hereditary features of her persona, reasoning that the "characters of her soul come from both parents – the emotional life from her mother, the rational life from her father."

Of course, the two narratives above are only examples of how the story of Minna Canth could be read. Additionally, the narratives are not separate but intertwined, distinguishable only analytically. By constructing these two narratives, my point was to demonstrate that instead of taking as the starting point for analysis a reading that is fixed to certain theoretical or ontological presuppositions about gender, the ontological division between public and private, or the subject, it might be more interesting to focus on the flexibility of reading. In this kind of reading, the performativity of reading as well as writing autobiography becomes visible.

As readers of autobiographical and other narratives, we can never be absolutely free from ontological or theoretical related presuppositions. However, it is of major importance to acknowledge these presuppositions for the sake of reliable research. The researcher with the conception of, e. g. gender as an essential biological binary fact will probably read out extrapolations of the studied narrative quite differently to those by the researcher conceptualizing gender as a process and a historical social location which is always attached to power relations. Presuppositions affect the reading: a study based on an essentialist view of the studied phenomenon – such as the idea of a "masculine" style and structuring of the autobiography through facts, concentrating on the public life, built according to chronological order, as opposed to a "feminine" style of rambling, that proceeds based on inner associations instead of rational logics, concentrating on an emotional level and relationships with others – can highlight only some aspects of the studied material, inevitably understating the others. Thus, it cannot yield any intricate interpretation of the studied phenomenon.

What struck me when narrating the autobiography according to two plot lines, roughly divided as the "public story of the writer" and the private story

of the wife and mother, was that the constructed stories seemed to be stunningly dissimilar in style and tone. It was very tempting to interpret the former, "the public story", as a representation of a masculine way of writing: the subject is presented as autonomous and independent, and the conflicts of the story happen on the level of public and even national events, theatre enactments, critiques. In the latter, the subject would be presented as more "feminine" in its relationality and its way of emphasizing emotions. Of course, when constructing these plot summaries, I have more or less consciously used the gendered way of representing the subject. Even so, it is very tempting to unquestionably look at gender as dual mode in autobiographical writing – although it might be more challenging and more rewarding to look for other ways to read autobiographies. That is, instead of reading the autobiography as either – or what can be interpreted as both. This moving interpretation does not fix the meanings but highlights the ongoing negotiations of autobiographical narration, thus also emphasizing the performativity of both narrating and reading, and autobiography as a process, not a fixed product.

4 Moving positions

Instead of reducing the multifaceted narration of autobiography into simple story lines, as I did above for the sake of example, it might be worth analysing the various subject positions of the narrator. Above, it is possible to discern numerous subject positions, such as the daughter, frivolous juvenile, student, wife, mother and widow, homemaker and breadwinner. Thus, she may be read as a heroine of private everyday life, prodigy, teacher, educator, missionary, journalist, intellectual, opinion leader, pamphletist-reformer, creative artist and national author.

Moreover, the subject positions intersect in ways that make their instability visible. For example, Minna's public career in education is interrupted because of a change of her marital status. Later on, the subject positions of mother and intellectual collide, and it is hard to negotiate her status as both a public figure commenting on sensitive issues such as religion, social problems, and feminism, in addition to being a competent parent as a single mother, capable of raising her offspring in a morally correct manner. But the positions can also support each other, such as when taking part in public intellectual life, writing pamphlets and being active in contemporary ideological discussions provides the homemaker and mother of small children with longed-for adult contact. As well as additionally, that writing offered an escape from domestic duties.[69]

A nuanced analysis of autobiographies is not constrained to rigid and unarticulated presuppositions. However, various themes and contents need to be taken into account. Instead of subscribing to the idea that there are two

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[69] Rytkönen 2000, 177.

possible narratives in Minna Canth's autobiography, namely the "public" narrative of the famous national author, and the "private" narrative of the widow and mother, that has sometimes been suggested in feminist thinking as well[70], the reader of Minna Canth's autobiography should instead ask, how the transforming and many-layered subject of her autobiography works.

In every autobiographical text, the subject consists of various layers, such as the narrating and the narrated 'I'.[71] The subject of Minna's autobiography can very well be *both* a unique and creative genius, *and* a family mother, mentally instable *and* capable of nurturing at the same time. It is also worth noting that the subject is constructed as both a distinguished individual, the opinion leader of the nation and a prize-winning author, a woman sharing the experiences of being a housewife and mother, as well as a misunderstood writer – all this in a short autobiography. As I hope to have shown above, the locations in Minna's narrative are not stable or fixed. Instead, they are constantly shifting, as performed in the autobiographical act.

In her time, it was exceptional for a woman to partake in intellectual and artistic debates. The subject of Minna's autobiography actively takes part in nation-building, and yet, at the same time, is constructed as a vulnerable, mentally unstable mother, a widow fighting poverty, and a grieving friend. The subject writes herself inside both public and private spheres. She is both "a speaking agent within a world of male institutions, including writing"[72] and a housewife, insecure of her capabilities as homemaker, and sometimes overwhelmed with her requirements and responsibilities as wife and mother.

In academic tradition we are accustomed to reading autobiographies as either masculine or feminine. This conventional reading should not, however, block other interpretations. Reading autobiographies as performative enables for the analysis of gender as produced in autobiographical writing. The notion of gender was not used in Minna Canth's time. However, autobiographical narration of that time was not free of gendered presuppositions. Whether reading autobiographies of today or those written more than a century ago, there is no point in labeling the narrative either autonomous or relational, either feminine or masculine, either public or private. Acknowledging this might mean "reading against the grain" instead of restricting reading into fixed categories.

Reading the century-old autobiography is also interesting in the context of Finnish equality discourse. When reading Minna's autobiography, I empathize with her will to step into so many shoes. As we know from history writing, it seems that Minna Canth was able to merge the roles of mother and provider for the family, educator, reformist, nationally influential person and successful merchant. This public portrait may have lost shades and some of its accuracy in decades of repeated narration. The polished image of Minna Canth as our

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70 E. g. Carolyn Heilbrun has made an "observation about the radical difference between the private and public personas of women writers". Hoogenboom 2000, 29 citing Heilbrun 1989.

71 See Smith & Watson 2001; Liljeström 2004, 69; Saresma 2005.

72 Liljeström, Rosenholm & Savikova 2000, 13.

national heroine, author and suffragette serves as the ideal of the Strong Finnish Woman, the omnipotent image that leaves no place for weakness or insecurity. The ideal is purified of any contradictory subject positions, and represents Minna Canth as a winner, an extraordinary woman, both making the ideal unattainable and placing considerable strain on every woman. Reading Minna's autobiography, on the contrary, brings out the contradictions of the subject positions, the fractures and inconsistencies that make the subject more human and more easily accessible – thus, deconstructing the narrative of the Strong Finnish Woman, giving us perhaps a more realistic model of negotiating equality.

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FINNISH WOMEN'S ROLES AND STATUS IN JÁNOS KODOLÁNYI'S TRAVELOGUE

Ildikó Váradi

Abstract

The article focuses on the work of János Kodolányi, who was an important author in Hungarian literature during the 20th century. Kodolányi was in Finland five times between the years 1936–38. He wrote many articles for numerous Hungarian newspapers. Additionally, he published several travel books about Finland and his experiences (*Suomi, a csend országa,* Finland, the land of silence 1937; *Suomi titka,* The secret of Finland 1939; *Suomi,* Finland 1942, 1944). The article deals with Kodolányi's connections to Finland and Finnish culture. I focus mostly on the social status and roles of Finnish women between the two world wars on the basis of Kodolányi's travelogue, *Finland, the land of silence*. The article answers the following questions: how, in his travel book, did the Hungarian traveller see and perceive the emancipation and roles of women in the Finnish nation building process; and what kind of picture did he receive of Finnish women in the course of his travels? The aim of the article is to interpret Finnish women's position in Finland according to how János Kodolányi illustrated it.

Keywords: emancipation, biological and cultural reproduction of nation, nation building, women roles, women social status.

1 Hungarian perspective to interwar period in Finland

In my article I focus on the work of János Kodolányi, who was one of the most significant authors of the 20th century in Hungarian literature. Further, he was also an important person in the history of Hungarian and Finnish cultural relations. My research deals with a lesser known part of his work, namely his

connections to Finland and Finnish culture, in addition to the observations made during his trips to Finland.

János Kodolányi was in Finland five times between the years 1936–38. He wrote many articles for several Hungarian newspapers and he published travel books about his trip. His first travel book, *Suomi, a csend országa* (Finland, the land of silence) was published in 1937. Two years later he released another book, called *Suomi titka* (The secret of Finland). Additionally, these volumes were published together in a book entitled *Suomi* (Finland). The first edition was printed in 1942, while the second was printed two years later. Here we have to mention that these volumes strongly influenced and shaped Hungarians' image of Finland between the world wars.

Kodolányi in his travelogues analysed, among other factors, the living conditions, cultural circumstances and traditions of Finnish peasantry. He reported about the Finnish education policy, he also reviewed the main points of Finnish democracy and finally wrote about the relations between Finnish men and women, including the position of women in Finland.

In my article I focus mostly on the social status, roles and emancipation of Finnish women between the two world wars, on the grounds of János Kodolányi's travelogue, *Finland, the land of silence*. In my article I try to answer the following questions: how did the Hungarian traveller see and perceive emancipation in Finland in his travel book; what kind of picture did he get regarding Finnish women in the course of his travels; and finally what kind of roles did women have in the Finnish society in light of these travel books? In addition to this, I would like to deal with those factors and elements which influenced Kodolányi's image of Finnish women.

In my investigation I use two different approaches. On the one hand, my analysis is based on the assumption that the traveller's statements concerning femininity in the patriarchal system cannot be represented without interpreting its relation to masculinity. That is to say, in Kodolányi's book women are written in binary opposition to men. It can be said that in his construction, women are interpreted in relation to how much they differ from the men as a norm.

On the other hand, there is a crucial element that should be noticed when analysing the ideal Finnish woman in Kodolányi's travelogue. The image that Kodolányi had about Finnish women was influenced not only by the relationship between men and women, but also by his cultural tradition, or rather, by his own social environment, and the problematic socio-political conditions of Hungary between the two world wars.[73] For this reason, I will refer to the status and conditions of Hungarian women in the interwar period.

Here I have to mention that Kodolányi's picture of Finnish women is based on his own cultural, political and ideological background. He interpreted Finnish women's roles and emancipation in Finland in an idealized way. With the help of his positive image of the women in Finland he wanted to criticise the Hungarian society and especially the women belonging to the upper middle-

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73 Harbsmeier 2006, 26-27.

class and gentry. In this case, Finland was a model for him and he wanted to show how the women in Finland were a crucial part of the society.

For these reasons I would like to interpret Finnish women's position in Finland as János Kodolányi saw and became aware of it in his travel book. With all this in mind, I would also like to emphasise that Kodolányi's image of women's roles are subjective and inherently partial, because - as Nira Yuval-Davis phrased it - our "knowledge" of the world is embedded in our own point of view.[74]

2 Social status of Finnish women

In the travelogue *Finland, the land of silence*, Kodolányi reaches the conclusion that the relationship between men and women, in addition to the rhythm of Finnish life and society, is influenced by symbolic acts and work. If this conclusion is taken into consideration, it can be supposed that Kodolányi's image of Finnish women and their social status is characterised by a certain dichotomy on the micro (private sphere, i.e. family) and macro (public sphere, i.e. society) levels of Finnish society.

2.1 Women's status on the micro level

On the micro level, Kodolányi analyses women's status from the viewpoint of biological and cultural reproduction of the nation. He connects women's role in the family with the subsistence of the nation and with demographic aspects. He refers to this topic when he criticises the Hungarian peasant landowner's so-called self-destructive habit of raising only one child. In his opinion the "one-child moral" was one of the most influential aspects of the crises experienced by the Hungarian society and peasantry in the interwar period. Referring to this behaviour, Kodolányi states that: Finnish women – in contrast to Hungarian women – "don't worry about what others say when they give birth to their second or third child. (It's true that one can notice certain decay in the circles of younger intellectuals, but still they cannot be compared to our "one child in a family" kind of mentality!)"[75]

In Kodolányi's conception, Finnish women have a very important role in the transmission and reproduction of the cultural traditions of the nation. In his opinion their duties include, for example the protection of the home and family, as well as the education of children. In the case of the latter, the writer means the teaching of self-control, self-sufficiency and accommodating the climate and work. His image is based on the Finnish woman's strong role in the family.

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74 Yuval-Davis 2005, 10.

75 Kodolányi 1990, 76. "(...) nem törik a fejüket azon, hogy mit fog szólni a »társaság«, hogy már a második vagy harmadik gyermekük jön a világra. (Igaz, már kezd mutatkozni egy kis romlás a fiatalabb intellektuelek körében, de hol vannak ők a mi *egykemorálunktól*!)".

Because of the dominance of the agricultural sphere in Finnish society, women have had to participate in agricultural work as much as men - only the tasks of the women have been different.[76]

In these roles, Finnish women do not appear in the travel books as a passive subject. In Kodolányi's image, they have an important and active space in the building of the nation. In the mind of the Hungarian traveller, the family does not subordinate to the civil spheres. On the contrary to this, in his opinion, the Finnish society is based on the family. So, we can surmise that in the travelogue, the family comes out of the private level of Finnish society and steps into the public sphere. Women are politically active and they become members of the power structure.

2.2 Women's status on the macro level

Kodolányi's image of women's political roles and statuses comply with the macro level of the society. Women gradually break with their passive role of the patriarchal family. On the macro level, therefore, we can say that Finnish women have a job, just like men, and actively participate in assuring the living conditions of the family. In *Finland, the land of silence*, Kodolányi sees Finnish women on the macro level as free, independent and emancipated persons, who are treated equally with men. This impression is mainly influenced by the fact that Kodolányi thought that in Finland women had a role and place in the society that only a man could have in the Hungarian society. "Just like on the tram, where there are no conductors but conductor women, or in the restaurants and cafeterias having no waiters and doormen but misses, or the barber's, where there are nice, friendly and gentle women serving you and not barber assistants, the shops with their women assistants showing the merchandise to you, in the upper classes almost every wife has a job. It is quite natural that the woman, unless she's too old and has a specific reason to stay at home, works normally, independently and has a job requiring just as much responsibility as a man's job would. And in case she stays at home she considers the housework to be her duty."[77]

Kodolányi got this image, because in the beginning of Finnish industrialisation during the mid-19th century, many women had to leave their homes and go to the cities to seek work from the factories, which needed labour-force - unlike agriculture, which was going through major changes,

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76 Kortelainen 2005, 191.

77 Kodolányi 1990, 76. "Ahogy a villamoson nem látsz kalauzt, csak kalauznőt, ahogy az éttermekben, a kávézóhelyiségekben nem látsz pincért, »főurat«, és köszönőembert, csak »kisasszonyt«, ahogy a borbélyműhelyben kedves, udvarias és finom nők vesznek gondozásba, és nem borbélysegédek, ahogy a kereskedésekben nők teszik eléd az árut, és nem férfiak, a felsőbb rétegekben is a feleségek jóformán kivétel nélkül dolgoznak. Egészen természetes, hogy az asszony, hacsak nem idősebb már, és nincs egyébként is valamely különösebb oka rá, nem ül otthon, hanem végzi a maga rendes, független és a férfival egyformán felelősségteljes munkáját. Ha pedig otthon ül, akkor legalább annyit tart kötelességének, hogy a házimunkát maga végezze."

because of the newest developments.[78] The professional crafts of women gave an early start to their emancipation in Finland and a possibility to become independent.[79] As Kodolányi saw it, work has played a very important role for Finnish women. This is not only because it helped them to become economically independent, but also because it was the basis of their spiritual and emotional self-realisation. As a result, Kodolányi wrote: "The Finnish woman doesn't feel constrained, works independently and without complaints, contributes with her earnings to cover the expenses, doesn't torment her husband with her personal problems, in fact she doesn't even give importance to them."[80]

Nevertheless, Kodolányi's image of women in Finland was too idealistic and did not give a true picture of their situation. The situation of Finnish women, who participated in the workforce of professional crafts in cities, was not that rosy. The working conditions were poor, and as Anna Kortelainen explains, the reactions to women's participation in professional crafts were mainly patriarchal. The master supervised how the staff dressed, how they spent their free time, and how they behaved.[81]

It can be concluded that in his travelogue, Kodolányi analyses the status of the Finnish woman in relation to the social and economic system of Finland. Kodolányi presents us with an idealised world where women can successfully reconcile their mother role with their career and profession. In this idealised world, Finnish women have the same rights as men, and in addition, the traditional gender categories fade away.

3 Social roles of Finnish women

3.1 Women in nation building

In the travel book, on the macro level Kodolányi presents the Finnish woman in different kinds of roles: women in the nation building process, in the academic world and cultural life, as well as finally at work. The first status he introduces by reviewing the work of Finnish writer, Maila Talvio, whose social political views greatly influenced Kodolányi's image of Finland, Finnish society and peasantry. Interestingly, Talvio appears in the travelogue as the mother of the nation. Kodolányi's opinion is that Talvio had an important role in the cultural and political progress of the Finnish nation. In the Hungarian writer's view, Talvio has a very close relationship with peasantry; she had a very important role in repairing the circumstances of peasantry, in addition to playing a role in

78 Kortelainen 2005, 337-338.
79 Kortelainen 2005, 336.
80 Kodolányi 1990, 80. "Maga sem érez megkötöttséget, munkáját önállóan és nyafogás nélkül végzi, keresetével hozzájárul az élethez, nem gyötri férjét egyéni bajaival, sőt nem is tulajdonít azoknak nagy jelentőséget."
81 Kortelainen 2005, 341.

the agrarian reforms. In the travel books, we can read about how Talvio, in her novels and essays, analyses social problems in the countryside and in Kodolányi's words, she "belonged to those people, who participated in the struggle of raising up the Finnish nation and who made tough propaganda for the agrarian reforms and the small-peasantry."[82]

Kodolányi emphasised Talvio's role as the defender of the nation when he stated that the writer had an important role in the fight against tuberculosis, which was destroying the nation. Kodolányi explained that she wrote the screenplay of the film *Ne 45 000*, designated to fight tuberculosis and for two years she gave propaganda presentations in favour of tuberculosis prevention. What is more, according to Kodolányi, she was an outstanding member of academic life and the political sphere. We are told in the travelogue that she had a significant role in educating and teaching the students of the university – the future generations. Here, Kodolányi refers to how Talvio and her husband, J. J. Mikkola held the famous "Thursday Seminars" dealing with literature and aesthetics, where Talvio actively lectured to students.

3.2 Women in academic and cultural life

In Finland – as we can read in Kodolányi's travelogue – women can educate themselves even at universities. The writer offers a glance at the living and studying conditions of a Finnish female student by presenting the case of Tytti Kannisto, the daughter of Lauri Kannisto. She "studies physics at the university and in her free time she works as a mason, building bridges and painting the roofs of the houses." And, as Kodolányi adds: "The female students work together with the waitresses in a large restaurant."[83]

With this example, Kodolányi tries to point out, on the one hand, that Finnish women at universities perform as well in their studies as only men do in Hungary. On the other hand, he emphasises that Finnish women work because this is how they can create the necessary conditions for their studies. Furthermore, he declares that after these women have obtained their university degree or established a family, their place in life is not limited to the family and private life: "The girls get married, give birth to babies, and work in their own specialty in the Finnish way, just like every other Finnish woman."[84]

The travelogue suggests that education, and particularly higher education in Finland, was characterised by the equality and emancipation of women. This was especially compared to the situation in Hungary, where higher education and the intellectual labour market worked in a gender-specific manner, despite

[82] Kodolányi 1990, 23. "Maila Talvio azok közé tartozik, akik ugyancsak kivették részüket a finn nép felszabadításának harcából, s akik makacs és ernyedetlen propagandát folytattak a f0ldreformért és a kisparasztért."

[83] Kodolányi 1990, 54-55. "(...) egyetemi hallgató, fizikus. Szabadidejében munkásruhában hidakat kátrányoz, háztetőt fest a munkásokkal. Egy nagy étteremben egyetemi hallgatónők pincérkednek a pincérlányokkal együtt."

[84] Kodolányi 1990, 27. "(...) a lányok férjhez mentek, gyermekeket szültek, és dolgoznak a maguk munkakörében finn módra, mint ezek a nők valamennyien."

the fact that in Hungary after 1895, women could study at the university. [85] In addition, Hungarian women hardly went to work or were employed in their own field after having graduated from university. Even if they worked, they only did it temporarily while they were still not married.[86] In Kodolányi's view, the social ambition of Finnish women was not hindered by such obstacles as their roles in the family, as mother and housewife.

3.3 Women in work life

According to Kodolányi, Finnish women additionally have equal opportunities in work life. Kodolányi clearly articulates his opinion on this subject by presenting the status and living conditions of servant-girls in Finland. The travelogue suggests that in Finnish homes the housemaids are treated in the same way as other people. Moreover, the relationship between them and the families they work for are extremely friendly. The equality between the servants and the employer in addition to the respect with which the servants are treated, is immediately noticed by the Hungarian traveller. Kodolányi recalls this with the following words: "When I went to visit a writer the housemaid welcomed me in the hall and helped me take off my coat. Upon entering the house, the nice and pretty girl greeted me, shook hands with me and introduced herself. At a different occasion I wasn't surprised when the housemaid, wearing a folk costume, shook hands with me and introduced herself. I introduced myself, too."[87]

In order to see more clearly the reasoning behind Kodolányi's view on the status and conditions of Finnish servant-girls, we need to observe the rights and conditions of Hungarian servants. Employing a housemaid in Hungary between the two world wars was a common phenomenon. It was quite normal that 15-20 year old girls moved from villages to larger cities (including the capital city) in order to find employment in the homes of the middle-class. Subsequently, they usually worked as servants until they got married.

The period the girls spent in the city had a great impact on both their material situation and social existence. In addition, this employment position had an important role in the socialisation of the girls, because it taught them to enforce their social role based on the patriarchal power relations inside the family. Furthermore, it taught them how to behave as a mother and what was acceptable both in their own family and the society. In addition, in Hungary the state tried to maintain the patriarchal society by laws. According to a law from 1876, the servant could not be considered an independent subject. The employer

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[85] Gyáni 1998, 287.

[86] Gyáni 1998, 287; Hámori 2003, 30-48.

[87] Kodolányi 1990, 52–53. "Látogatóban voltam egy írónál. Az előszobában a szobalány is elébem sietett, hogy lesegítse a kabátomat. Amikor beléptem, a kedves, csinos leány kecses bókkal köszöntött, kezet nyújtott és bemutatkozott. [...] Egy másik alkalommal már nem lepődtem meg, amikor a paraszti ruhában elém jött cselédlány kezet nyújtott és bemutatkozott. Bemutatkoztam én is."

had the right to control her, using corporal punishment in disciplining her as if she was a family member.[88]

4 Finnish women versus Hungarian women

Kodolányi's perception of Finnish women and their emancipation was greatly influenced by his own cultural and historical traditions. This included the social conditions of Hungary in the 1930s, and especially the critical attitude towards Hungarian middle-class women. Kodolányi constructed an image of the Finnish woman in contrast to the Hungarian woman.

The Finnish women presented in the travelogue, are made of exclusively positive features, while the Hungarian women are characterised in a negative way. According to Kodolányi, Finnish women are "healthy, calm women wearing flat-soled shoes and who don't use lipstick nor nail polish. One can easily notice that they all go to work. Since I'm used to the women of Budapest who are artificially thin, these healthy women who wear simple clothes, walk calmly, don't obviously know of the temptation of sex-appeal, which to me is strange."[89] While the Finnish women are nice, silent, modest, cheerful, proud, self-confident, and partake in sports regularly, the Hungarian middle-class women are spoilt and indulge in a life of idleness. They also expect that "men would humbly serve them if they need something. If they want to take a seat one has to grab a chair for them. If they want to put on their coats one has to help with that, too. If they need water one has to pour them water."[90]

In conclusion, it can be stated that Kodolányi, in his analysis of Finnish women, removes himself from the patriarchal social norms of the interwar period in Hungary, and the feminine patterns fitting these norms. He achieves this by discussing the role of women as being organically part of the socio-economical system. Nevertheless, his picture was too idealised, this was due to his main task being to criticise the Hungarian society, and especially the women of the upper middle-class and gentry. Finland and the Finnish women acted as a practical example for his critique.

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88 Gyáni 1998, 339.

89 Kodolányi 1990, 81. "Egészséges, nyugodt mozgású nők, lapos sarkú cipő, rúzstalan ajak és festetlen körmök… *Valamennyien látszik, hogy dolgozik.* Mesterségesen soványított *pesti* dísznőinkhez szokva, furcsán hatnak rám ezek az egyszerűen öltözött, nyugodtan járó, a szexepil szédületét nyilván hírből sem ismerő, első látásra is egészséges nők."

90 Kodolányi 1990, 81. " (...) a férfiak azonnal inasként ugorjanak, ha valami kell nekik. Ha leakarnak ülni, nosza, széket alájok. Ha a kabátjukat fel akarják venni, hamar felsegíteni rájuk. Vizet akarnak: ide a kancsóval, és tölts nekik! *És vége-hossza nem volt a siránkozásnak*."

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CREATING A NATIONAL BRAND OF 'GIRL' – COMPARING MARIMEKKO'S MARI GIRL WITH HELEN GURLEY BROWN'S SINGLE GIRL DURING THE 1960S AND 70S

Rebekah Rousi

Abstract

Where there is a struggle there is an opportunity. Whilst countless women internationally were taking part in feminist protests during the 1960s and 70s arguing for issues such as equal labour participation, and highlighting the moral implications of subjectivism of the female body others were using the social movements as vehicles for their own capital agenda. *Playboy* magazine's Hugh Hefner is famous for attributing *Playboy's* role in women liberation, particularly drawing connections between the sexual revolution (and introduction to the birth control pill) and women's ability to enjoy non-reproductive sex, as well as *Playboy's* role as a lucrative employer for women. In the same vein, parallel to Hefner's playboy bunnies, adult 'Girls' were mobilised world wide. In the earlier half of the 20th century, the Modern Girl emerged in central Europe, the US and Asia. She served as both a sales mannequin for commercial products and a symbol of modernised economies. The Modern Girls varied in their manifestations from one locale to the next. This article focuses on comparing two of the Modern Girls who arose during the 1960s and 70s in Finland and the US. The Finnish Marimekko Corporation's 'Mari Girl' is described in relation to Helen Gurley Brown's Single Girl, in an attempt to gauge the differing nature of commercial constructions of women's roles and societal positions in the Finnish and North American contexts. The article introduces the 'Girls' in terms of their historical contexts and creators. From there on, themes discussed in this article include: work versus profession and economic philosophies; concepts of autonomy and connectedness, as well as identity through work, sexuality and motherhood.

Keywords: Armi Ratia, Helen Gurley Brown, Mari Girl, Modern Girl, Single Girl.

1 Introduction

This article is about the construction of adult female representational phenomena known as 'Girls' which emerged during the 20th century as symbols of modernity and role models of consumption. Barlow et al. discuss the emergence of Modern Girl phenomena during the 1920s and 30s.[91] Their project specifically looks at the roles of the Modern Girls in contexts such as the Shanghai advertising industry in China and as a symbolic token of Japanese imperialism in Japan. With the location and cultural centricity of the Modern Girls in mind, this article focuses on two 'Girls' who emerged on the parallel US and Finnish commercial markets during the 1960s – the Single Girl and the Mari Girl. Both 'Girls' were created by prominent public female personalities and were fostered within companies for promotion to specific cultural audiences. Further, both 'Girls' can be said to have rested separately and somewhat uneasily in relation to the feminist movements of the 1960s and 70s.

By this, I mean that certain elements of the ideals promoted in the movements such as female financial and social independence were incorporated into the "Girls'' rhetoric. Yet, there were other portions of the issues such as the radical and lesbian feminist problematisation of heterosexual hegemony, marriage and family structures that were not interwoven into the 'Girls' make-up.[92] As a matter of fact, in Helen Gurley Brown's biography *Bad Girls Go Everywhere*[93] there is note that in 1970 a militant band of feminists occupied the offices of *Cosmopolitan*[94] to bring Helen Gurley Brown into a "consciousness-raising"[95] (CR) session regarding feminist issues. Part of their motivation related to their objection of adult women being referred to as girls.[96] However, this type of intervention (at least on the US scene) did not prevent the creators and promoters of the 'Girls', American Helen Gurley Brown and Finnish Armi Ratia, from exploiting the climates of woman power and independence endorsed in the movements.[97]

The article has been written on the basis of a small sample of texts which discuss the 'Girls' within their respective commercial, corporate and cultural contexts. It is designed to expand upon the narratives which were commenced by Helen Gurley Brown in her infamous *Sex and the Single Girl*[98], as well as

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91 Barlow et al. 2005.

92 For more information about radical feminist views on these issues, see for example Willis 2004, Shulman 1980 or the article "Feminism, Second Wave" at http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-3045300811.html. These sources present the complex nature in which matters of power and taken-for-granted understandings of the economic and social worlds were problematised.

93 Scanlon 2009.

94 Brown was editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* for over 30 years.

95 Consciousness raising sessions are said to have been a series of meetings which took place in the late 1960s in which women spoke of matters of male supremacy in areas such as professions, education, public life and private life. See Shulman 1980.

96 Hays 2009.

97 See for example Hernes 1987 and Lloyd 2005.

98 Brown 1962/2004.

those featured in the 1986 Marimekko anthology, *Phenomenon Marimekko*[99]. The material and the constructions of the 'Girls' themselves have been treated through the frames of interpretive analysis. In other words, this text represents the way in which I have interpreted the *images* (textual and pictorial) based on my own understanding, or "verstehen"[100], as a woman who did not live through the 1960s, and was not born or raised in the United States or Finland. Through my Anglo-Australian lens this text, in Clifford Geertz's words, merely expresses my take on the 'Girl' phenomena as "not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning".[101]

This article approaches the topic through the recognition of the diverse cultural contexts in which the 'Girls' were situated. In the following sections the 'Girls' are introduced in their historical commercial contexts – the Single Girl as a literary manifestation who went on to serve as a role-model for the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and the Mari Girl who typified the consumer and associates of the Marimekko Corporation. The different conceptual frameworks of work versus professionalism and economics in relation to freedom to spend are then discussed in section three. Integrated into this section, and crucial to understanding the 'Girls'' roles in relation to societal and family structures are the notions of 'autonomy' and 'connectedness'. The article concludes with reflections on sex, appearance, motherhood and female empowerment which have been raised in the article.

2 The 'Girls' historical contexts

The 'Girls' promoted by Helen Gurley Brown and Armi Ratia can be seen to differ on several levels, none-the-least the environments (cultural and corporate) in which they emerged. Similarities in their origins rested in the advertising backgrounds of their creators. Helen Gurley Brown was hired during the 1950s as a copywriter after being discovered by her boss for her sharp, concise writing style whilst working as a secretary. Soon she became the highest paid female copywriter on the US West Coast.[102] Armi Ratia had trained as a textile artist, however, soon after World War II worked as a copywriter for Erva-Latvala Ltd. until joining her husband's business in 1949.[103] Both women were known for their witty writing skills and straight-talking media personae. Yet, the ways and environments in which the 'Girls' were created differed, and this matter will be addressed in the present section. The first sub-section describes the

[99] Rahikainen-Haapman, H., Kaarakka, E. & Vuorimaa, M-T. (Eds.) 1986.
[100] The concept of verstehen was developed by the likes of Wilhelm Dilthey (1982) and Max Weber (1964) in an attempt to explain the subjective element which is inevitably brought in to the interpretation of research findings. It also explicitly addresses the subjectivity of the re-assemblage and "filling in the gaps" of material. For more information read Martin (2000) and Yanow & Schwartz-Shea (2006).
[101] Geertz 1973, 5.
[102] Garner 2009.
[103] Ainamo 1998.

establishment of the Single Girl, from the focus of a best-selling book to the role-model for readers of the *Cosmopolitan* magazine. The next section describes the Mari Girl created through Armi Ratia's corporate rhetoric and the imagination of creative practitioners involved with the Marimekko Corporation.

2.1 The Single Girl

Helen Gurley Brown's Single Girl was brought to public attention with the publication of her book *Sex and the Single Girl* in 1962. This book – which incidentally was encouraged as well as named by her husband film producer David Brown – could be seen as a self-help (or "how-to-get-ahead") book for single women in the 1960s.[104] The book was interpreted by some as empowering for its positive spin on women's singleness during a time when women's primary tasks in life were perceived as being a wife and mother. Those who had not fulfilled these roles by a certain age were stigmatised as being unwanted spinsters.[105]

Interestingly, whilst the book celebrated the freedom brought through singleness such as sexual freedom, afforded by the introduction of the contraceptive pill and the right to decide over one's life in matters such as consumption – as women with jobs were economically independent and therefore able to spend on whatever they wished – the book was clearly distinct from the feminist movements in its emphasis on the importance of physical attractiveness. The Single Girl is typified by Helen Radner[106] and Angela McRobbie[107] in their critique of media representations of women, as being "girlish" and in a "perpetual state of immaturity"[108]. Or to explain the Single Girl's physique in other words, she could be seen as permanently pre-pubescent, in a way, physically and emotionally not yet ready for motherhood. A set body type is established in the assumption that her breasts are so small, she can discard of her bras and the expensive necessity to buy them. Instead of bras, she may cover her nipples with bandaids.[109] This attitude towards spending can be considered as advice for the Single Girl based on Helen Gurley Brown's 'Single Girl survival-like' economic philosophy, to be discussed in the economics section of this article. The physical characteristics can be seen to reflect images of Brown herself – she is infamously known for her super skinny body and bulb-like head.

Further, the book in its existence as a Single Girl's manual was formed through a collection of short texts providing tips and advice that Brown had

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[104] Hays 2009.
[105] Garner 2009.
[106] Radner 1999.
[107] McRobbie 2009.
[108] This is talked of in McRobbie's (2009) chapter on "Disarticulating Feminism" in terms of the girl-like behaviour of 30-something year olds, the fictional Bridget Jones and the media-crafted Kylie Minogue, and the necessary immaturity required for maintaining sexual and overall public appeal. Radner (1999) talks of this in direct relation to the Single Girl.
[109] Peck 1985/1991.

written during her pre-marital years.[110] It was not until three years into her marriage (at the age of 40) that Helen Gurley Brown published the book with her husband's encouragement. In 1965 she became editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan* magazine. This not only marked a career move for Brown, but arguably an innate change to the discourses of women's magazines forever. Helen Gurley Brown credits herself for saving the *Cosmopolitan* from being closed down by the Hearst Corporation in 1965 when it failed to make profits from what she classified as advice on darning socks.[111] Instead, she changed the format of women's magazines when she featured an article about the birth control pill on the cover of one of her early issues.[112]

Radner notes that whilst the magazine dramatically changed, the characteristics of the Single Girl stayed relatively constant.[113] Further, her trademark features which positively promoted singleness in light of women's working life, was embraced by the magazine's editorials. It was strategically in-step with the increasing reality of postponed marriage and women in the work force. Helen Gurley Brown's Single Girl had the advantage of other (feminist) initiatives at the time, such as Betty Friedan's declaration that although marriage and motherhood were "sine qua non"[114] of a woman's life she could also maintain a job, in that via the Single Girl it was *alright* (and even desired), not to be a mother or married. Articles published in the *Cosmopolitan* reinforced this notion with topics covering contraception, 'playing the field' with relationships and career advice, in that they emphasised how singleness was a *choice* not a *stigma*.

Furthermore, whilst ideologically for one of the first times women's choice was being actively articulated and promoted, the Single Girl also served a purpose quite closely related to the Modern Girls in for example China. The Single Girl, who placed particular care in her appearance, working with "what she had"[115], could be seen as the perfect basis upon which to promote products such as cosmetics and clothes. Thus, most characteristics of the Single Girl thrived in the glossy magazine, but one particular characteristic relating to spending philosophy could be seen as conveniently taking a backburner. We return to this in the economics section of the article. The matter of key concern at this stage in the discussion is that the image of the *Cosmopolitan* changed from family magazine to a vessel for what was seen as on-the-edge content, with Helen Gurley Brown's risqué presence in editorship. She already had a name and reputation established through the controversy and popularity of *Sex and the Single Girl*, permanently associating her with the Single Girl, and her products (the magazine) as the promotion of guiltless sex and women's choice.[116]

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110 Hays 2009.
111 Hantman 2000.
112 Cosmopolitan 2009.
113 Radner 1999, 14.
114 Friedan 1963/1979.
115 A comment made by Gurley in an interview with Richard D Heffner 1999.
116 Radner 1999.

2.2 The Mari Girl

The formation of the Mari Girl has occurred through a mixed set of processes including corporate rhetoric of the Marimekko Corporation's founding owner Armi Ratia, as well as through texts and narratives offered by others associated with the Finnish textiles company. Unlike the Single Girl who had been created as a literary-based role model, the Mari Girl had been formed to typify the female staff, consumers and associates of the Marimekko Corporation during the 1960s and 70s.

The Marimekko Corporation was formed in 1951 as a company designed to utilise and showcase printed textiles produced by its parent company, Printex (acquired by Viljo Ratia in 1949).[117] The company's name translates to English as "Mary/Marie Dress". The initial owners of the company were Viljo and Armi Ratia, as well as Viljo and Riitta Immonen. Riitta Immonen, a textiles designer (as Armi Ratia had also trained to be) transformed Printex textiles into dresses which were showcased at one of Finland's first fashion shows after World War II. The original dresses were haute couture inspired, setting a tone similar to what was seen in fashions in, for example, France at the time.[118]

After the first fashion show Riitta Immonen refused to make more clothing for Marimekko, instead choosing to concentrate on her own fashion company. In her replacement Armi Ratia set about employing practitioners fresh from art schools such as Vuokko Nurmesniemi, employed in 1953, whose modernist approach to design could be seen to complement the Printex patterns created by another artist trained designer, Maija Isola.[119] The significance of these artists cannot be seen as resting solely in their aesthetic approaches but also within their political involvement. For whilst Armi Ratia herself was never noted as being involved in the activist movements, Marimekko's artist-designers such as Vuokko Nurmesniemi and Annika Rimala were known for their activity within the scenes of the feminist and student movements.[120] This also instilled a connection between Marimekko's design philosophy and progressive social awareness.

Already the name of the company in itself with its anagramic reference to Armi Ratia, took on the shape of a woman, particularly in conjunction to the word dress. There is simultaneous closeness and distance in the name, whereby the 'Armi' ('Mari') directly referred to the owner herself: thirty-nine years of age, married, mother and business woman. The name 'Mari' may be interpreted in terms of other women, younger or older, single or married and in other stages of career life. They are connected yet different. Already with the statement "Marimekko needs to be different" − correlating with Armi Ratia's rejection towards being yet another company to print floral textiles − the buds of redefining Finnish textiles, and subsequently re-articulating (or arguably instilling the already articulated) Finnish femininity had formed.

[117] Ratia 1986.
[118] Ainamo 2003.
[119] Marimekko 2009.
[120] Ainamo 1996, 144.

According to Kimmo Sarje the Mari Girl seemed to emerge into public recognition through different stages and names.[121] Sarje cites the *Norsk Dameblad* which on December 7th 1960 described the Finnish 'Mari' as the modern version of women from the Finnish national mythology *Kalevala*. This 'Mari' was distinctly female alongside the more general breed of Marimekko follower or associate 'Marimekkoite'[122]. The *Norsk Dameblad's*, or Norwegian women's magazine's, description of the 'Mari' already sets the tone of the Marimekko woman as being that of some folkloric, exoticised other.[123] Exoticised or not, the othering may be seen as a way of negating Finnish design, and in particular primitivising Finnish women, on the international circuit, but on the national circuit, and especially in regards to Marimekko, the othering was a strength. It was a distinction between the 'us' (Finnish women) and 'them' (women abroad) on the international level, and an 'us' (Mari women) and 'them' (the rest – presumably consumers who did not identify with Marimekko or its products) on the national and corporate levels.

Thus, when the idea of the Mari Girl, according to Sarje, was alive and thriving, strength came in the forms of unification through company and culture, and supposed distinction from those outside the circles. Ideas of the Mari Girl had been harnessed and projected during the height of international feminist movements (including the second wave in the UK and US) – as with the Single Girl – yet had been designed to act as a role model for the Marimekko consumer (as the Single Girl had done during Helen Gurley Brown's reign of *Cosmopolitan*). Whilst the Mari Girl had been created within a specific corporate context, she can be seen as more general and less defined as the Single Girl. For instance, the Mari Girl is described by Sarje as an autonomous woman, whose life was at the mercy of sudden changes and multiple roles.[124] The Mari Girl was simultaneously a warm mother, "an excellent 'home spirit' skilled at cooking, a good mixer, mood creator, as well as being a keen fisherman"[125]. Further, Sarje adds that the Mari Girl "would rather marry an architect" or some other creative professional than for example a businessman.[126]

Thus, by this stage the reader should already be aware of the ambiguity in the term 'Girl' in this context. For, as mentioned previously, feminists rejected the implied immaturity and inferiority in the term 'Girl', here 'Girl' was used to form a unifying (marketing) spirit, which appealed to women across generations, and naturally broadened the target group of potential clients. Thus, it was assumed that the 'Girl', or the free-thinker, linked to childhood through

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121 Sarje 1986.

122 The Marimekkoite, who could be female or male of any age, is described by both Saves (1986) and Sarje (1986), both of whom offer a cult-like surrealistic tinge to this breed of consumer-creator.

123 Kalha (1998) talks of the processes of othering Finnish modern design within the realms of Scandinavian design, whereby associations made in regards to Finnish and even Byzantine folklore were common practice when describing artefacts such as the ryijy rugs (woollen wall hanging rugs) and even the likes of designers such as Tapio Wirkkala (who promulgated the image of being a man fresh from the forest).

124 Sarje 1985, 55.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid., 55-56.

dreams and imagination[127] would get married, as she eventually would need motherhood to fulfil her profile as an all-and-everything Mari Girl. Therefore, as with the Single Girl, the Mari Girl can be seen as a reflection of the *genuine* role-model, Armi Ratia, who countered Helen Gurley Brown in her profile, by being a mother, artist, host, diplomat, and not just selective with men, but equal to them.

3 Concepts of Economics and Career – an overall comparison

3.1 Notions of survival and fulfilment

The cases of the two 'Girls' can be seen to differ in regards to notions of work in the Single Girl case as compared to career in the Mari Girl case, as well as in attitudes towards economics. For the Single Girl, work was a means by which to secure economic independency and for the first time in US modernised history to have the power of choice in regards to what she spent, participating in non-marital anti-reproductive sex and postponing marriage to enjoy the fruits of single working life. According to Anna-Liisa Wiikeri, the Marimekko *woman*[128] was a "career woman, normally with a degree and a profession that involved travelling extensively".[129] Wiikeri further described the Marimekko woman in terms of her commitment to keeping up-to-date. In other words, the Marimekko woman from Wiikeri's perspective was by no means just someone else's secretary. Whilst Sarje does not articulate the Mari Girl's professional aspirations in such detail, he suggests that her personality was that of "a modern, liberally minded person of humor, commited [sic] both intellectually and artistically".[130]

Where the Mari Girl is complex on the one hand in so far as she could be seen as being embodied within any woman, young or old, of thin or large frame, provided that they consumed Marimekko products and satisfied most, if not all the criteria outlined by Sarje – which most Finnish women would have done – the Single Girl's complexity rested in her particularity which was confounded by contradictions. Further complications in the career and economic aspects of the Single Girl can be seen as she has evolved through the writings and interview material Helen Gurley Brown provides as she grows older. Firstly, right from the initial stages, work was not seen as being a right in Helen Gurley

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127 Saarikoski (1986) emphasises the importance of dreams and imagination in regards to the nature of the company, deeming this characteristic to be a part of Armi Ratia's overall "vision".

128 Please note Anna-Liisa Wiikeri's reference to the Marimekko woman rather than 'Girl'. This may be interpreted either as a refusal to join the discourse of labeling the female Marimekko associates as girlish and naïve, or as an indication of Wiikeri's own outsiderness or unfamiliarity with the Mari Girl paradigm.

129 Wiikeri 1986, 34.

130 Sarje 1986, 55.

Brown's opinion, it was seen as "a necessity".[131] This interpretation can be thought to have emerged from reading *Sex and the Single Girl* as a survival guide for unmarried women, as there is almost urgency in Helen Gurley Brown's plea for women to recognise that when there was no husband in their lives, they had to look after themselves. There was also a shift in thought from the idea of women, regardless of resources, getting married and having the husband take care of the financial concerns, to the idea that in order to make a successful career out of marriage a woman already needed to have resources.[132] These resources were outlined as being in the forms of housing, clothing and anything which enhanced the woman's appeal.[133] This reflected Helen Gurley Brown's own pathway into marriage.

Further contradiction lies in the urgency, not just to have a job (and at this stage of the Single Girl it is any kind of job), but to be thrifty, as stated above, to cut back and save money on whatever possible. This conflicts with the freedom envisioned in being a woman in charge of her own finances and able to spend money on whatever she wished. Upon reflection, the obligation to accumulate nice things (or assets) in order to be more appealing to a male suitor also seems to counter-act the freedom of being able to decide upon what one wants. Thriftiness does not seem to enter the equation of the Mari Girl.[134] In fact, when viewing the Mari Girl as a consumer role-model it may be observed that there is much more emphasis on everyday beauty and aesthetics. This should not be surprising given Armi Ratia's own corporate design inspiration from Gregor Paulsson's idea of *vackrare vardagsvaror* (more beautiful everyday things).[135] However, rather than accumulating aesthetically appealing items for the purpose of attracting a spouse, for the Mari Girl the consumption of Marimekko products was more about satisfying one's own need to be surrounded by beauty, and in turn to improve the quality of lives of those around her through decorative consumption.[136] This emphasises the integral role the Mari Girl is perceived as possessing in relation to family and social life.

On the work front, the job description of the Single Girl was not expressly emphasised apart from the possibility of office romance, supposedly with a man in a more senior position (the boss). Yet, in terms of mixing jobs with

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131 Radner 1999, 11.

132 Ibid.

133 D'Acci 1997, 76.

134 For why would there be in the case of an imaginary woman designed to be the role-model of Marimekko consumption? Even though the Finnish economy was characterised, particularly during the 1950s, as the economy of 'scarcity'. Hawkins 1998.

135 Aav 2003, 38; Wiberg 1997, 26.

136 This philosophy was an intrinsic part of the Swedish socio-political notion of *folkhemmet* (home of the people), which drew connections between the aesthetic quality of people's everyday lived in environments with overall well-being, welfare and cultural-intellectual standards. Interesting reading regarding this can be seen in Hanna Lindberg's dissertation *Vastakohtien Ikea: Ikean arvot ja mentaliteetti muuttuvassa ajassa ja ympäristössä* (Ikea of Contradictions. Ikea´s values and mentality in the times of change, 2006), in which Lindberg describes the evolution of Ikea's business philosophy based on changes in social-political contexts over time. This also includes discussion on the development of Gregor Paulsson's ideas in relation to *folkhemmet*.

romance, or in other words, using sex to get ahead, Helen Gurley Brown gives this advice: "You can't sleep your way to the top or even to the middle, and there is no such thing as a free lunch. You have to do it yourself…"[137]

In the Mari Girl's case there is never the assumption of a free lunch, nor sleeping one's way to the top. In fact, from particularly Wiikeri's and Sarje's texts in *Phenomenon Marimekko* one gains the distinct feeling that there is no hierarchy – at least in terms of gender. Seppo Saves' text on the other hand distinctly implies a hierarchy in which women are at the top.[138] Contrary to seeing the reverse gender distribution in corporate hierarchy as a positive characteristic, Saves' text reflects an overt disdain of this type of organisation, even within the Finnish context. In his horror-like account of the business he describes:

> There must have been a slaughterhouse on the ground floor of the factory – at least it smelt like it… Here in Marimekko's virginal premises was a long white table with stacks of women around it. Somewhere in the background hivered slim, young male Marimekkoites in their pretty Marimekko shirts. They opened doors, were terribly nice, and absolutely soundless. I seemed to recall they were addressed collectively, but I don't remember the noun.[139]

In this piece of text, following suit with the positive descriptions of the Mari Girl, is the idea of the loss of male identity through women's success in the workforce. The term 'Marimekkoites' is used in this text, and instead of any reference to the Mari Girls who would be assumed to have been the ones sitting around the table, 'Marimekkoites' appears to be a negative way of depicting this collective identity of young males, the correct name of which he could not remember. Associations may be drawn in light of the type of atmosphere and labelling that Helen Gurley Brown herself was aiming to conquer in reference to death and singleness – i.e. the aging spinster who dies alone. Arguably the women around the table could be read as members of the virginal premises, who may have either slaughtered their competition, prospective suitors, or any wayward man, thus explaining the smell of the slaughterhouse, or been exuding the smell of imminent death, the death they would befall as eternal virgins – or spinsters.

3.2 Autonomy and connectedness

When comparing the two 'Girls' it may be observed that there are webs of female autonomy and interdependence of the genders. In the case of the Single Girl, if reflecting on John Donne's "no man is an island", there seems to be the feeling that every woman is a ship, who needs to keep working on the surface as well as pumping out the water in order to stay afloat. Helen Gurley Brown's Single Girl is certainly an independent agent who Radner describes through

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137 Cited in Garner 2009.
138 Saves 1986.
139 Ibid., 66.

Michel Foucault in relation to the "new ethical system" of capital.[140] A system comprising single workers is seen as having supported a disenfranchised mobile workforce. The articulation of femininity, what it meant to be a woman, and in a sense, the responsibilities of being a women – including those which were economic – printed in the book *Sex and the Single Girl*, and seen in the likes of *Cosmopolitan's* editorial, have been interpreted as modes of counselling working women. In other words, they have been read as making single women feel better about being single and working in the context of a transitioning economy which relied on 'unattached' individuals to increase productivity. Thus, these textual vehicles fit neatly into the above mentioned paradigm as attempts to prevent women from having regrets and reverting back to a more traditional gender-based division of labour.

The Mari Girl on the other hand emerged in a context in which women have a long history of paid labour. In the *Phenomenon Marimekko* texts which discuss the Mari Girl there is some mention of her ideal husband, particularly in relation to the requirement for him to be creative, but the Mari Girl was seen much more in terms of a comprehensive familial and social whole. The Mari Girl had a nameless husband who had his own role somewhere (possibly in reproduction), but it was she who maintained the family economically, domestically and socially. The marital relationship comes particularly close to that which was hinted towards by Armi Ratia's ex-husband Viljo Ratia[141] who mentioned that after Armi Ratia got a taste for the limelight, she never let it go.[142] In contrast to the Single Girl, rather than being a single agent, or autonomous struggling-to-stay-afloat ship in the remorseless sea, the Mari Girl was the centre of everything – everything being interdependent and relying on her. This follows in the tradition of women's roles in Finnish society, as described in detail by Anu Koivunen who uses representations and re-framings of the Finnish *Niskavuori* sagas by Hella Wuolijoki (1880-1940) to emphasise women's roles in light of the absence of men due to reasons such as war, working in the city whilst the women are left on the estates, and vagabond style job seeking.[143]

There seems to be a prescribed direction in which the Mari Girl, as a Finnish woman, was expected to take. Her choices rested in terms of her profession and husband. The Single Girl on the other hand, had a life of uncertain direction which may have ended up in marriage – the quality of the marriage depending on the quality of the resources the Single Girl had accumulated during her single life – or eternal singleness (supposedly no longer stigmatised by the term 'spinsterhood'). Whilst the level and rate of work a woman put in seems to have equalled the quality of husband, it by no means equated to the quality of family, as it did in the Mari Girl (and other Finnish) examples. If Helen Gurley Brown was anything to go by, marriage did not necessarily mean the need to quit working, nor did it mean that babies would

[140] Radner 1999, 21.
[141] The Ratias divorced in the late 1960s.
[142] Ratia 1986, 9.
[143] Koivunen 2003.

instantly be born. As seen in her example, the absence of children meant more time to spend on working, to advance in career and to keep oneself in shape.

4 Conclusion – Lover, Mother, Worker

The discussion of the article has moved through conceptual understandings of work, economics, consumption, family and social structures and to a brief extent sex via constructions and various interpretations of the Single Girl and the Mari Girl. Undoubtedly, the introduction of the birth control pill and the freedom of US women to participate in un-reproductive sex, contributed to a large extent in the image of the man-selective Single Girl. On the same token, beauty of the Single Girl, through her petite physical features and consciously maintained cosmetics played an integral role in her ability to attract men, in order to play the field and ultimately find 'Mr. Right' and most importantly to boost advertising sales with a focused vision of what women (or 'Girls') should look like. The Mari Girl, on the other hand, was eternally 'Girl' in thought, playfulness, creative ideas and curiosity. The products she was to consume such as the *Ilotakki* (Joy Jacket), and other shapeless 'mumu'-style dress designs, which according to the *Life* magazine in the 1960s, were "By Any Name – Still a Sack"[144], did not require the Mari Girl to be particularly thin. The Mari Girl could be of any size and as Armi Ratia claimed "[a] woman is sexy, not her dress".[145] And, to further this: not her make-up.

The sale of Marimekko clothing was (and arguably still is) the sale of ideas, which thus made the image of the effervescent Mari Girl, all the more important. The visualisation of the Single Girl, who in her eternal physical youth could enjoy un-reproductive sex, was countered in the case of the Mari Girl, who through her sexual maturity was not (in verbalised ideas) to be the object of heterosexual desire, but to serve in her reproductive role as mother. Where motherhood was seen in the US to have taken away the autonomous identity of women[146], it was seen to complete the identity of the Mari Girl. Moreover, the very basis of the factor of contraception within the discourses of the Single Girl implied that having a child out of wedlock, and particularly being a single mother, were very much still a taboo. This is juxtaposed by one of the most prominent Mari Girls, Marimekko designer and partial creator of the 'Marimekko look' Maija Isola, famously being a professionally successful single mother.

In short, gender relations in the workplace of the 'Girls' can be seen in terms of who makes the coffee. In the Single Girl's case, the young barely-woman makes the coffee for her male executive boss, and for a nice little wage with which to buy the *Cosmopolitan* magazine and save on everything else but

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[144] Tarschys and Hedqvist 2003.
[145] Gura 2004, 37.
[146] Willis 1969.

the home and furnishings she buys in order to lure the male bird to the nest. The executive and creatively thinking Mari Girl on the other hand, has a work team of unaffected smiling young Marimekkoite men who are willing to make coffee for their strong, more mature and motherly boss.[147]

The elements that have arisen within this article can be seen as national issues and discourses of gender. There have been several distinct differences in the history of women's and men's contributions to societies in the respective countries. In Finland, women received the right to vote and stand for parliament in 1906.[148] Whereas, in the US women got the right to vote in 1920 in Tennessee, after the right had been proposed as far back as 1848.[149] Both countries had used women's labour to compensate for the male labour shortage during wartime.[150] However where in Finland, women's labour contribution had been strategically constant, historically and more recently in light of the necessity to pay back war debts[151], in the US the shift of labour was more of a temporary 'wartime effort'. In the US during World War II, 38% of the workforce were women, yet these women were displaced as soon as the men returned from their tour of duty.[152] The two 'Girls' *mothers*, Armi Ratia and Helen Gurley Brown, can be seen to promulgate and reflect the ideologies of their societies. Both women created their discourses of women based on idealised consumer models for their companies. Further, both women had something in common with their 'Girls'. However, there were also (generation) gaps between the 'Girls' and their *mothers*, Helen Gurley Brown was no longer single, and Armi Ratia was as motherly as any businessman. What the 'Girls' do though, is offer us a glimpse into the diverse conditions and discourses of national specific feminisms in the 1960s and 70s.

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147 An example of this is seen in the quotation on page 10, in which former-Marimekko photographer Seppo Saves (1986) establishes a somewhat alienating setting in which he describes the gender role-reversed nature of the Marimekko organizational setting.
148 Sulkunen 2003.
149 ACLU 2005.
150 A good example of the American case can be seen in the movie *A League of Their Own* directed by Penny Marshall (1992).
151 Hawkins 1998, 234.
152 Morse 2007.

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WOMEN ON THE FRINGES OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNITY IN YVONNE VERA'S *WHY DON'T YOU CARVE OTHER ANIMALS*

Anna-Leena Toivanen

Abstract

Throughout her literary output, the Zimbabwean author Yvonne Vera (1964-2005) has studied the thematic of the gendered subaltern. What is characteristic of Vera's work is that the stories of the women are always set in temporally specified contexts in Zimbabwe's national history. Although her aesthetically less complex debut work, the short story collection *Why don't you carve other animals* (1992), has not received as much scholarly attention as the rest of her production, it still proves to be a worthwhile subject for a study on the interlocked issues of gender and nationhood. Set in the years of the Zimbabwean anti-colonial freedom fight at the end of the 1970s, the short stories depict the struggle from the viewpoint of those positioned in its margins, especially women. The texts in the collection portray the anti-colonial freedom fight and the process of nation-building as mainly masculine projects in which women are designed as restricted agency, their primary role being to mother. As with the rest of Vera's production, *Why don't you carve other animals* highlights the fact that in the context of the anti-colonial nationalist project, other struggles, unparallel to that grand narrative, were taking place. The goals of these struggles seem, to a certain extent, incompatible with the clearly articulated agenda of decolonisation and nation-building. Rather, women's battles prove to be somewhat intangible aspirations to newness as the women are struggling to design themselves a better future in the strangulation of the gender-biased discourses of colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism. The women do not share men's feelings of affinity and loyalty towards the land and the past: for women, these represent burdens and betrayals standing in the way of their future self-realisation. Being positioned on the fringes of the national community, Vera's female subjects mark the inconsistency in the anti-colonial nationalist discourse that stresses an all-encompassing belongingness and a

collectively shared cause. Through her writing, Vera engages in exposing issues that stand in the way of the realisation of an ethically viable communality.

Keywords: anti-colonialism, community, decolonisation, gender, nation, Yvonne Vera, Zimbabwe.

1 Women and national history in Vera's work

The back cover text of Yvonne Vera's (1964–2005) short story collection *Why don't you carve other animals* (1992) describes the thematic of the work as follows: "These stories, set during the years of the armed struggle, tell of the other struggle, that of survival of those who stayed behind." This is the compilation that launched the career of the renowned Zimbabwean author, who at the beginning of the 1990s lived in Canada where she had come to study at the University of York in Toronto. In 1995, after attaining a doctoral degree in literature studies, Vera returned to her home country Zimbabwe. When she passed away ten years later in 2005, her literary output, in addition to the aforementioned debut work, comprised of five novels that were critically acclaimed and awarded both on a local and global scale. One could generalize the thematic of Vera's œuvre by stating that her main interest has been in studying the gendered subaltern[153] in the context of Zimbabwean national history. Basically, Vera's novels build on different physical assaults to which her female characters are subjected: the novels portray women as victims of rape, incest, murder, as well as the self-inflected violence that the women direct against their bodies and children in the form of abortion and infanticide. What is typical of Vera's work is that these acts of violence always take place in very specific contexts of the Zimbabwean national history. These include the colonial intrusion and native insurgencies in the 1890s (*Nehanda*); the turn of the 1950s, with nationalist movements starting to gain ground (*Butterfly burning*); the anti-colonial freedom fight of the 1970s (*Without a name* and *Under the tongue*); as well as the early years of the post-independence era in the 1980s (*The stone virgins*).[154] Vera's own statement is illustrative of her concerns and aims as an author: "I'm writing, in a way, the biographies of unknown women, but I'm also interested in our national history, so they are always against the backdrop of a particular time."[155] This approach enables Vera to study the concept of nationhood and to shed light on how women are excluded from national community, while, through the violence inflicted on their bodies, they become some sort of "unofficial", displaced site of struggle. In the context of freedom

153 In Gayatri Spivak's terminology subalternity refers to subordination that can be based on, for instance, class, ethnicity, or gender. It also suggests that the group or subject in question does not have an articulate political identity. Morton 2007, 96–97.

154 In fact, *The stone virgins* covers a wide time span from the 1950s to the year 1986. The focus, however, is on the events that take place in the 1980s.

155 Bryce 2002a, 223.

fighting which is, as Kizito Z. Muchemwa and Robert Muponde put it, "[d]riven by an excess of masculinity, individuals whose gender does not contribute to the war economy are under threat."[156] A salient feature in the violence acted on the women's "bodies under threat" is that the perpetrators are usually men somehow involved in the anti-colonial nationalist struggle[157]: they are freedom-fighters, ex-combatants, or like in *Under the tongue*, a father hiding in the mountains during the war. This aspect emphasises the violent, gendered dimension of the nation-building project and its impacts on women, placing them right into the middle of the struggle over freedom, power, and national community in a very peculiar way.

The remorseless representation of violence in Vera's work is appropriate in arresting the reader's attention. Gendered violence during the anti-colonial freedom fighting period and in the nation-building project is a disturbing issue in the nation's history that needs to be addressed through different representational practices, including literature. Here, however, the focus will be neither on Vera's novels nor on the direct physical violence inflicted on the female bodies. First of all, not much scholarly attention has been given to the author's debut work *Why don't you carve other animals*: clearly, the focus has been on her novels, which, compared to the short story collection, can be qualified as aesthetically more ambitious entities.[158] Although Vera's short stories can hardly compete in complexity with her more elaborate novels, they nevertheless lend themselves perfectly to a closer scrutiny focusing on the intertwined issues of gender and nationhood. The other reason why the short story collection is chosen as the subject of analysis in this essay is that it represents another – more subtle, so to speak – dimension of the relation of gender, anti-colonialism and nation-building in Vera's work: the emphasis in these stories is not on direct physical violence, but on the everyday lives and rather monotonous routines of women during the time of the freedom-fight.[159] What is equally interesting is that the short stories embody several of Vera's main themes that have later found a more elaborate expression in her acclaimed novels. On the whole, the short story collection proves to be worth scrutiny despite – and equally because of – the apparent lack of scholarly interest that it has encountered compared to the rest of the production.

In this essay, my reading is receptive to the intertwined issues of nationhood and gender as they are represented in the setting of the freedom fight and nation-building in Vera's short stories. The stories are set during the

156 Muchemwa & Muponde 2007, xviii.

157 What is typical of African nationalisms is their anti-colonialist character; nationalist movements walk hand in hand with the struggle to end the colonial rule. Schraeder 2004, 81–82. This is why the processes of decolonisation and nation-building are represented as intertwined phenomena throughout the essay.

158 Illustrative of this lack of critical attention is the fact that in *Sign and taboo*, an essay compilation dedicated to Vera's œuvre, only one essay of seventeen addresses the short story collection, and more precisely, its opening story "Crossing Boundaries". See Bryce 2002b.

159 Women's daily life and routines are portrayed in Vera's production throughout. However, the absence of harsh physical violence in the short stories shifts the focus even more towards the less dramatic course of life.

time of the anti-colonial freedom fight, that is, in the late 1970s. The presence of the anti-colonial struggle is pervasive, and it is reflected, to quote once more from the back cover, even in the lives of "those who stayed behind" – a choice of words that interestingly debars certain subjects outside the reality of the struggle from the very outset. Some of the stories address the time of independence which, in Zimbabwe, came comparatively late for continental Africa, in 1980. These texts are interesting in the sense that they portray the effects of the alleged change in the long-awaited freedom as manifested in the realities of the women. As the following analysis demonstrates, the anti-colonial freedom fight and the process of nation-building are struggles over power and meaning in which mechanisms of gender-based exclusion are constantly at work. What the article also wishes to convey is that in Vera's short stories, the years preceding independence cannot be entirely incorporated into the grand narrative of the anti-colonial freedom struggle and aspirations towards a collective national identity: the fronts on which women's struggles took place are not necessarily congruent with the aims of the nationalist project. By rendering visible the gendered bias of nationhood, the short stories, just like the rest of Vera's production, engage indirectly in the project of re-narrating the nation in a manner that could genuinely accommodate differences.

2 Intertwining nation and gender

The strength of ideologies such as nationalism is in their "naturalness" for which they are easily taken for granted.[160] Narrating the nation is, however, a socially constructed process inherently two-fold in character: it is marked by the co-existence of acts of affiliation and exclusion.[161] To conceive nationhood in terms of its internal mechanisms of belonging and not-belonging is, ultimately, to question the "naturalness" of the notion of nation, and above all, to challenge the all-inclusive and rather dubious collective "we" constitutive of its narrative.[162] What is to be underlined is that the notion of national community

160 Jackson & Penrose 1993, 3.

161 Bhabha 1990, 5.

162 In this essay, it is the exclusionary and problematic aspects of nationalism that are highlighted. However, as R. Radhakrishnan notes, "Like all complex historical movements, nationalism is not a monolithic phenomenon to be deemed entirely good or entirely bad; nationalism is a contradictory discourse and its internal contradictions need to be unpacked in their historical specificity." Radhakrishnan 1996, 190–91. Thus, it is important to acknowledge that, historically, different forms of nationalisms have had positive effects in terms of empowering collective identities and cultural resistance against derogatory colonial discourses. Sivanandan 2004, 49; see also Boehmer 2005a, 10. Discussing nationalism in the Zimbabwean context, Ranka Primorac has argued that, "It is arguable that representing nationalism as inherently detrimental is especially counter-productive in the Zimbabwean context, because in Zimbabwe, anti-colonial nationalism has from the outset embodied ideals of freedom, democracy, and equality as well as the restoration of the land to the people." Primorac 2006, 3–4. How these ideals have been materialized in Zimbabwe is, of course, another issue. It is noteworthy that the current crisis has given a new

is unproblematic only for the dominant groups[163], that is, for those in subject positions entitled to claim belonging to the "we". Hence, national affinity can be conceived as "[t]he exclusive empowerment […]" of privileged subjects.[164]

Alongside "race"[165], one of the most important exclusionary mechanisms operating in the realm of the nation is the one based on gender difference. As Anne McClintock has observed in her widely cited article on nationalism and gender, "[n]ations are […] historical and institutional practices through which social difference is invented and performed."[166] When nationhood and its communal aspects are analyzed from a gender-sensitive viewpoint, it becomes obvious that it is not by accident that the "we" proves to be primarily an expression of *fraternal* solidarity.[167] Hence, the gender difference on which the notion of national community is based serves to define women as marginal within the nation.[168] What is peculiar to women's positioning in the national community is that while being practically excluded from its scope, they are simultaneously made to bear the symbolic meanings of the collectivity.[169] For instance, imagery based on female corporeality is central to nationalist discourses, as the following quote from Elleke Boehmer confirms:

> The female body form […] that most fetishized and silent of body symbols, figures prominently in early nationalist/postcolonial representations. National wholeness, fusion with the maternal national body-land, suggests a hoped-for plenitude, a totality with which to subsume the denial that was colonial experience.[170]

What is problematic is that while women are made to bear the symbolic meanings of the violated Motherland, national agency, that is, leadership and citizenship are defined as distinctively masculine.[171] The same goes for national heroes: in the Zimbabwean freedom fight context for instance, the war is represented mainly as a struggle between (real) men, "sons of the soil."[172] Besides the symbolic value of female corporeality, the *mère/terre* trope[173], which is so precious to nationalist rhetoric, epitomizes the notion of women's reproductive capacity as important for the nation, that is to say, to give birth to new (male) citizens.[174] In this respect, motherhood can be conceived as a national service.[175] As the stress on women's maternal role suggests, nations are

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rise to anti-colonial nationalist rhetoric. In this respect, the question of who actually constitutes the nation, its margins and its enemies, remains topical in contemporary Zimbabwe.

163 Jackson & Penrose 1993, 9.
164 Mayer 1999, 1.
165 On "race" and ethnicity as nationalism's othering mechanisms, see for instance Gilroy 1991; 2004.
166 McClintock 1993, 61.
167 See Anderson 1991, 7.
168 McClintock 1993, 62.
169 Yuval-Davis 1997, 47.
170 Boehmer 2005a, 132–133.
171 Ibid., 29.
172 Parpart 2007, 108–109.
173 See Larrier 1997, 194.
174 Yuval-Davis 1997, 26.
175 Parker et al. 1992, 7.

figured as domestic genealogies. The family trope functions as a "[s]anctioning social *hierarchy* within a putative organic *unity* of interests […]", which subordinates women and children to men.[176] The family trope is illustrative of women's positioning within the nation also in the sense that, this way, women and their experiences are to be confined to the private sphere, whereas men are entitled to occupy the public realm of the nation.[177]

In the context of decolonisation, women's lack of concrete national agency places them outside the struggle over independence. National liberation signifies male liberation.[178] Gayatri Spivak has critiqued the understanding of decolonisation as a simple reversal of the colonial rule: she argues that the political claims that are relevant to the postcolony, such as nationhood and citizenship, are "[c]oded within the legacy of imperialism […]."[179] Spivak has discussed the position of gendered subaltern within the context of decolonisation and independence, arguing that subaltern subjects inhabit "[a] space in the new nation that cannot share in the energy of [the] reversal" and that for them, "'[E]mpire' and 'Nation' are interchangeable names […]."[180] This is in many respects due to the fact that nationalist projects in the colonised world are often, in Radhakrishan's words, more like "[t]ransplantations of Eurocentric nationalism in the postcolonial situation […]" that "[p]erpetrate […] an indigenous form of elitism […]."[181] Consequently, the question of whether the post-colonial project of nation-building is to be seen as a relevant site of engagement for subaltern subjects is rather apposite. This question is well-grounded in relation to Vera's work too, since her women's sites of struggle seem to be emphasised in other areas than purely those of decolonisation and nationhood. Indeed, in his reading of Vera's *Without a name*, Robert Muponde has addressed this very issue, asking whether "[Zimbabwean nationalism can] coexist with competing liberatory projects […]" and "[i]n what way(s) was the struggle national?"[182] In this sense, Vera's work links up with the contemporary trend in African literatures questioning decolonisation narratives that build on the notions of communal identity and shared hopes.[183] Vera's work is also in line with the tradition of postcolonial women's writing, which has "[q]uestioned, cut across, upended or refused entirely the dominant if not dominatory narrative of the independent nation", and places women's experiences "[i]n tension with conventional roles transmitted by national […] narratives."[184] Her works, including the short story collection currently under scrutiny, render visible the chasm between women and the nation, thus

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176 McClintock 1993, 63–64; original emphasis.
177 Yuval-Davis 1997, 68. The division between the private and the public is, of course, highly problematic and the boundary between them needs to be deconstructed. See Spivak 1988, 103.
178 Boehmer 2005a, 33.
179 Spivak 1993, 60.
180 Ibid., 78.
181 Radhakrishan 1996, 147.
182 Muponde 2002, 125.
183 See Vambe 2004, 90.
184 Boehmer 2005a, 6.

opening up a discursive space in which claims on community and shared cause can be challenged. The short stories reveal nation as a site of incongruent discourses.

3 Diverged fronts: Struggles for freedom

3.1 Gendered loyalties

Why don't you carve other animals consists of 15 short stories altogether, their length varying from the 25 page opening story, "Crossing boundaries", which is also the most extensive of them all, to compact texts covering barely three pages. The opening story stands out from Vera's work – with the exception of *Nehanda* – in the presence of white characters and the inclusion of their narrative viewpoints, albeit admittedly rather caricatured ones. The story depicts the tense relations between a white farmer, his wife, and their black employee, whom the farm owner's wife has named "James" as the name "[w]as easier on her tongue than his native name, which she did not try to learn or understand." (13.) What is more interesting for the purposes of this article is that besides the colonial dynamism, the story also portrays the gendered biases of anti-colonial nationalism through the figures of James and his wife MaMoyo. The story intertwines the issues of land and nation: the land not only signifies geographical space and property, but also an imagined community.[185] The short story opens with a scene in which James approaches the farm owner's wife with his request for more land for the members of his family living and working on the farm. This scene is interesting in the sense that, already at this point, it reveals the gendered dynamics operating in issues that concern the land: women – even white women – are less attached to the land than men, and thus it is easier for James to approach the farmer's wife than the farmer directly. Ultimately, the farmer intervenes the uneasy situation and tells James not to "[b]other Madam" (20), and to his wife that she should not "[l]et the natives get cheeky with [her]." (21.) The gendered biases of colonialism come through in this scene, but since the focus is not on the colonial encounter as such, I will not go deeper into this theme in this context.

James's old father is also living on the farm. The old man is a figure through which the masculine shame of not having been capable of defending the land against the colonial intrusion finds its articulation:

> His legs now infirm, the old man remembered the migration of his people from one part of the country to the other, a forced movement across the land which

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185 As James Graham points out, "[land] is a place to which one can belong, but also that necessarily *belongs to somebody*" (original emphasis). Graham 2009, 1. Graham also states that in Zimbabwe, black nationalist discourses have "[l]ong exerted hegemonic force to this sign [the land], attempting to control both what and who 'the land' signifies […]." Ibid., 14.

> symbolized the loss of their link with the soil, a journey that was a revoking of their connectedness, their belonging. […]
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> His father had been angry, and the old man remembered him storming in and out of the house, angered by a sense of helplessness. He would rather move than work for these criminals, but it was difficult to leave the earth where all of his ancestors had been buried, where all the culture, history and religion was contained. (4.)

The old man recalling the reaction of his own father reveals a feeling of shame and helplessness traversing masculine memory through generations. The collective memory of humiliation and loss seizes the man every now and then: "[T]he old man […] felt a confusing anger that he could not restrain. He had lost the children. He had lost the fight." (7.) The burden of humiliation has shaded his childhood memories, and in his present life, the man is represented as unable to rid himself of these bitter memories: "The old man's mind could not let go of the thorns and cactus that populated the dry cracking terrain of his boyhood." (8.) This insistence on the past and the feelings of powerlessness are represented as masculine experiences.

Besides the feelings of indigenous masculine shame, the figure of the old man also portrays romanticized collective memories of the pre-colonial past, suggesting that the liberation of the land from the colonial invaders is the only struggle that is needed to "restore the order."[186] The old man's son, James, shares this ideal, imagining how, through the freedom fight, the future will restore the glorious past: "He thought always of how it could be without the presence of these strangers on the farm – it would be as his grandfather has told him." (2.) The current situation is an "anomaly" that "call[s] for change" which "[t]he armed struggle was designed to produce […]." (13.) The story represents men as attached to the past, women not equally so:

> He valued the past over the present, and saw it replicated in the future. James's history felt burdensome to her and it hurt her, and her children. […] He was immobile, like his father whom they had to carry from the shed to hut and from hut to shed, every day. He took pleasure in his hope for redress, which he saw approaching in the future. Meanwhile, their lives must be dry, and they must live in the ruins of that past which they carried always with them. Why must they be trapped in the memory of an old man who could not walk? For the woman, the shattering indignity of her poverty had destroyed the prestige of the past. (25.)

As the previous text sample suggests, women's relationship to the past differs from that of men by being more complex and less romanticised. For women, past does not automatically mean a glorious golden age that decolonisation is anticipated as bringing back; rather, it is marked by the continuous burden of indigenous masculine suppression. Women do not find the return to the past a

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186 In many cases, anti-colonial nationalist discourses have been ill-founded in the sense that the anticipated changes have not taken place along with the independence: "[t]he rhetoric of anticolonialism was reductive: it implied that there was only one struggle to be waged, that being defensive one against colonialism which would bring independence. It was assumed that independence by itself would deliver the looked-for freedoms; the ideal of freedom was rarely given content." Sivanandan 2004, 55.

viable solution: "MaMoyo was confident that, given the static nature of traditions, the only escape was into the white man's world." (6.) On the other hand, some of the women are equally hesitant in embracing the "white man's world":

> MaSibanda, though she sent her children to school, did not always agree that the solution lay with the new education. She felt that their condition on the farm was a daily trial, and to embrace more of the culture of those who kept them subservient was hard to accept. (6.)

This hesitancy between the traditional and modern expresses the complexities of women's position in the hold of colonial and gender-based oppression. In such a setting, women do not seem to have any simple way to secure their freedom. This is also why women are represented as less passionate about the anti-colonial freedom fight than men: they are not convinced of this particular struggle being the one that will guarantee them a better future, a change and newness they aspire for.

What is interesting in this story is the way it highlights the similarities of both colonial and anti-colonial masculine discourses regarding the land: the white farmer has a very similar discussion with his wife as James has with his. Both men react negatively to the women's pleading to leave the land and to go to the city in order to live a more secure life instead of putting oneself in danger for something that is not considered worth dying for. The men insist heavily on the importance of staying. Here is a part of the dialogue that the white farmer has with his wife Nora:

> "It would be safer there, for both of us. There is nothing to protect us here. There is nothing here."
> […]
> "We have the land here, Nora. Can you not see that we have something to love here? Are you not connected to the land? […]"
> […]
> It was necessary to belong, not to feel like an intruder. (15.)

The next quote expresses James's reluctance to leave the land behind and his wife's MaMoyo's wish to move on:

> It was clear he did not want to be in the city. […] She did not share his stagnancy, and felt that she should express her resentment of his immobility. Why could they not move from this farm? (23.)

James's response to his wife is to wait, for change is coming: "We should wait and see what the changes that will come will be like […]." (25.) Correspondingly, MaMoyo does not share her husband's eagerness to stay and wait; she has concern for the future of her children and feels sceptical towards the possibility of change:

> She was burdened by the need to see her children advance, and paid no attention to the hope he held out, which she could not believe. It was easier for her to think of action, than of waiting, doing nothing. Had they not done enough of waiting? If she could move she would have achieved something. (25.)

Women are represented as being disconnected from the land, the cherished object of the anti-colonial nationalist discourse. While the (male) labourers are portrayed as having a special connection to the land they are working on (13), MaMoyo does not feel such a sense of belonging. She sees their loyalty as ill-founded since the land seems to give nothing in return. MaMoyo's outlook is that it is not the people who have betrayed the land, but vice versa: "Often she cursed the earth that had betrayed them by supporting the unkind feet of strangers." (9.)[187] It is hard to imagine that such a thought could be articulated by any of the conventionally masculine male figures in this particular story, and, as such, it interestingly expresses the discrepancies between gendered viewpoints. For MaMoyo, land is less something to fight for than an age-old burden:

> MaMoyo […] did not like her life on the farm. The knowledge that several generations of her husband's family had laboured fruitlessly on this farm intensified her dissatisfaction. […] She wanted a different future for her daughter. Perhaps an education would release her from this continued design, which was almost becoming its own tradition, though everyone loathed a life in which they owned nothing. (22.)

In spatial and temporal terms, women are characterised by movement whereas men by immobility and willingness to cling to the glories of the past.[188] As these text samples convey, women do not share their husbands' sense of loyalty and belonging towards the land. Women – interestingly, this seems to apply to both sides of the colonial divide – do not feel involved in the struggle over the land, and that their projects and hopes are directed elsewhere, in their personal autonomy as well as that of their children. The women's outsiderness in the struggle erodes the credibility of nationalist discourse assuming to speak for an undifferentiated category of subjects constituting the "we" of the national community. In this sense, women's marginality in the project of nation-building is explicitly brought out in this short story.

3.2 Fraternal rules

Practically throughout the collection, women are represented as occupying the private sphere: the short stories depict them executing their daily tasks, such as child care, cooking, handwork, and selling foodstuff; monotonous and not so heroism-prone activities that have to be taken care of despite the war that takes place in the bushes. Portraying women in their daily routines is an interesting choice in the sense that while it highlights their being outside of the struggle, it

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187 Betrayal as emblematic to women's relation to the land has been discussed in the novel *Without a name*, too. The novel's female protagonist states, for instance, that, "The land has forgotten us. Perhaps it dreams new dreams for itself." (39.) Later in the novel the theme of betrayal is shown in a more violent light, as the protagonist associates her rapist with the land.

188 Vera has portrayed her women in terms of movement and men in terms of immobility elsewhere in her work, for instance in *Butterfly burning*. This is illustrative of how women do not have some age-old tradition from which to draw an empowering sense of identity, but merely marginalised subject positions which they wish to challenge.

simultaneously renders visible the fact that they actually *do* become intertwined in its reality whether they like it or not.[189] In a story entitled "Shelling peanuts", for instance, a children's game is inspired by the freedom struggle. A group of small boys plays war, during which one of them suggests that they should invite girls to play along. One of the boys states that, "Girls don't know how to fight and they cry if you push them. I don't think we should call the girls into our team." (37.) Others disagree and claim that, in reality, "girls" have participated in the armed struggle:

> 'My mother told me that some women have also gone to fight and that they hold big guns and fight besides the men. I have seen pictures of dead women who have been killed by the soldiers in *The African Times*. My uncle shows them to us. This means we must call the girls to join us'.
> 'Okay then. But let us decide first how we are going to play the game.' (37–38.)

Women are invited to take part into the struggle and even to "sacrifice" themselves for "the common cause"; it is just that the rules of the fight have already been defined by men. This idea is central in the concluding story entitled "It is over", where a female freedom fighter returns from the front only to encounter a reality where she can claim no sense of belonging. The story opens with a scene in which the freedom fighter arrives to her home town by train. She feels alone, and at first she is not even recognised by her own mother who is supposed to meet her at the railway station: it is as if her unconventional gender role as a soldier had made of her an unrecognisable aberration of femininity. The mother starts immediately posing questions about her future plans. The daughter should quickly adopt a traditional feminine subject position:

> "What kind of job are you going to get, since you did not finish your education? Maria is now a school teacher. She has done very well". […] "You should be thinking of getting married", Mother said. "At least that will be a beginning." (95.)

The text implies that the efforts of the female freedom fighters are barely appreciated in the independent postcolony. They are not celebrated as *heroines* of the nation but represent embodiments of gender anomalies who come to realise that they should have, so to speak, stayed in their place outside the struggle: "Those who stayed at home had more success. The kind of success that counts." (95.) The female soldier is in a situation in which, despite the contribution that she has given to the formation of the new nation-state, "She had nothing that she could claim as her own." (95.) This suggests that women are unconceivable as a part of the national community. The story ends with a lugubrious scene in which the woman travels away from her home in order "[t]o try life in a large city" (96); a start for an undetermined search for something else – a newness not yet articulated – so typical of Vera's heroines.

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[189] Boehmer has observed that 'small' familial questions are complexly linked to the grand-narrative of the nation: "The domestic realities of the nation both is, and is not, separate from the *petit* [sic] *récits* of grand/mothers', aunts' and daughters' lives. " Boehmer 2005a, 208.

3.3 Mothers of the nation

Besides female fighters, the short stories also portray women in more conventionally "feminine" positions. A story entitled "It is hard to live alone" depicts a discussion that women have during a get-together in the setting of selling foodstuff at the market place. Their talk touches the issue of motherhood and what is supposed to be women's role in the struggle for freedom. One of the women laments the hardships of mothering in the context of war: "These are difficult times to bring a child to the world. Every woman who is raising a son is raising a soldier." (44.) The women are fully aware of the reproductive role they are supposed to adopt for the sake of the nation:

> We know we are women asked to bear children. We know that to bear children will bring us suffering. This land must be watered with the blood of our children and with the saltiness of our tears before we can call it our own. (44.)

Some of the women adopt the nationalist rhetoric's insistence on women's reproductive role as their "ethical choice"[190] and the necessity of bloodshed in order to "cleanse the land"; a powerful discourse in which there seems to be no room for a dissenting opinion:

> Women are the backbone of this struggle. If people like you are barren because they are afraid what shall be the result of that? Let life flow through you, my child. We need sons to take the places of those whose bodies lie without proper burial. […] The earth is very angry. The land needs to be purified, it is too much burdened with the blood of young people. It was never the case when our ancestors lived that the death of young men came before that of old incapacitated men. We must purify the blood flowing on the land with fresh milk springing from our breasts. (44–45.)

This aggressive and violent nationalistic address nearly stifles other viewpoints.[191] Nevertheless, one of the women ventures to pose a faint challenge to this outlook: "You do speak well, MaDube, but your words do not give me comfort" (45). The fragile dissenting address implies that the reproductive role that women are supposed to adopt is being questioned.

Indeed, a more direct refusal of the national task of mothering is articulated in a story with the title "Whose baby is it?" where the corpse of a new born baby is found in a garbage bin. As such, the discarded baby can be interpreted as a challenge to the imagery of the national family and a refusal of the maternal role. One could even expand upon the interpretation and argue that the act of throwing away the new born baby symbolises the renouncement

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190 Spivak has argued that subaltern women are not only subject to external oppression, but that they also internalise the gender-based subjection imposed on them. Spivak 1995, xxviii. "Ethical choice" refers in this context to the process of internalised subjection which makes the woman perceive her acts as ethical. In Spivak's work, the Indian tradition of *sati* or widow immolation is an example of the "ethical choice" that subaltern women might be inclined to enact.

191 Narratives of blood and violence have are central in Zimbabwean nationalist discourse both during the freedom struggle and in the current crisis. Muchemwa 2008.

of the concept of nation altogether.[192] This is one possible interpretation. Elsewhere I have been reluctant to make the conclusion that the bodies of Vera's women and children could be seen as mere allegories standing for something beyond their physical suffering. I have based my interpretation on the observation that in Vera's novels, physical pain is represented in a pervasive manner that highlights the individual's embodied experience of it, which, again, renders a mere allegorical reading ethically somewhat questionable.[193] In this story, the aspect of lived physical suffering is not so much highlighted, which renders the allegorical reading less suspicious in regards to ethics. However, the next quote from the short story is interesting when it comes to proposing a purely allegorical reading: the reader is reminded of the fact that despite the pervasive presence of the freedom fight, several other struggles take place simultaneously, and that these struggles also demand their casualties: "People talked about dying a lot, about soldiers dying. If you were a soldier you were prepared to die, she thought, but babies were not soldiers, and she doubted that they were prepared to die." (59.) This is the sort of tragedy that Vera has addressed elsewhere in her production; nameless victims on the fringes of the official struggle. The official struggle over freedom has such a signifying power that it tends to overshadow these "unofficial", displaced struggles and their victims. By interpreting the baby's corpse merely as an allegory of discarding the concept of nation, one runs the risk of leaving the "unofficial" victims once more without attention.

3.4 Anticipating newness

Some of Vera's stories – like "Independence day" – embody the hopeful, anticipatory ambiance preceding independence: "Maybe something is going to change in this country. Someone will begin to see the folly of suppressing another group." (63.) It becomes clear that "the folly of suppressing another group" does not refer uniquely to the white minority rule but also to the gender-based oppression. What is illustrative of women's expectations for the independence is the word "something" that appears in the sentence: exactly *what kind* of changes is the independence expected to bring about? For women, the desire for change and newness has not, in these short stories, found any articulate and clear object such as anti-colonial nationalist discourse. The arrival of independence does not claim the hopes that they have set in the change of an era. In this respect, "Independence day" is highly illustrative of the "change" and "new beginning" that the independence actually brings to women's lives. Upon the arrival of independence, official festivities are organised at a stadium to celebrate this fundamental moment in the narration of the new national

192 In his disputed article "Third-World literature in the era of multinational capitalism", Fredric Jameson argues that, "All third-world texts are necessarily […] allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as […] *national allegories* […] ". Jameson 1986, 69, original emphasis. His outlook has been challenged by several postcolonial scholars. See, for instance, Ahmad 1987, or Franco 1997.

193 See Toivanen 2008, 13–14.

community. The head of the postcolonial nation-state is giving speeches and the event is being televised. The Prince of England has come to attend the celebration, and women are "[d]ancing and singing traditional songs […]" to solemnise his arrival: "Sweat poured down their faces as they welcomed the future." (27)

There are two interesting aspects figuring in the previous quotes. First of all, national culture is portrayed in terms of traditions, which, as such, freezes it into a representation of an immobilised past, a feature that Franz Fanon has criticised in anti-colonial nationalist movements.[194] The second interesting observation is that the anticipated future finds its representation in the form of the Prince of England, that is, a privileged white male subject. This is illustrative of the "newness" that the independence represents: the colonial legacy marks the new beginning from the outset. Significantly, policemen carrying guns give the women small flags to wave, "[a] new flag for a new nation." (27.) The guns embody the threat of violence that is constantly present in the new postcolonial beginning, painting thus menacing shades on the future of the post-independence years. No one actually sees the Prince – who symbolizes the end of an era and the beginning of another – passing, but some of the women are planning to go to the stadium at midnight to follow the ceremonies. One of the women, presumably a prostitute, is not going to the stadium, for she has a client that evening. This symbolically excludes her from the national community from the very start. Her client has planned to follow the independence jubilee on the TV and to celebrate the independence in his own way:

> He was going to celebrate Independence properly; with cold beer and a woman. Now it was ten minutes to midnight. She must take her clothes off. […] The old flag was flapping in the air, the new one was hanging below. The man pushed the woman onto the floor. He was going into the new era in style and triumph. She opened her legs. It was midnight, and the new flag went up. The magic time of change. (29.)

Here the independence is represented as a masculine sexual victory; it is a symbolical repossession of the land through the female body after the long colonial rule. It is emblematic that afterwards the only evidence of the new era that the woman sees are the miniature flags hanging sadly along the hedge: "In the morning she saw miniature flags caught along the hedge: the old flag and the new" (29). The continuous presence of the old flag implies that the "new start" is not as new as the postcolonial nation-state would like it to be. Despite their hopes set in the new era, no sudden change seems to be in sight regarding women's position: nationalist promises of a new beginning have no positive relevance to subaltern subjects. However, as the women's fragile, almost intangible aspirations for newness articulated in the stories imply, the question

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194 Fanon 1961/2003, 191–97. Fanon criticises the tendency of nationalist movements to base the notion of national culture only on traditions, as it involves the risk of resorting to the colonialist arsenal of exoticism. Ibid., 194.

of whether nation could be re-imagined in a way that is open to women's experiences and belonging, remains relevant.

4 The relevance of nation in Vera's politics

Finally, I will shortly discuss the question of whether "nation" remains a relevant category for Vera's politics as a postcolonial writer. Jean Franco, in an essay questioning Jameson's idea of Third World literatures as merely national allegories, argues that Jameson's generalisation is hardly applicable in a contemporary context in which "[n]ation is either a contested term or something like the Cheshire cat's grin – a mere reminder of a vanished body."[195] Franco's analysis on several Latin American writers reveals that the texts under scrutiny repudiate the concept of nation and that, altogether, nation is seen to "[fail] to provide systems of meaning and belief […]."[196] The reasons that motivate the abandonment of nation as the primary provider of "systems of meaning" are obvious: the exclusionary practices inherent to the national projects have, at worst, resulted in violence. This has been the reality in Zimbabwe, whose past and present are burdened with crimes committed in the name of hegemonically defined national unity. The most striking example of this is the state-organised genocide that took place in Matabeleland during the early- and mid 1980s.[197] Richard Werbner's term "quasi-nationalism" is applicable to these atrocities.[198] Werbner defines quasi-nationalism as "[t]he dark side of nationalism" that

> [r]eaches a peak when its protagonists capture the might of the nation-state and bring authorized violence down ruthlessly against marginalized antagonists who are in the nation yet for terrible moments not entirely of it.[199]

In her last published novel, *The stone virgins* (2002), Vera deals with the Matabeleland genocide. However, as my analysis here conveys, the reasons why the concept of nation proves to be harmful do not have to be this extreme: exclusion does not have to come in the form of physical violence in order to be damaging. The struggle over power and meaning that takes place in the realm of the nation also manifests itself in forms that are less horrifying and more subtle, as they come through as naturalised practices. Women's exclusion from the realm of the national community is a good example of this: their maternal role, for instance, is quite often taken for granted even by the women themselves.

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195 Franco 1997, 131.
196 Ibid., 133.
197 For more on the Matabeleland genocide, the *Gukurahundi*, see for instance, Meredith 2003, 59–76.
198 Werbner 1998, 92.
199 Ibid.

In the field of postcolonial studies, there is nothing new in this enmity towards nationalist projects. In this respect it is rather disturbing to acknowledge that, as Simon During has put it, "[t]he nation-state is, for better or worse, the political institution which has most efficacy and legitimacy in the world as it is."[200] During argues further that rejecting nationalism in its different forms *altogether* is problematic in the sense that in so doing, postcolonial intellectuals "[c]ut themselves off from effective political action".[201] Indeed, in the field of postcolonial literature, writing without any national affinities is often deemed historically weightless, which at worst, can be understood as a lack of serious political commitment.[202]

In Vera's work, nationhood and nationalist discourses occupy a central position. The author's main interest in nationhood has been in highlighting the marginalisation of the gendered subaltern. As such, it is obvious that through her writing, Vera has engaged in challenging the validity of hegemonic nationalist discourse as to its spurious claims on communality and common cause. In her work, Vera has made visible the silenced gaps between the nation and the gendered subaltern. Does the critical stance towards nationhood that she has adopted mean that "nation" has lost its relevance as a system of meaning in her politics? The answer to this question is by no means self-evident. When it comes to nation as a construction of authoritarian discourses, it certainly is repudiated and questioned. However, one has to keep in mind that besides the authoritarian dimension, nationhood has another face, that is, the one underlining communal affinities.[203] In Vera's case it is noteworthy that the communal side of nationhood is a theme that quite frequently comes up in authorial interviews where the writer actively constructs her authorship in terms of her "immediate community"[204], by which she refers to her fellow-Zimbabweans. Vera has argued that her aim as an author has been to render audible the silenced stories of Zimbabwean women, "so that men, or people in general, or the nation – can be as close as possible to women's experiences."[205] These statements convey that despite the criticism that Vera's work directs towards authoritarian nationalist discourses, nation as affinity and communal belonging remains a relevant site of engagement in her writer's politics. This comes through in her overall authorial vision, which beyond the critical edge, promotes a constructive hope for a better future, for a community in which differences could be accommodated for ethically.[206] This community remains yet unimagined. But, exposing the issues standing in the way of its coming into being opens up a space in which this re-imagining will be able to take place. Leela Gandhi, while acknowledging the problems of nationalist projects, has highlighted the empowering aspects of nationhood and has suggested that

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200 During 1990, 139.
201 Ibid.
202 Boehmer 2005b, 233.
203 Brennan 1990, 45.
204 Bafana 2000, 10.
205 Primorac 2004, 162.
206 I have discussed this issue in a conference paper, see Toivanen 2009. See also Boehmer 2005a, 203 and Graham 2009, 123.

> [P]erhaps what postcolonial literature needs is a properly romantic modality; a willingness to critique, ameliorate and build upon the compositions of the colonial aftermath. It is possible, in other words, to envision a transformed and improved future for the postcolonial nation.[207]

When it comes to nationhood, Vera's work answers Gandhi's call for "romantic modality": her critique moves beyond hopelessness and disillusionment, setting ultimately a terrain upon which the "improved future of the postcolonial nation" could be built. Indeed, as Elleke Boehmer has observed, the empowering potentials of nationhood still remain compelling to some postcolonial female writers. Boehmer's characterisation of women writers' complex relationship to the nation is applicable to Vera, as well: "By conveying women's complex give-and-take between public and private spaces, women writers use the novel as a powerful instrument with which to reshape national cultures in a way more hospitable to women's presence."[208] Underneath the criticism to which nationhood is subjected in Vera's production, the question of "women's nation"[209] constitutes an important motive. As to the short story collection presently under scrutiny, the motive of re-imagination finds its articulation in the women's fragile, somewhat intangible aspirations for newness. This affect-like hopefulness manifests itself in the words of the narrator of the story "The bordered road." These words are the narrator's reaction to another woman's anticipation of change: "There was something about the woman's tired voice that gave me confidence: for the first time I felt elation and a sense of release. The sun was coming out and umbrellas burst into the empty sky like flowering plants." (63.) This yet unimagined "something", the fragile possibility of women's nation, constitutes the hopeful undertone in Vera's work.

5 Concluding words

As a discourse, nationalism serves to legitimate women's repression under masculine power.[210] This aspect becomes clear throughout Vera's production, and as my analysis of the short story collection *Why don't you carve other animals* conveys, Vera's texts represent the anti-colonial freedom fight and nation-building as mainly masculine projects in which women are designed restricted agency. Their primary role is mothering, giving birth to new male heroes and citizens. Women participating in the freedom fight are barely celebrated as national heroes, and despite their contributions to the achievement of independence, they do not feel entitled to claim the national community as their own. It is obvious that in this case, fraternity excludes sisters.

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207 Gandhi 1998, 166.
208 Boehmer 2005a, 12.
209 Ibid., 189.
210 Mayer 1999, 1.

Like the rest of her production, Vera's short story collection highlights the point that in the context of the anti-colonial nationalist project, other struggles, unparallel to that of the grand narrative, took place. The goals of these struggles are not compatible with the clearly articulated anti-colonial nationalist agenda of "re-establishing the order." Instead, they are somewhat intangible aspirations to conceive a better future and personal autonomy in the strangulation of the gendered discourses of colonialism and anti-colonial nationalism. For women, the desire for change and newness has not been found to be as articulate and clear an object as the rhetoric of anti-colonial nationalist discourse. All that one can say is that their better personal futures are imagined in terms of the not-present and not-past. Women do not share men's loyalties towards the land and the past: for women, these stand for burdens and betrayals obstructing their way towards self-realisation. If women have hopes set in the freedom fight, their hopes prove to be misguided as there are no indicators of any change what so ever in their lives fringes of the national community, Vera's female subjects mark the inconsistency in the anti-colonial nationalist discourse stressing an all-encompassing belongingness and a collectively shared cause. By contesting the spurious nature of national communality and belonging, *Why don't you carve other animals* indirectly engages in the project of re-narrating the nation from a viewpoint which is sensitive to differences without being driven by exclusionary motives. For Vera's politics, then, nation in terms of collective belonging, remains a relevant site of engagement. Vera's overall authorial vision is marked by hope for a viable communality.

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REMEMBERING NATIONAL HEROINES – GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY FINNISH MONUMENT SCULPTURE

Tuuli Lähdesmäki

Abstract

The category of so-called Great Men has always been gendered as masculine, even though it also includes some female heroines. In Western culture, heroic deeds have usually been understood as belonging more to manhood than womanhood. Descriptions of heroism are often produced with vocabulary and expressions which stress manhood. In addition, the concept of genius has been gendered as profoundly manly. Thus, in nationalistic narration and public memory, the Great Men are men, heroic deeds are manly deeds and important turns of history, particularly nationalistic ones, have been narrated as evoked my men. Even though nationalistic and patriotic ideologies and deeds seem to be very male dominated, the representations and symbols of them have often obtained a female form.

Even though the monuments of Great Men belong in particular to the nationalistic ethos of the 19th century Western world, historical figures are still being commemorated with monument sculptures. Between the years 1989 and 2000, 89 monuments were erected in Finland to commemorate one or several historical figures. Thirteen of them were erected in memory of women. In general, the article aims to discuss the gendered tradition of monuments of Great Men and illustrate the gendered nature of the monuments with statistics, which indicate with numbers and figures, how the monument genre was gendered in Finland at the end of the 20th century. According to the statistics, gender still matters in monument sculpture on several levels. Even though the postmodernist turn has dismantled the traditional category of Great Men in Western culture, the category still exists, and is further being produced and maintained in monument art. The heroic deeds honoured with monuments in contemporary Finnish culture still seem to be very manly. Moreover, gender has an effect on the time that it takes to erect a monument in commemoration of

male and female figures posthumously. According to the statistics, it takes longer for women than for men to be commemorated with a monument.

The traditional image of the male gender of the monument artist seems to still exist. The gender equalisation in sculptor education and the profession of sculptors has not changed the dominance of men as monument artists in the researched timeframe. In addition, gender has an effect on the form of monuments. Abstract and untraditional art forms are relatively more often used in the monuments of men, and male artists relatively more often deploy abstract and untraditional monument forms.

Keywords: Finland, gender, the Great Men, heroism, monument, statistics.

1 Gendered commemoration tradition of the Great Men

Monument sculpture has a long tradition in Western history. The tradition of commemorating, honouring and reminiscing important figures has had a fundamental role in the notion of Western history. Further, it has characterised Western history writing and popular narration of the past. The Great Men are an institution whose role is crucial in the narration of history, in the production of cultural memory and in nation building processes. Thus, the Great Men who are seen as particularly merited, and often nationally important figures, are an essential part of a certain phase in Western history and its ideological movements. The concept of Great Men reflects the nationalistic ideology which influenced the Western world throughout the 19th century. The monuments of Great Men are essential visualisations and symbols of nationalistic ideology.

The formation of the institution of Great Men was one of the reasons for the intense monument boom which occurred in Western countries in the second half of the 19th century. In research literature, this boom has been called 'statuomanie'[211] or 'monumentomania'[212], which depicts the eagerness of erecting monuments in order to honour the important figures and events of a community or nation. The monuments of Great Men were interpreted as signs for both the erecting community and for other countries – they were seen as signifying the level of civilisation, cultural development and the social morals of the erecting community. Only nations whose culture had reached high standards were seen as able to produce Great Men, and only civilised nations were seen as being able to understand the importance of thanking their mental leaders by honouring their memory.[213] The erection of monuments of Great Men became a communal tradition, and imagery of honoured men was established as an essential part of Western urban environments and city views.

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211 Agulhon 1978; 1989; Boime 1987, 6-8; Gamboni 1997, 235-23.
212 Berggren 1999, 562-564.
213 Lindgren 2000a, 26; Berggren 1999, 562.

The erection of monuments can be seen as a practice in which the past is being demarcated, organised and categorised as history. In this practice, the Great Men and their real or imagined virtues are being given a concrete space and form. Further, the narration of them is being produced, maintained, recycled and repeated in public. The practice of erecting monuments establishes and institutionalises the Great Men and interpretations of past events related to them. While the monuments institutionalise people and events, they also become institutionalised in themselves. The tradition of erecting monuments calls for them to be interpreted as phenomena, which represent communal, such as national, values and virtues. Along with various public representations, monuments are a means of visual history writing. The past as well as memories which are marked by monuments become a part of history.[214]

The aim of the article is to concentrate on the gendered structure of visual history writing in the practice of erecting monuments in Finland towards the end of the 19th century. The focus of the article is neither purely on the women who were commemorated with a monument in Finland at the end of the 19th century, nor does the article aim to introduce or analyse the deeds and lives of those women. One of the aims in women´s history, and within feminist approaches in general – in the social sciences and humanities – has been to make women visible in the narration and practices of history by stressing their deeds, lives and thinking.[215] This kind of woman-centred approach belongs to the second wave of feminism in which researchers became interested in 'forgotten women' and their 'hidden' histories, and aimed to 'raise' these women to the institutionalised level of the male dominated narration of history. These aims have directed women´s history and gender studies-oriented research towards more analytical approaches to gender. In third wave feminism, the former bipolar understanding of the concept of gender has been replaced by more manifold and complex views on the concept of gender and gender difference. In this article, the erection of monuments is analysed as an ideological practice, in which gender is intertwined into various other phenomena such as heroism, nationality, locality, profession and history writing.

Even though the monuments of Great Men belong to the nationalistic ethos of the 19th century in particular, historical figures are still being commemorated with monument sculptures. In fact, according to my Finnish research data, more monuments were being erected towards the end of the 20th century than ever before. Economic development during the second half of the 20th century enabled smaller towns and villages, even city quarters, to commemorate their regional and local heroes with monuments. In addition, the fostering of home districts and local traditions, which became more active in Finland after World War II due to the general change of the society and mobility of the people from rural areas to cities, greatly influenced the

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214 About the means of producing history see Kalela 2001, 18-19.
215 Markkola 2002, 76; Saarikangas 1991, 237.

commemoration projects in smaller towns and rural regions.[216] In the second half of the 20th century, several Finnish home district societies started a considerable number of monument projects in smaller towns and villages to commemorate their local heroes. Thus, the tradition of erecting monuments has not vanished, even though it has been transformed. Along with national commemoration, small-scale and local monument projects are being executed. The transformation has had an effect on the gendered character of the tradition – ever more women have been commemorated with a monument.

At the end of the 19th century, many scholars approached Western culture and its nationalistic emphases from postmodern perspectives, with critical and deconstructive views towards so-called Grand Narratives, nation building processes, national myths and the institution of Great Men.[217] The previous coherence of the narration of history and practices of collective memory has been seen as replaced by more fragmented narrations and changing practices in which the role of the individual and various group identities has increased.[218] In addition, critique has focused on gendered politics in the national narration of history and practices of memory.[219] Even though the Grand Narratives and national myths have been criticised in postmodernism, history, past, and tradition, are present in the logic of postmodernism in various ways. Thus, the relationship between postmodernism and the past, history, and tradition, is in a way paradoxical – on the one hand the relationship is deconstructive, and on the other it is nostalgic.[220] The twofold relationship between postmodernism and history can also be seen as reflecting contemporary interests in erecting monuments. Deconstructive relations between postmodernism and history occurs in efforts of dismantling the so-called Great Men, as well as in the criticism of official, shared national commemoration practices. In some views, the whole practice of lifting some collective heroes symbolically and physically onto pedestals has been seen as an old-fashioned and unwanted phenomenon, referring to a hierarchical and authority-led past.[221] Instead of the Grand Narratives, many contemporary monument projects have stressed small-scale narratives: local narratives and untypical local heroes. The nostalgic connection linking postmodernism to history recycles historical narratives, imageries and imagination. Particularly, local and personal histories and memories are often intertwined with nostalgic returns to the past. Local monument projects appeal to the longing for nostalgia by enlivening the local past, which is often narrated as a romantic rural past, and as a more positively communal past than the present day.

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216 Turunen 2004, 107- 108, 207-208; Lindgren 1996, 33-35.
217 See the critical views on the production of the Grand Narratives, coherent narration of histories and collective memories e.g. Lyotard 1985, 15, 31-41; Jameson 1984; Huyssen 1993; Nora 1998, 614-615.
218 Nora 1998, 614-615. Nora´s remarks have been made from the point of view of French society.
219 See e.g. Yuval-Davis 1998.
220 Huyssen 1993, 253; Jameson 1984, 53–92.
221 Lähdesmäki 2007, 310-313.

In recent years, the Grand Narratives and the institution of Great Men have been questioned in various Finnish monument projects, in which the focus has been altered to include alternative narrations of history. 'Small Narratives' have been commemorated by erecting monuments dedicated to untraditional 'heroes', which have, for their part, questioned the exemplariness traditionally attached to the Great Men, or which have enlarged the traditional category of the Great Men. In these kinds of monument projects, the initiative for the projects has often come from small associations, societies and active individuals. Some examples of these kinds of monuments raised in recent decades in Finland are: the monument of sailor-adventurer Otto Toivainen, in Jyväskylä (1989); the monument of a mental hospital patient, Anna Svedholm, in Tuusula (1995); the monument of a voluntary worker, Alvar Typpö, in Tuusula (1996); the monument of a charge nurse, Anna Pakalén, in Tuusula (1998); the statue, *The Common Pirkkala Citizen*, made after workman Valte Nieminen, (who was raffled to be the model for the statue) in Pirkkala (1998); the monument of a former drunk and founder of the Suoja-Pirtti association for alcoholics, Arvo Kustaa "Arska" Parikkala, in Helsinki (2001); as well as statues Kissa-Alli (1978), Korppu-Vihtori (1985), and Kissa-Kallu (1989), raised after local personalities in Turku. There are several women among the untraditional and local figures commemorated with monuments. This is while the categories of traditional heroes and national Great Men in the major monument projects are profoundly male dominated.

Besides postmodern critique, in addition to interests in alternative histories and memory practices, the so-called Grand Narratives and the nationalistic ideology of honouring the Great Men still exist in contemporary society and culture. As sociologist Paul Connerton has stated, even if we no longer believe in the great 'subjects' of history, there is no indication that the Grand Narratives have disappeared. Rather, in several ways they continue to influence thought and action in contemporary culture. [222] Contemporary monument projects of the so-called Great Men are typical examples of this.

According to my research data, between the years 1989 and 2000, 89 monuments were erected in Finland to commemorate one or several historical figures. Thirteen of them commemorated women. The article aims at discussing the gendered tradition of monuments of Great Men through statistics, which indicate via numbers and figures, how the monument genre was gendered in Finland at the end of the 20th century. Even though the analysis in the article focuses on Finnish monuments, the article does not aim to indicate that the situation in Finland would be unique in terms of gendered practices of monument sculpture.

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[222] Connerton 1989, 1.

2 Gender of a hero

The category of the Great Men can be understood in a discursive sense, referring to those figures who are produced, in each period of time, as influential (cultural, political, economical) leaders of the community or nation. It is no surprise that this category has always been gendered as referring to men. In Western cultures, heroic deeds have usually been understood as belonging more to manhood than womanhood. As Finnish media researchers Erkki Karvonen and Janne Virtapohja have indicated in their studies, descriptions of heroism often exploit manly vocabulary and expressions.[223] Several scholars have noticed how the concept of genius has also been gendered as profoundly manly.[224] In addition, patriotism, nationalism and nation-building processes appear to have profoundly gendered structures.[225] Thus, it seems that the Great Men are male heroes, whereby heroic deeds are defined as manly deeds. Further, important turns of history, particularly nationalistic ones, have been narrated as evoked my men. However, even though nationalistic and patriotic ideologies and deeds seem to be very male dominated, the representations and symbols of them have often obtained a female form.[226] This paradox also concerns the Great Men monuments.

The home country – the fatherland – is personified in several countries in terms of female maidens or mothers, who are constructed as the symbolic bearers of the collective identity, future destiny and honour.[227] Female personifications have also been used in the visuality of the monuments of Great Men. The monuments of Great Men, particularly during the 'statuomanie', often contained gendered structures between historical male heroes and anonymous female personifications. Historical men were placed on the top of high pedestals and symbolic female figures were used on the sides of the pedestals as decorations, or as narrative symbols giving context to the heroism of the commemorated Great Man. Contemporary clothing expressed the social status of the male hero, while female personifications were expressed as timeless figures, or as fictive representatives of mythology, or as the distant past of the nation (e.g. the monument of Johan Ludvig Runeberg, unveiled 1885 in Helsinki). Thus, in the visuality of the monuments of Great Men, two very different gendered conceptual levels were combined. However, the Great Men monuments of the 19th century also contained symbolic male figures. The male figures often symbolised work, industry, development in addition to physical power, and they were usually used in large compositions of figures which also included female ones (e.g. the monument of Alexander II, unveiled 1894 in Helsinki). The massive unveiling ceremonies were essential parts of the monuments of Great Men in the 19th century. Unveiling ceremonies have been

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223 Karvonen 1988, 34; Virtapohja 1998, 129-130.
224 Koskinen 2006, 13-15, 25; Hekanaho 2006, 216-217; Battersby 1989.
225 Valenius 2004, 35.
226 Warner 1985; Valenius 2004, 9-10.
227 Yuval-Davis 1997, 45-46: Valenius 2004, 10-11.

(and sometimes still are) communal rituals in which people were taught who they should remember and honour. In this way, the gendered patriarchal hierarchies became normalised in the celebrations and in the institutionalised memory of the nation.

Besides the gendered structure of the visuality of the monuments of Great Men, the monument sculpture is itself a profoundly gendered art genre.[228] Male artists have dominated monument art. Monument sculpture has been a profoundly heroic genre and monument sculptors have had a high status in cultural life. Making monuments for heroes has made the sculptors heroes as well.

The category of Great Men additionally includes some women. In Europe, these women have been, for example, queens, who are on the one hand historical figures, but on the other hand have been simultaneously utilised as symbolic figures, and more or less as personifications of a nation or state. During the twentieth century, along with the modernisation of societies and increase in women participating in society, women from other societal positions have started to be honoured, commemorated and reminisced with public monuments.

In Finland, the first woman commemorated with a free-standing public monument was writer Minna Canth. Her monument was erected in Kuopio, in 1937. After World War II, women started to become more often remembered in the society by public monuments. For example, Minna Canth was commemorated by a monument in Tampere, in 1951, and in Jyväskylä, in 1962. Moreover, other female cultural figures, such as actor Ida Aalberg, and writer Maila Talvio, were honoured in major monument projects which took place at the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s. In the 1960s, some Finnish female sculptors actively took part in the renewal of expression in the monument genre. Eila Hiltunen´s victory in the monument competition of composer Jean Sibelius caused an intense debate in the country because of the new informalist form of the monument proposal. The monument was unveiled in Helsinki in 1967, and it was the first monument of a Great Man in the country to be based on abstraction. However, the artist attached a face image of the composer next to the abstract monument. Laila Pullinen was another female sculptor, who was much in focus in the Finnish informalist movement. Her informalist monument of Maila Talvio was unveiled in Helsinki, in 1971. In general, the increased presence of women in commemoration practices and monument art reflected the changes of Finnish society, in which women, little by little, became more visible due to the more active participation (or increased possibilities for participation) in various societal fields.

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[228] Lindgren 2009, 183, 188.

3 Demarcating eighty-nine monuments

In my previous research, I have explored Finnish monuments erected for so-called Great Men in the 1990s. In my doctoral dissertation, I focused on nine case monuments, which were erected from 1989 to 2000, and which were intensively publicly discussed during the 1990s.[229] In my research, I gathered a list of all monuments erected in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000. Making the list required going through art historical and historical literature, artist registers, different kinds of archive material, museum catalogues, data bases and internet pages, in addition to interviewing several informants in municipal administrations and in different societies. The list may not include all monuments erected for historical figures between these years. However, the list is made as complete as possible within the time schedule and resources of my research years. In Finland, no common database exists of erected monuments, memorials or public sculptures. However, art museums in some larger cities have stored extensive information on their internet pages regarding the respective city´s public sculpture.

In the list, I regarded those sculptures which commemorate a historical person or persons, and which are placed outdoors in profane public spaces as monuments. Thus, for example, sepulchral monuments and sculptures in private or indoor spaces were excluded from the list. Demarcation of the sepulchral monuments outside the focus of the research has an influence on the gendered image of the monument sculpture. As Liisa Lindgren has shown, in the beginning of the 20th century socially distinguished women were remembered and mourned with sepulchral monuments, whose execution did not differ from those of men.[230] However, in this research, the focus is set on monuments which aim to commemorate and honour persons outside the contexts of grief, mourning, piety and religion. Instead of death, the monuments in the focus of the study stress the triumph, celebration and memory of the lives of the selected persons. In addition, the list excludes pure memory plaques and memorial stones. Only those monuments, which are independent works and have some artistic elements, are included. Following these definitions was not always unambiguous. Even the definition of including only those monuments which commemorate historical figures (not e.g. events) within the list was sometimes difficult to follow. Even though, the persons of the monuments in the list are concrete human beings, they may also have more or less symbolic meanings. Some persons represent not only themselves, but also some group of people, some event or some phenomenon.

In this article, I categorise the monuments in the list according to their form. In making this categorisation, I could not have avoided some simplification and subjectivity. By a statue and bust, I refer to a monument

229 Lähdesmäki 2007.

230 The gendered structure of the sepulchral monuments is also being smoothed out by the practice of erecting monuments to family and kind graves. See Lindgren 2009.

which figuratively depicts the person for whom it is erected. By figurative sculpture, I refer to a monument which depicts a figure or objects which are not representations of the person for whom the monument is erected. An abstract sculpture refers in the categorisation of a monument which does not represent any realistic figure or object. By a plaque on a stone, I refer to reliefs which contain, besides the text, some visual elements which are carved or attached as a plaque on a natural or sculptured stone. By untraditional form, I refer to monuments in which the traditional solid form is replaced by other sculpture genres, such as different forms of environmental art. Even though, various forms of conceptual, environmental and site-specific art were introduced to the Finnish public art scene in the 1970s, they were not used more broadly in monument sculpture until the 1990s.[231] Still at the end of the 1990s and in the beginning of the new millennium, monuments, which utilised ideas from environmental art, were evaluated in art criticism as new and as renewing the tradition of the monument genre.[232] In general, the monument genre has experienced some delay in reacting to new artistic styles and movements.

The 89 monuments form a research population for the statistical analysis, which aims to quantitatively show how the monument genre was gendered in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000. The population of 89 monuments is not very large, but it gives some idea as to the gendered practice of the monument genre. The statistics themselves do not reveal or explain why the monument genre and practices of erecting monuments are gendered in the way that they are. The article aims at providing some suggestions as to how to interpret and explain the statistical results in the context of monument sculpture and a contemporary cultural atmosphere.

This statistical approach and measuring data with quantitative methods has been criticised by several feminist researchers due to their stress on the positivist world view, the notion of scientific thinking and formation of knowledge. In their studies, feminist scholars have often criticised positivist ideas, instead emphasising qualitative and 'understanding' approaches and methods which utilise subjective experiences. However, gender orientated or feminist thinking is often based on information, which is produced via quantitative studies of the society. For example, several statistical studies and quantitative survey researches have indicated how various social problems (such as violence) have been gendered in societies. On the other hand, feminist scholars have problematised the limits and rhetoric of quantitative research and indicated sexism hidden in statistics.[233]

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231 Lähdesmäki 2007, 367-369.
232 Lähdesmäki 2007, 315-316.
233 Ronkainen 2004, 44-47.

4 Comparing male and female heroism

The commemoration of historical figures seems to be a profoundly manly practice also in the present day. When comparing the number of monuments erected in honour of men and women in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000, the distinction between numbers is clear: 75 monuments were erected for men and only 12 for women. One of the monuments was erected for both a man and a woman. This monument is simultaneously commemorated folk poetry singer Larin Paraske, as well as priest, historian and folk poetry collector Adolf Neovius. In this monument, the source of folk poetry (Paraske) and its collector and mediator into literature, history and science (Neovius) are equally remembered. The male dominance is even more evident when comparing those monuments which are so-called free-standing sculptures. These monuments are usually bigger and more expensive than, for example, plaques on stones. They are also more often executed by established artists and generate more attention in the community and media. The quantity of these kinds of monuments for men is 58 and 6 for women.

Which women were commemorated with a monument at the end of 20th century? What were their positions or professions? The positions and professions are not simple to define: many of the women have worked in several positions or professions, or have influenced several areas of societal life during their lifetime. Table 1 presents the often mentioned achievements, positions or professions of these women. These achievements, positions or professions are being repeated in the literature, newspapers, brochures, web pages and elsewhere, where the persons are being introduced. Thus, the descriptions of the achievements, positions or professions are inevitably generalisations. However, the descriptions indicate how these persons are identified in cultural memory in the society.

Name	Died	Professions	Place	Year	Artist
Aurora Karamzin	1902	philanthropist and founder and supporter of charities	Ulvila	1990	Olavi Koskinen
Marina Takalo	1970	folk poetry singer	Kuusamo	1990	Nina Sailo
Annikki Kariniemi	1984	school teacher and writer	Ylitornio	1990	Ensio Seppänen
Elisabeth Stenius-Aarneenkallio	1924	teacher, journalist and member of women´s movement	Kuopio	1991	Anu Matilainen
Alexandra Europaeus, later Nora Pöyhönen	1938	founder of a gardening and cooking school for girls	Haapavesi	1992	Kari Ovaska
Larin Paraske	1904	folk poetry singer	Porvoo	1992	Nina Sailo
Anna-Mari Mård	1927	folk healer and clairvoyant	Kiuruvesi	1993	Eino Lovikka
Anna Svedholm	1988	masseuse and mentally ill woman who thought that she was a princess	Tuusula	1995	Rauni Liukko
Helene Schjerfbeck	1946	painter	Tammisaari	1996	Leif Stenwall
Helene Schjerfbeck	1946	painter	Hyvinkää	1998	Tapio Junno
Anna Pakalén	1974	charge nurse	Tuusula	1998	Mija Wikane
Siiri Rantanen	-	skier, Olympic medallist	Lahti	1998	Toivo Pelkonen
Maria Purpur	1856	colonel widow, who due to her stubbornness saved the church of Kotka from burning down during the Crimean war	Kotka	1999	Juta Eskelinen

TABLE 1 Monuments of women erected in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000. Table includes the death year of the women, a short description of their professions or merits, the place of the monument, the erection year of the monument and the name of the artist of the monument.

The women in the table represent different social classes and educational backgrounds. Most of the women are cultural persons, artists, ethnographic figures, local personalities, or in one way or another, teachers or healers. Teaching and healing are not typical deeds for the institutionalised Great Men. Traditionally, the greatness of the Great Men has required national and political

deeds in the public sphere rather than focusing on deeds related to helping the poor, sick or children in the private sphere. In addition, teaching and healing are often stereotypically seen as feminine deeds. Women have also been active in other areas of societal life, like in politics, but those women have not been commemorated with a monument between the years which were the focus of the research.

Several of the women on the list, such as Mård, Svedholm, Pakalén and Purpur, seem to be rather untraditional and non-normative choices for a public commemoration. Similar kinds of male figures have also been commemorated with a monument between the years 1989 and 2000. However, the number of these kinds of figures seems to be relatively higher among commemorated women. In general, the practice of erecting monuments for untraditional figures can be interpreted reflecting the postmodernist standpoint which aims to dismantle or broaden the previous categories of the Great Men and national heroes. In the case of monuments of female figures, the dismantling or broadening is dealt with both in the terms of untypical deeds and gender of a hero.

Both in Finnish women´s history and everyday talk, Finnish women have often been represented as strong and hardworking.[234] This kind of image of women has been intertwined into the notions of the Finnish nation. The idea of the strength of women and national narrations are related in Finland, as well as in several other countries.[235] Does the monument sculpture in Finland at the end of the 19th century support the idea of strong women? Strength is a relative concept, and if it is interpreted as the capability of making a living and obtaining one´s goals despite poor conditions or other difficulties, most of the women in Table 1 can be considered as strong. However, if strength is interpreted in terms of determination and stamina in achieving certain goals in the public sphere or in a community, many of the women in Table 1 cannot be considered as strong. Instead of the notions of strength, the ideas of strong personalities and unique characters seem to be more relevant in describing the women in question. The same could also be said about the men who were commemorated with a monument in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000. In particular, the commemorated figures in smaller towns can be described by these terms.

The initiatives for the erection of the monuments of the women came from various sources: from active local history associations, home district societies, local art associations, and other associations of public utility (such as the Lions Club). The initiators were very similar within the monument projects of both genders. However, governmental initiatives are missing in the projects of the women. The major presidential monuments of the research period were initiated by governmental agents.

If the positions and professions of women are compared to the positions and professions of men who were commemorated with a monument between

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234 Markkola 2002, 75-80.
235 Markkola 2002, 85.

the years 1989 and 2000, it can be observed that there is a great difference between common positions of genders. Figure 1 indicates that the most common professions of the men were athletes and different kinds of sports promoters, as well as those who held positions in the political and official sphere. The high number of athletes (13 persons, Lasse Viren in three different monuments) represented in the monuments of men is noteworthy. Sport has traditionally been a profoundly nationalistic issue and Finns have generally been keenly interested in sports.[236] Sport used to be a very male dominated field until the second half of the 20th century, and its practices are still often gendered as manly. Many of the athlete monuments in the list have been erected in smaller towns by active private associations and societies, who have put a lot of effort into purchasing a monument for their local hero. Thus, the athlete monuments are often intertwined with local patriotic sentiments. Politics and public life also seem to be profoundly male dominant categories in the commemoration practices. There is only one monument in the list which was erected for a male 'healer'. Jussi Kyyrä worked as a folk healer in Saarijärvi at the end of the 19th century.

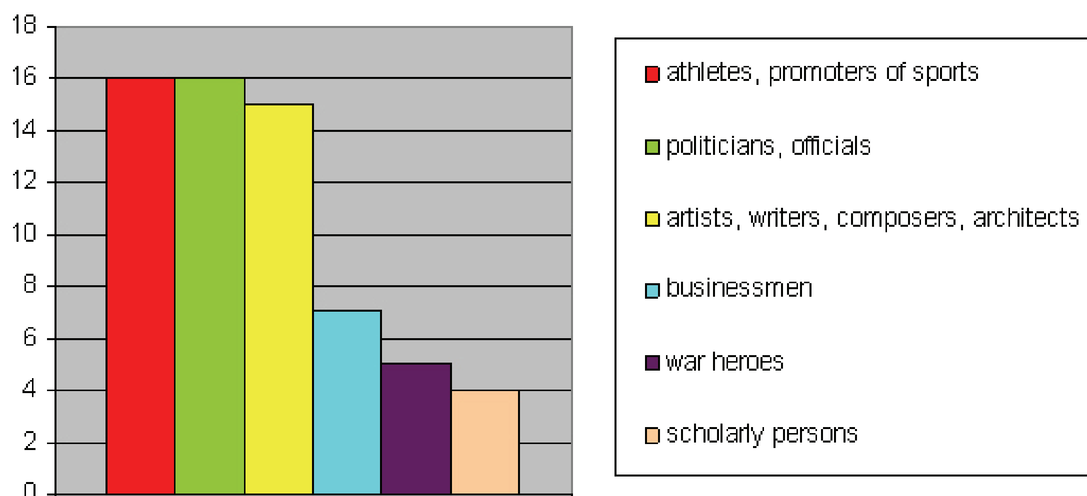

FIGURE 1 The number of the most common professions of men commemorated with a monument in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000.

The gendered practices in commemoration are intertwined in a complex way with time. This complexity is brought up when analysing how many years after the death of the person the monument was erected in honour of him or her. According to the statistical analysis presented in Figure 2, it takes longer for women than for men to be commemorated by a monument. When comparing the averages, it can be observed that women's monuments were erected 51 years after the women's deaths, while men's monuments were erected just 43 years after the men's deaths. When comparing the median, the difference is even larger. It took 52 years for women and only 25 for men to have a

236 Virtapohja 1998.

monument erected in their honour. Men were also being honoured and seen worthy of monument commemoration more often than women, even when the person was still alive. According to the statistics, 8 per cent of women (in one monument) and 18 per cent of men (in 14 monuments) were still alive during the erection of their monuments.

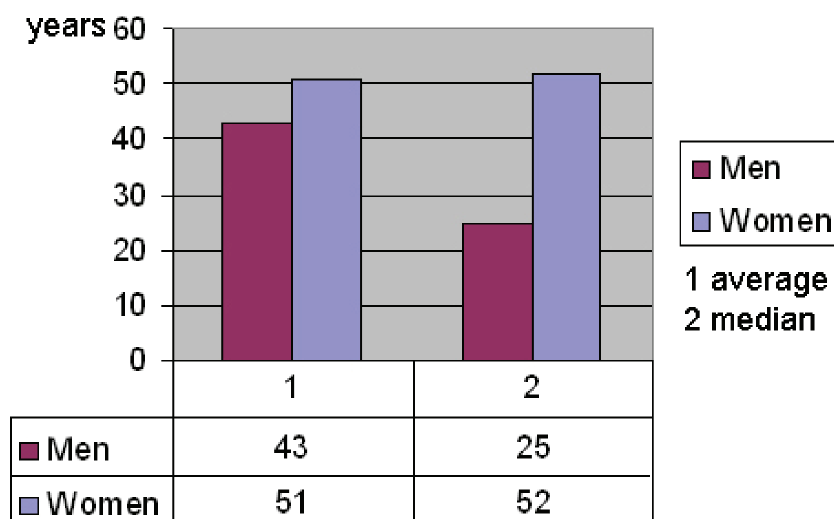

FIGURE 2 The average and median amount of years after death that were taken to erect a monument for men and women in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000.

Why did the commemoration of women take a longer amount of time to occur? Perhaps the deeds of women are seen or narrated as significant and important only when they are seen from the historical perspective. This would mean that understanding and acknowledging the significance and importance of the deeds of men does not require such a long historical perspective in our society.

There seems to be a small difference in the forms of the monuments of the male and female figures. As Figure 3 illustrates, abstract and untraditional art forms were relatively more often used in the monuments of men. These monument forms, particularly large abstract monuments, are usually the most expensive and they are usually made by educated artists who have established their positions in the art scene. At the end of the 20th century, these monument forms were also the most appreciated and valued forms in the views of art criticism and art institutes.[237] Figurative form, which was commonly used in the postmodernist art movement in the 1980s and 1990s, did not influence the views of the art scene in relation to the monument genre. In the 1990s, as well as today, figurative monuments were not taken as artistically convincing works in the views of the art scene. Even though some established artists (like Laila Pullinen and Matti Pelkokangas) tried to open the discussion on figuratism in the monument genre in the 1990s, the abstract form dominated the major (and

[237] Lähdesmäki 2007, 382-383.

male focused) monument projects.[238] Monument forms which were the cheapest to execute, as well as the easiest to erect, and which did not necessarily need any artistic effort, were relatively more common in the monuments of women. These forms include different kinds of memorial stones with plaques. As Figure 3 indicates, there is no remarkable difference in the numbers of statues and busts and figurative sculptures between the genders.

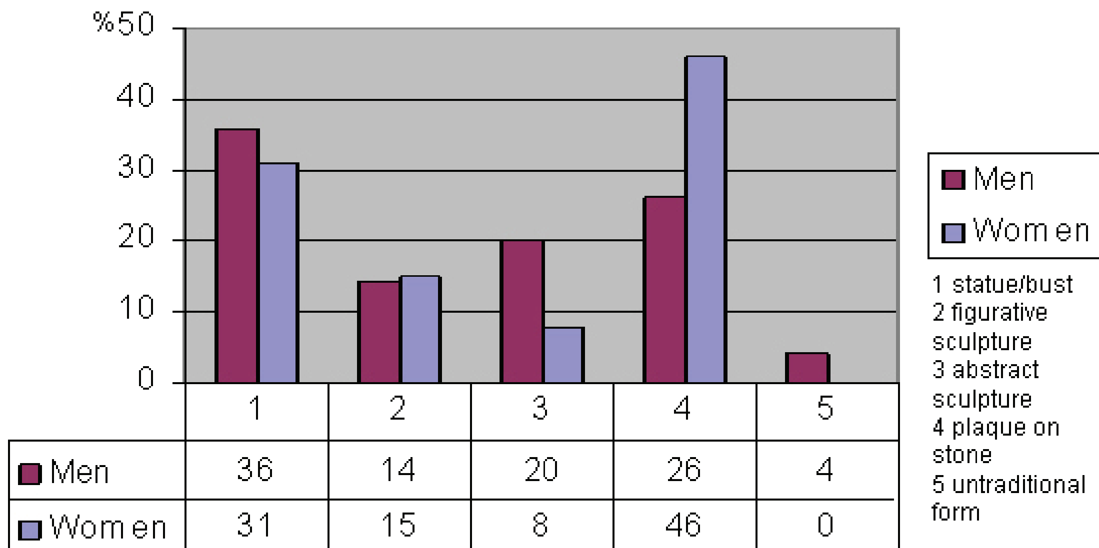

FIGURE 3 Forms of monuments erected in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000 for men and women.

5 Gendered genre

Monument sculpture has traditionally been seen as a profoundly manly, physical, and heroic art genre. It also used to be a male dominated profession. However, nowadays the gender distribution is more even. For example, today 45 per cent of the members of the Association of Finnish Sculptors are women. However, the monument genre is still male dominated, as Figure 4 illustrates. Only 17 per cent of the artists of the monuments erected between the years 1989 and 2000 were female, while 77 per cent of the monuments were executed by male artists. What explains these numbers? Do commissioners still prefer to commission monuments from male artists? Or are female sculptors not focused on monumental art, but rather, on smaller-scale sculpture and more non-monumental sculpture genres? Perhaps female sculptors are not as interested in participating monument competitions as men. We can also ask as to whether or not male sculptors win monument competitions relatively more often in

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[238] Lähdesmäki 2007, 333-334, 352-354.

relation to the gender distribution of the participants of the competitions. The data of this article is inadequate to answer these questions.

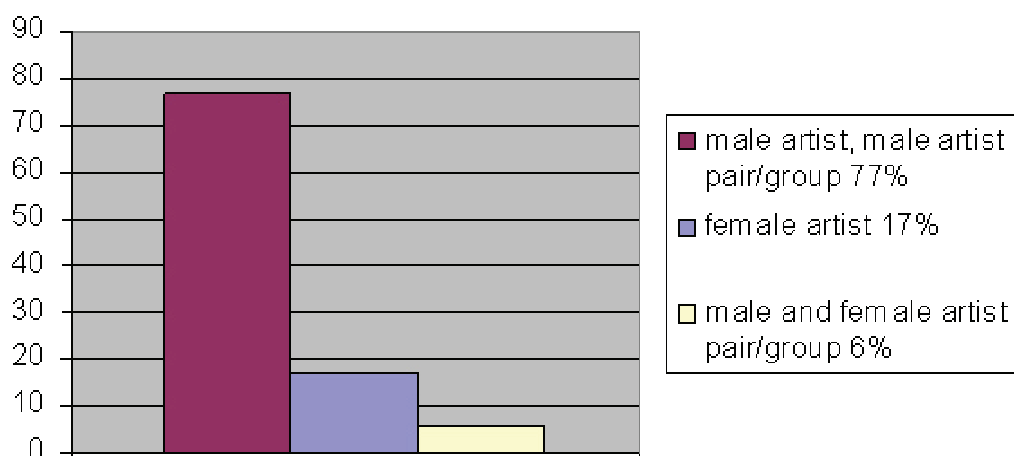


FIGURE 4 Gender of the artists executing monuments in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000.

There is another difference between genders in the execution practices of monument sculptures. There were several male-female artist pairs or groups, and male pairs and groups, executing the monuments, but no female pairs or groups. In the list of artists, there are some names of those who have executed several monuments between the researched years. There seem to be both male and female artists who are particularly focused on monument art. The female artists in the list are: Nina Terno, Riitta Helevä, Nina Sailo, Tea Helenelund, Anu Matilainen, Rauni Liukko, Kaija-Riitta Iivonen, Wija Mikane, Nora Tapper, Eila Hiltunen, Juta Eskelin and Laila Pullinen. Sailo, Helenelund and Mikane executed two monuments within the years in the research focus.

According to the statistics, the gender of the person for whom the monument is erected seems to have an effect on the gender of the artist. As Figure 5 illustrates, female artists create monuments for women relatively more often than for men. Forty-six per cent of the monuments of women were made by female artists. Could the reason for this be that it is seen as more proper and somehow more familiar for women to do a monument for the same sex than to opposite sex? Or could the reason for these kinds of statistics be that the monument projects of women are not seen as important as the monument projects of men? Women seem to be easily chosen to execute these more often cheaper and 'minor' monuments. The geographic location is also intertwined with the gender problematics of the monument artists. The monuments made by female artists in the focus of the research were often erected in small cities (Jalasjärvi, Kannus, Kotka, Kuopio, Kuusamo, Pielavesi, Porvoo, Sotkamo, Tuusula (4 monuments), Vöyri and Äänekoski).

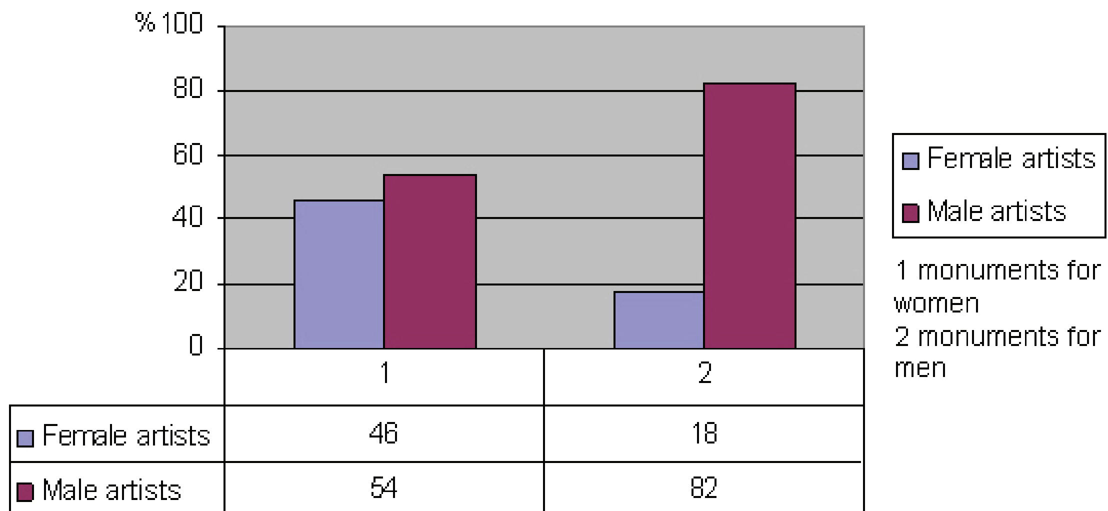
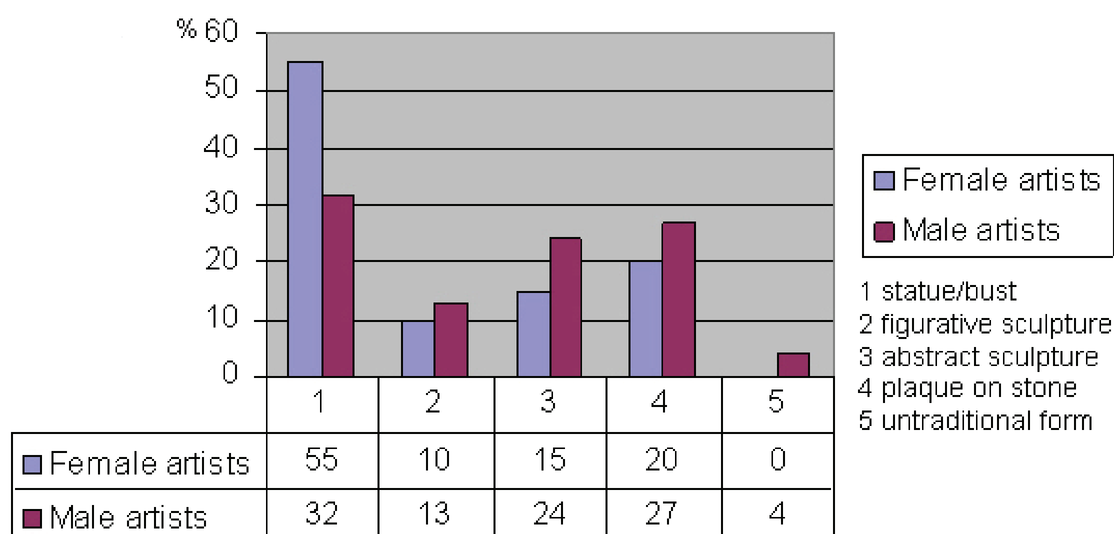


FIGURE 5 Gender of the artists compared to the gender of the person commemorated with a monument in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000.

Gender of the artist seems to additionally have an influence on the form of the monument. As Figure 6 illustrates, male artists focus relatively more often on monument forms which are the most expensive and the highest in the hierarchy of monument art. These forms include abstraction and untraditional monument forms, such as environmental art. The abstract monuments, or monuments which are executed via some untraditional art form, were more often commissioned through a monument competition. Thus, the statistics also reveal the gendered practices of monument competitions. Female artists execute relatively more often monuments which follow the most traditional expressions in monumental art – statues and busts. However, these results do not necessarily indicate the difference in the artistic motivation or ambition of male and female monument sculptors. The form of the monument may also have been decided upon by the commissioners, as it often is in the case of figurative monuments, busts and memorial stones. As Figure 6 indicates, relatively more often male artists produce monuments based on symbolic figurative sculpture, or plaque on a stone, compared to female artists.

To conclude, the statistical analysis of the monuments erected for historical figures in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000 indicates, that gender still matters on several levels in monument sculpture. Even though the post-modernist turn has dismantled the traditional category of the Great Men in Western culture, this category still exists and is being produced and maintained in monument art. The heroic deeds honoured in contemporary Finnish culture still seem to be very manly. In addition, the traditional image of the male gender of the monument artist still seems to exist. The gender equalisation in sculptor education and the sculptor profession has not balanced the gender difference of the monument artists.



	1	2	3	4	5
Female artists	55	10	15	20	0
Male artists	32	13	24	27	4

FIGURE 6 Form of the monuments executed by male and female artists in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000.

The women who were commemorated with a monument in Finland between the years 1989 and 2000 do not form any coherent group. The group includes figures from different social classes, language groups and educational backgrounds. The way in which these women participated in the public sphere in the society varies greatly. Many of the monuments can be interpreted as stressing individuals and their individual life courses, goals and achievements. In some cases, the individual goals and achievements parallel the larger communal, i.e., local, regional or national, goals and strivings. In these cases, the monuments not only commemorate strong personalities or unique individuals in their community, but a person who is somehow a representative exemplar member of the community. Because of the diverse commemorative aims of the monument projects, it is not relevant to interpret the commemorated women as representatives of locality, regionality, Finnishness, Finnish women, or womanhood. However, as the statistical analysis indicates, the women represent the dominated gender in monument sculpture and commemorative practices, which, nevertheless, are important elements in communal, national and nationalist enterprises.

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