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Brethren of Herrnhut and Sisters of Festival: Gendering the Nation in Latvia

Women in Herrnhuterian Brotherhoods. Rites of Inclusion and Difference

The second half of the 19th century brought Livonian lands to the crossroads between capitalist modernization and the formation of national ideologies by both the German and the Russian imperial projects. Traditionally, the positions of the political and economic elite were in the hands of the Baltic German gentry, and a *Lett* was identified in social terms with the *Bauernstand* (peasantry). The status of *Bauernstand* excluded the individual from entry into the collective designations that would entitle him or her to political and economic power. Young Latvian *literati* of the late 1850-1870s took up the roles of visionaries of a modern Latvian nation. The first groups of the Latvian National Awakening movement appeared in Riga in the mid-1850s. One group that surrounded Jūris Caunītis included 11 men, who worked in Riga, and represented a number of different professions (e.g. teachers, workers, accountant, organ master, gardener). Another group that was founded in Terbatas University in February 1856 included future leaders of the Latvian national movement – Krišjānis Valdemārs (1825-1891), Jūris Alunans (1832-1864) and Krišjānis Barons (1835-1923).

As the names tell us, from the very beginning the making of a modern Latvian nation was a clearly gendered process. However, the transformative aspects of traditional gender relations, which were central to this nationalizing process, have been the blind spots of research efforts. In my view, it is very important to consider the forms of inclusion and exclusion and the politics of difference that crucially influenced the gender system of the emergent nationalist project in the agrarian society of Latvia. Analyses of the gender aspects of nation-building in Latvia must consider the stabilizing forms of social actions, norms, values, cultural

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codes, and religious influences as formative elements as well as inclusion/exclusion factors in the gender order of modern Latvian nationhood. The inclusion/exclusion parameters of the nation-making period as a gendered process may be found in forms of collective action, accessible to the Latvians, which counterbalanced social and economic dissociation, as well as in migratory tendencies among Latvian men and women eastwards during the period of modernization and Russian imperial centralization.

Among the collective experiences that encoded society's continuity were the activities of Herrnhuterian groups, which were extremely important in the construction of the nation's identity as a secularization of *civitas Dei*. In my view, the activities and ideas of Herrnhuterian Brethren were outstanding in gendering the passage into the secular making of modern Latvian nationhood.[1]

From the mid-18th century, Herrnhuterian fraternal communities in some Latvian and Estonian territories, in their course of religious enlightenment, had propagated the Herrnhuterian ideal of spiritual equality of all individuals in the creation of foundations of theocratic harmony on earth. This period also saw the influence of the activities of Johann Gottfried Herder. He collected and published German translations of Latvian and Estonian folk songs (1778). His ideas of cultural relativism, which were informed by his views on returning Baltic peoples into the family of the European nations, were not alien to the leaders of the religious enlightenment and the national awakening.

Herrnhuterian fraternal communities had been introduced by the German earl Nikolaus Ludwig Zinzendorf (1700-1760) and his wife Erdmuthe Dorothea. This couple was influenced by the religious movement of Moravian Brethren and their teaching of brotherhood. Conduct of life according to strong discipline and equal work toward the sustenance of the community were salient features of Herrnhuterism. Zinzendorf had asked his brother-in-faith Christian David to try to found a body of soldiers of Christ, "a fraternal community of Jesus that would repre-

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1 Herrnhuterian influences, however, have to be viewed in combination with other affiliative and adapting religious and social mechanisms in the nationalizing process. The 19th century in certain localities was a time of collective conversion of peasant Latvians into Russian Orthodoxy. Religious conversion and the Russian orthodox church were no less significant for the religious undertones in shaping the national identity than was Herrnhuterianism. This is also one of the least explored areas of research into Latvian history and gender, however, and must await extensive future studies.

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sent everybody across ethnic and religious classes"[2] and to bring new religious awakening to the land where, in the words of David, "the Lord opens the door, and we are asked, we must go as builders, most eagerly to where the darkness is thick."[3]

Valdis Mezezers argues that initially "the religious Pietistic awakening reduced the social gulf between the Baltic peasants and their 'German brothers'. Pietism made a new bridge from heart to heart, regardless of whether the believer was a Latvian or a German, a peasant or a noble".[4] Max Weber suggests that Pietism strengthened the emotional, affective aspect of the religious faith and the ascetic behaviour in everyday life.[5] More importantly, in combination with its rationalist and ascetic elements, German Pietism articulated clearly the idea of individual and collective recognition and self-identification connected to a person's belonging to the spiritual aristocracy of the selected. The present becomes the time of testing one's genuine belonging to the selected. Individual actions in accordance with the values of the faith become the condition for a person's future belonging to the selected. In these terms, Pietism aimed at the methodical incorporation of religion into everyday practices, valuing spiritual equality and affectionate behaviour.[6]

In the first half of the 19th century, Latvian Herrnhuterism spread significantly throughout the families of peasants and artisans in Vidzeme (Livonia) and, to a lesser extent, in Kurzeme (Courland). It challenged the monopoly of the official Lutheran church, which, according to the propagators of Herrnhuterism, did not meet the spiritual demands of Latvian people. Consequently, Herrnhuterism was considered a political movement by the powerholders in the Baltic region. In fact, Herrnhuterism was instrumentalized – as a means of spiritual unity and consolidation – against the political, economic and religious power and interests of the Baltic Germans. In official denunciations peasant revolts were openly connected with herrnhuterian influences upon peasant minds and souls. Certain actions were taken against the meeting-houses of Herrnhuters, since the Imperial Minister of the Interior Nikolai Benkendorf was very

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2 JĀNIS ZUTIS, Vidzemes un Kurzemes zemnieku brīlaišana. XIX gadsimta 20. gados (The Emancipation of the Peasantry in Vidzeme and Kurzeme in the 1820s), Rīga 1956, p. 563.

3 LUDVIGS ADAMOVIČS, Latviešu brāļu draudzes sakumi un pirmie ziedu laiki. 1738-1743 (The Beginnings and the first Flourishment of Latvian Brotherhoods. 1738-1743), Rīga 1934, pp. 513-514.

4 VALDIS MEZEZERS, The Herrnhuterian Pietism in the Baltic. And its Outreach into America and Elsewhere in the World, North Quincy 1975, p. 72.

5 MAX WEBER, Isbrannye proizvedenija (Selected Works), Moskva 1990, pp. 164-166.

6 Ibid., pp. 167-168.

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suspicious of any possible meeting places where educated men (in particular, if they had received an education abroad) had access to people. In addition, attempts were made to blackmail Herrnhuterian missionaries.

The situation was aggravated after the Decembrist coup d'etat in St Petersburg, 1825, when Tsar Nikolai I issued the manifesto on clandestine groups. The manifesto also implicated religious brotherhoods that formed well-disciplined and closed communities. Thus, the Governor-General's bill of 1828 directly concerned Herrnhuterian groups, as being peasants' closed secret organizations, for the two major reasons: they were led by unknown outsiders, and they had meetings whose purposes and significance were never clearly explained. In the 1830s, as a display of the Tsar's authority over the faith, Herrnhuterian meeting houses were transformed into associations for spiritual singing. Still, with all the imposed limitations, Herrnhuterian meeting houses, on the one hand, became the homes of local singing associations, which were extremely popular and were to be instrumental in the times of the nation-making. On the other hand, they continued to be the premises of long-term and stable social networking and organization, where power was delegated to the representatives of the growing agrarian bourgeosie.[7]

The traits of Pietism, strong individual discipline, justice and the equality of "quiet souls" were among the most propagated features of the Herrnhuterian community (*Gemeinschaft)* and spirit (*Geist)*. Herrnhuterian idealism stressed the spiritual purity of an individual as the criterion for his/her being equal with others in the face of God, and equal to God (a concept that would be appropriated into the vision of a future God-man). "A *Lett* could write to the German earl Zinzendorf addressing him as 'My beloved and dear brother Ludwig ...'".[8] For Herrnhuters, beauty could not be other than spiritual beauty. In its turn, spiritual beauty could be reached through an honest life, kindness, industriousness, and faith in God, i.e. values that were viewed as equally achievable by men and women, as soon as they performed their God-given duties in *praxis pietatis* perfectly.

Herrnhuters referred to their Church as their Mother, and they sometimes referred to Zinzendorf's Herrnhut in Saxony, or the Herrnhuterian Brotherhood in general, as their Mother:

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7 ZUTIS, Vidzemes un Kurzemes (see note 2), p. 222.
8 MEZEZERS, The Herrnhuterian Pietism (see note 4), p. 73.

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> "One thing still lies on my heart, it needs to be told: I wish to see with my own eyes the place of the mother of our birth."[9] – "My weakness often causes me to be disobedient to the Mother, and as a result I am led into and through the school of correction ... "[10] – "I feel so close to the Mother who is merciful and loving, showing His wounds to me and His blood ... ".[11]

When the first Herrnhuterian community was founded in Valmiera, the capital of Vidzeme, the core group consisted of 11 husbands, 11 wives, 9 sons and 9 daughters:

> "In Valmiera the Latvian fraternal community was seen as the center of the whole movement, the first community, the maternal community. The first lists of membership included leaders, with their more specified rights in each group, or band (married brothers, married sisters, brothers of sons and sisters of daughters): elders (or elder brothers, elder sisters), their deputies, teachers (only men's groups), assistants."[12]

Community religious practices were led by deacons, called *Daddies* ("tetiņi"). Since these spiritual Daddies came from the German Herrnhuters, Latvians called them "German brethren". In the Herrnhuterian hierarchy, women were delegated certain recognition and representation. They could, for example, be the superiors of the married sisters, or deacons of women's groups called *assistants*.

Herrnhuterian communities took special care to provide proper religious education for both sexes, based upon the grounds that had been laid down earlier in Vidzeme by Swedes. Local schools came under Herrnhuterian influence, under the patronage of certain Baltic German landowners, such as, for example, the wives of landowners Gavel and Bergholc, members of the Pietist circle in Valmiera, who were the founders of the Jaunrauna and Marsnene schools.

A number of Baltic German women, wives of landowners, were among the supporters and promoters of Herrnhuterian ideas and Pietism. These women's involvement, in tangent with the Herrnhuterian idea of equality in sisterhood as parallel to equality in brotherhood, also explains why wives, sisters and daughters of Latvian peasants were involved in

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9 Ibid., p. 92.
10 Ibid., p. 94.
11 Ibid., p. 95.
12 ZUTIS, Vidzemes un Kurzemes (see note 2), p. 564.

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Herrnhuterian activities. One Latvian Herrnhuter woman wrote in a letter:

> "... whoever has left me, my Jesus has not left me, He is my brother, my bridigam, and my mother, He is around me all the time.... the Lord Jesus has given me sisters and brothers in great numbers who love Him, and in Him we have our joy together for the salvation that is ours through Him".[13]

Women were quite active in certain types of Herrnhuterian activities such as the selling of books for the purpose of "enlightening" the souls of simple people. Women were given an active role as agents in religious enlightenment, although they were never permitted full power in the decision-taking bodies of the Latvian Herrnhuterian movement.

At the worship services that were in buildings separate from the churches,

> "people met brothers and sisters in Christ from other communities, particularly the lay preachers, called the preaching brothers, who often 'crossed the borders' of their own communities with the message. Visits from one brotherhood to another were not rare, either, and in this way the Kingdom's work bound together men and women from near and far. Since visitations were not practised in the official *Volkskirche* (people's church) even by pastors, people discovered the depth and warmth of Christianity which had been missing in their large, but cold, state Church"[14]

– as a contemporary descendant of the Herrnhuters reminisces about the scene.

A Latvian Herrnhuter of the time rendered a peaceful picture of such community meetings:

> "The meeting of the German brothers with their Latvian brothers was very warm-hearted: they granted equal rights to peasants, they conversed with them as with equal brothers and sisters. They even used the informal 'you' with some very good peasant men and women. On Christmas Eve they organized a common hour of meeting. Men were sitting in one hall, and women – in the second; the doors between the two halls were opened ... After this common hour, all gathered in one hall, but men and women were sitting separately, far from each other ... Buntebart was telling us about

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13 MEZEZERS, The Herrnhuterian Pietism (see note 4), p. 90.
14 Ibid., p. 75.

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'the great love that will be brought to us, in our grief, by a future God-man'".[15]

This description testifies to how in these communities the idea of difference/equality was being specifically constructed across family, clan, sex, ethnic, and social status. Differences in age and sex had to be visible and persuasive so as to strengthen the effect of the belonging to the uniting spirit of "the aristocracy of the selected"[16] shared across these social, age, and gender differences.

Men's and women's group-units, or "bands" (a band of husbands, a band of wives, a band of boys, a band of girls) paralleled each other in organisation and work, each with their own internal leadership. However, teachers for each group were chosen only from the men's groups. Herrnhuterian Latvian communities were organized into para-families, which were spiritually and emotionally no less binding than physical family bonds. This was due to the fact that through these communities individuals pursued spiritual redemption, which was their highest aim.

The Herrnhuterian spiritually bonding "para-families" did not live separately from peasant families, but, on the contrary, represented interpolated household and clan relationships. An individual's identification with a local parish or Herrnhuterian community was no less significant than his/her collective identification with a household. A spiritual "para-family" was seen as a materialized bonding to bring spiritual principles into the sinful world. This model of a spiritually uniting and binding "family", in my opinion, was among the appropriated collective identifications that served as adaptive experiences of social interaction for the members, as they responded to the consolidating calls of Latvian *literati*.

Consolidating codifications of collective identification were supported by the fact that in the regions Vidzeme and Kurzeme the religious, either traditional Lutheran, or Herrnhuterian centered on locality. The Herrnhuterian ideology proposed "a new language" that "opened a whole new world" to peasants and "the promised land of milk and honey".[17] The intra-local and inter-local communication networks that were maintained by lay teachers were particularly important in this process. Rural locality as a symbolically rewritten habitat of authentic social entity for the re-

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15 ZUTIS, Vidzemes un Kurzemes (see note 2), p. 533.
16 WEBER, Izbrannye proizvedenija (see note 5), p. 34.
17 MEZEZERS, The Herrnhuterian Pietism (see note 4), p. 100.

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imagined communal secular project of nationhood found its central place in the visions of the awakeners.

Jūris Alunans wrote a core text for the period of national construction, entitled *Seta. Daba. Pasaule* (Home. Nature. World). In this symbolic triangle, *Seta* ("home" or "locality") is inserted into the harmonising codes of *Daba*-"nature" and *Pasaule*-"world" ("universe" or "cosmos"). The three core concepts of Alunans' work were encoded in the cosmogonic images of the "feminine" in traditional peasant culture and its folk songs. *Seta*, a maternal location, was paralleled to *daba* (nature), the maternal womb of the *seta*. Folk songs, for example, include about 60 images of the maternal "inhabiting" the world of nature, e.g. the Wind's Mother, the Land's Mother, the Sun's Mother etc. The World, or *pasaule*, a word of the feminine gender, means "under the Sun." In traditional Baltic mythology, the sun was the unifying and harmonizing symbol of the world emboding feminine/maternal power, whereas the moon was masculine. To live in "pasaule," or "under the Sun," meant to live within the womb of the maternal. These traditional codifications cannot be disregarded if one wants to understand the complex long-term process of the secularisation of collective consciousness and national self-identification through the reinscription of traditional codes, images, and symbols of the agrarian Latvian culture.

The process of national consolidation generated a powerful sense of individual identification, reflected in the faith "not in the human being as such, the abstract human being, but in the importance of a human being of high quality, his importance, role and power", – as Aleksandrs Dauge, a writer of pedagogical didactics, remembers. "Thus", he continues, "my task in this life is to develop this quality of the spiritual and ethical person, and to give opportunity to such a personality to define, to take decisions, to govern, to rule"[18]. Dauge, like other Latvian democrats, was interested in socialism as "the work of the heart", likening it to "what all forms of sacred cult meant to a religious man"[19].

The awakeners and the first generations of Latvian writers were influenced by the Herrnhuterian legacy; brothers Reinis and Matiss Kaudzītes are prime examples of such writers. Matiss Kaudzītes was the chief-elder of a Herrnhuterian Brotherhood for his entire adult life. In his famous novel *The Times of Surveyors* (Mērnieku laiki) Kaudzītes por-

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18 ALEKSANDRS DAUGE, Manā jaunības zemē: Atmiņu gramāta (In the Land of my Youth: The Book of Memories), Rīga 1928, p. 137

19 Ibid., p. 140.

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trayed the two Herrnhuterian women Ilze and Annuža, idealized characters, "spiritual and ethical persons", who were "pure in heart" like Christ; this was one of the first attempts in the national literary discourse to picture the feminine.

His brother Reinis Kaudzītes tried to outline a code of femininity for the ideal Latvian woman. He was known for having written the first book of aphorisms on the improvement of mankind and on personal betterment. His views mixed agrarian cosmogony, the legacy of the Herrnhuterian vision of divine harmony, and the national project to embody the rational order of the universe. An ideal feminine person, in his opinion, is "anyone who is loveable, proud, everything that blossoms and sparkles, the whole smiling world (*pasaule* –"under the sun"), because this person is more a person of the heart. To men belongs the nature of autumn and winter".[20] Women are different and special human beings. Thus, Kaudzītes explains, rights and obligations should be rationally divided between genders so that each of the two could potentially fulfill his/her inborn, natural capabilities and gifts of nature, in order to create spiritual harmony in the family. The family, thus, should be organized as an embodiment of the rational order of the universe and of progress. To learn "homemaking" is an especially important part of women's education, because it is, in his words, "the first stone in the corner of the building of Latvian Enlightenment".[21]

Kaudzītes's views portray the Herrnhuterian legacy that also contributed significantly to the developing awareness of literacy being essential to both boys and girls in rural areas. Herrnhuterian, parish, and folk schooling pertained to the religious education of girls as sisters in faith and future mothers. The tradition of mothers as children's first educators was reconstructed into the cornerstone of the Latvian awakening movement, as expressed in the article "On girls' education" in the newspaper "*Balss*" (Voice) in 1880:

> "A woman takes a visible position in the education of the public. She is the basic person in public education, and this puts a great stress on the need for the development of women's education. Boys and girls are equally gifted, and it is not decent to take care of boys and to forget about girls. It is particularly necessary for

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20 REINIS KAUDZĪTES, Domu izteikumi (Expression of Thoughts), Cesis 1997, p. 119.
21 Ibid., p. 134.

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girls to develop their gift of spirituality because they preserve morality, and the beauty of humanity grows out of them".[22]

Women in the Folk Song Festival: Rights to Equality and Rites of Exclusion

Political emancipation of the nation – as a discourse of difference in European modernity – claimed accessible forms of representation for its gender order, constitutive of "the subjective and collective meanings of women and men as categories of identity".[23] It should be remembered that Latvia throughout the nation-building period was part of the Russian empire, and under the rule of Baltic Germans. The discourse of political suffrage and citizenship was not an accessible resource for the project of popular unity and its sanctioned imaginations of gender difference. The constitution of boundaries in a political as well as a spiritual sense could not operate with political identity, which had been and still was missing.

But it was possible to give cultural expression to "spiritual roots", one of the anthropological claims of modernity. The concept of *kultivierte* (cultivated) collectivity needed a historical dimension for the construction of a national identity.

The Herrnhuterian vision of *civitas Dei* as the nation's spiritual regeneration and awakening on earth had needed "a promised land," and it had found the land where thousands of folk songs testified to the preserved innoncence and moral cleanliness of ancient peoples that "had to be awakened from its lethargic sleep"[24]. Latvian folk songs, called *daina* (singular, feminine gender), were appropriated as ethnic, historical and cultural legacy and converted into gender symbolism at the First All-Latvian Folk Song Festival in 1873. Dainas were employed as sacral evidence of the ancient, awakened and redeemed national legacy and as texts sacralizing the new origin in the National Awakening, in the transition from marginality to "a center of our own".

In the process of building a transgenerational identity of communities and regions, *daina* songs were pronounced authentic sources that testified to collectively shared old times and language. Tens of thousands of these folk songs were collected from villages and farmsteads by ethno-

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22 LILJA BRANT, Latviešu sieviete (Latvian Woman), Rīga 1931, p. 19.
23 JOAN W. SCOTT, Gender and the Politics of History, New York 1988, p. 6.
24 ARVEDS ŠVABE, Latvijas vēsture (History of Latvia), 3. ed., Rīga 1990, p. 23-24.

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graphers, from the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder to the passionate Latvian awakener Krišjānis Barons (1835-1923). For the latter and other awakeners, the folk songs preserved by peasant women gave unifying evidence of the immanence of nationhood and the roots of *Volksgeist* (people's spirit) in the redeemed and promised land. They became "marker" texts for their representations of femininity and, in particular, of motherhood, in producing national and cultural difference.

Dainas were created on the principle of parallelism, in the way that a character/event/relationship/role/status in the heavenly family had a parallel earthly/local plot reflected in the same rhyme. And they were performed as texts mediating between the singing performers and divine phenomena, revealing their endowing sacrality to performers during the act of singing.[25] As Dace Bula points out, the ideologues of the national awakening used biblical motifs to set up the metaphors of "nation" as body and organism in relation to *daina* songs as "voice markers" of Latvianness as the discourse of ethnocultural difference and particularity. She cites J. Zvaigznīte:

> "They arise from the hearts of Latvians, and only Latvians can claim: they are bones from my bones, they are the body from my body."[26]

The rise of nationalism in Latvia was an extremely complex process, and I have outlined one of its constituents. The Herrnhuterian religious and social legacy, with its message of political protest, its potential for mass movements and alternative roads to future equality and emancipation, was significant in the production of "nation". The tradition of *daina* songs was as significant in the production of the "historical" identity of the nation.

The Latvian Herrnhuterian legacy contributed significantly to the production of nationhood at the First All-Latvian Folk Song Festival, considered the event at which the nation was founded. The tradition of Baltic folk song festivals had been previously conducted as a socially and ethnically exclusive ritual by Baltic Germans.[27] This model was re-scrip-

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25 C. RYŽAKOVA, Javlenie svjaščennogo v latyšskich fol'klornych tekstach (The Occurrence of "the Holy" in Latvian Folkoristic Texts), in: Latvijas Zinatņu Akadēmijas Vēstis 51 (1997), no. 1, pp. 31-39.

26 DACE BULA, Dziedatāju Tauta. Latviešu Tautas dziesmu tradīcija un nadijas paštēls (The Folk of Singers. The Tradition of Latvian Folk Songs and the Self-Image of the Nation), in: Latvijas Zinātņu Akadēmijas Vēstis 51 (1997), p. 22-30, here p. 25.

27 F. MILLERS, Baltvāču kordziedāšanas tradiciju pārmantošana (The Legacy of Baltic German Choir-Singing Traditions). Latvijas Zinatņu Akadēmijas Vēstis 44 (1990), no. 6, pp. 29-33.

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ted and transformed into the First Latvian Song Festival in Riga. It was possible to invite quite a number of participants (more than one thousand) because in Vidzeme and Kurzeme there already existed Latvian local song groups and associations of Latvian singers, male and mixed. Since then, the festival has been regularly conducted in symbolical connection with the summer solstice holiday of St John's. The first event of performing the nation set the scenario for the Song Festival tradition (1873, 1881, 1888), and, as such, it was central to the nation-building phase in the 1870s. Thus, a cultural event – the festival – was crucial for the social and gendered construction of individual identification with the nation. This follows, if one subscribes to the Hegelian school of understanding the nationalizing process, for which nationhood is "more than an aggregation of political agents, it is political agency based on a shared cultural identity"[28].

The festival was not only a social form of enunciating the rebirth of the nation, but at the same time a symbolic re-appropriation of Riga, the "heart" of Baltic German power. Financially the festival was supported by rich Latvian merchants from the Riga Latvian Society. The society's house in downtown Riga was nicknamed "Mother" (more precisely, Mum, or "Māmuļa"). The conversion of Riga into the capital and the heart of the awakened nation signified its new historical status of being the re-appropriated and redeemed maternal home. At the same time, this conversion established the boundaries between the former paternalist regime and the fraternal contract of the Festivals organisers – all Latvian men.

Song associations and groups traveled from different parts of Latvia – in particular, from Vidzeme and Kurzeme – to participate in the first festival and to represent the unity of the nation, of its language, history and culture. The politically instrumentalized cultural ritual of the festival, with the *daina* singing underlining the sacrality of the nation, included the religious rhetoric of Herrnhuterian communities from Kurzeme and Vidzeme and folk songs from numerous localities celebrating the *Volkssprache* (vernacula), along with the passionate nationalist rhetoric of its Latvian organizers and keyspeakers. Together with the language, this combination of elements gave rise to the festival's sacral status as the

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28 TUIJA PULKKINEN, The Postmodern and Political Agency, Hakapaino Oy 1996, p. 147.

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nation's foundational event, as "a matrix of creativity and individuality"[29].

The Festival, whose final segment was entitled "A Singing War," literally gave "voice" to an affectionate fraternal-sororal contract in actualizing the *civitas Dei*. The performance was a symbolically unifying act of new Latvian citizens across social and regional differences; it would retain this value in the 20th century as the sanctifying moment when the hearts of all singers, dancers and spectators are united into one "small family," with the affectionate beating/voice of their "heart" at the Festival. The trope of a familial "home" was instrumentalized for negotiating complexities within appropriated legacies into performing/singing/enunciating the nation. On the one hand, the festival was a marker of a new nation on the map of Europe that had to be included into the imperial visions of coming modernization. On the other hand, the festival was an exclusive and purifying ritual; as such, it embedded the national order in the popular rhetorics of natural order and organic growth.

Given women's experience in the Herrnhuterian community networks, women's awareness of the importance of literacy for both genders, and women's role in collecting centrality, preserving, teaching, and performing folk songs, they could not be excluded from participation and representation in the nation-building process. The festival, symbolically embodying the rationality of an organized collective will, served as a homogenizing ritual for the collective and public "inclusion" of women. It was the first nationwide public event for women to participate in, – as members of local mixed song groups from Vidzeme and Kurzeme. The symbolic function of women singers was that of "sisters" who supported men in territorializing/stabilising the nation/family in the capital, as well as in the family of European nations. Although it had been different in old times, the nation claimed its equality to other European nations in modernity.

However, the Latvian *literati* who were the leaders of the First Festival viewed Latvian political and spiritual emancipation as a fraternal contract, and delegated their "sisters" to maternalism. The maternalist discourse was embedded in the rhetoric linking of women to the power of Latvian pre-Christian goddesses as well as to strong Latvian mothers of the past. The rhetoric of maternalism was closely connected to the rituals of the national domestication of Riga as the nation's capital, its

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[29] ROGERS BRUBAKER, Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the national question of the New Europe, Cambridge 1996, p. 113.

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heart. A leader of the National Awakening, Atis Kronvalds (1837-1875), at the opening of the Festival, emphasized the idea that maternal legacy and spirit were embodied in this collective national event, in which the performance of folk songs as the collective evidence of preserved maternal legacy contributed to the drawing of boundaries of a nation redeemed from the paternalist legacy of the oppressors. The "maternal" in this context can be viewed as a compensatory symbolic space for realigning power relations from the paternalism of Baltic German rule into the communal contract of a modern nation. The codes of femininity (mothers and sisters) were transformed into a shared agency/responsibility for the boundary-construction and exclusion scripts of the nation/family. The metaphor of a familial "home" was politically instrumentalized in the affective enunciation of the nation as a fraternal-sororal nation-unifying voice.

The Folk Song Festival as a form of collective identification and recognition deployed the power of audio-visual mechanisms for constructing an identity of "new women". Women singers and dancers, delegated by their local communities to attend the Festival, participated in rhythmic, metric, melodic, and tonal synchronization, producing the nation as a natural phenomenon in common voice and movement. The performances were controlled by an underlying rhythm of folk songs and songs specially written that conformed to the melodic patterns of folk songs.[30] The words that were most frequently used in the songs were "people" and "we".[31]

Photography was another significant visual mechanism in constructing national identity. The repertoire of images and themes, the cumulative portrait of a nation, and the creation of "history" through a long succession of photographic images were gendered in order to produce the image of totality and its authority. Actually, nothing happened by accident in the carefully prepared scenario of The First Festival, which would become a matrix for the Festival tradition in the 20th century, as well.

Since then, Folk-Song Festivals have always been the central ritual of the collective performance of ethnic authenticity, a regular mark in the cycle of time (families, groups and communities being central to choir performances, dances, and spectatorship), establishing and "normalizing" the nation's visibility in European history. The political function of the

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30 G. KANTANE, Dažas dziesmu svētku dziesmas māksliniecisklā modeļa iezīmes (Some Aspects of the Song Model for the Folk Song Festival). Latvijas Zinatņu Akadēmijas Vēstis 44 (1990), no. 6, pp. 22-28.

31 Ibid. p. 24.

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festival was consistently foregrounded as the major symbolical ritual of national and historical purity and the central form of collective self-representation.

The domestication of the nation into Riga was cemented by converting the social status of the *lettische Bauer* (Latvian peasant) into that of a new national citizen. However, the emerging masculine national subject was still marginalized from political and economic power and alienated from power positions in knowledge-production. He needed to employ legacies such as Herrnhuterism and cultural rituals such as folk song festivals to solidify the spiritual, educational and harmonizing power of the nation. The feminine "subject" was not excluded, but was delegated to the symbolic familial roles of strong women, mothers, daughters and sisters to tend the fire until the next day[32], to act in a collectively-binding "sisterly" way, to secure an individual woman's inclusion into the nationhood.

Women in the Territory of Nation: Bonds and Boundaries

In the 1880s, the public discourse on women's roles in the private sphere was adopting the rhetoric of gender and nation – in particular, in the views about the bonding continuity between new Latvian women and their ancestral foremothers, as, for example, in an essay by Karolina Kronvalde. Kronvalde was the first woman to voice the problems of women's subordination and equality and to argue for equal opportunities for men and women in public and cultural life. She placed stress on the importance of equal education for both sexes:

> "Latvians should pay more honour to their sisters' mothers. When Latvians had to resist invaders, Latvian mothers sent their sons to defend their land. In the darkest ages, mothers went on teaching their children and bringing them up in the spirit of decency",

wrote Kronvalde in the newspaper *Baltijas Vestnēsis* (Baltic Herald).[33] Her contemporary, Marija Pekšeņu (1845-1903), who was the first woman playwright, finished her play *Gertrude* with the question „how to help my people, first of all?" followed by the woman-protagonist's

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32 KAUDZĪTES, Domu izteikumi (see note 20), p. 197.

33 See KAROLINA KRONVALDE, "Ceenigam Garram" ("To an Honorable Spirit"), in: Baltijas Vestnēsis 1870, pp. 46-48.

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answer: "I will write a good play and send it to the Riga Latvians' Association"[34].

Latvian society of the 1880s responded diversely to the new demands and needs of young women, who were confronted with new tendencies in the labour market and in education, with urbanization, family nuclearization, and modernization, particularly to the desires of young women to go into higher education. A woman belonging to that generation emphasized in her memoirs that

> "few Latvians were prejudiced about girls' education. But German society of those times looked at the strivings of Latvians to give education to their children as ridiculous 'clowning'. German pastors in Latvia at that time openly criticised women's education, which they predicted would lead Latvian women to immorality. Pastors were not the only people who opposed women's education and their equal participation in public life. Latvian intelligentsia at the time treated women's longing for higher education and equal rights with men as a threat to family and moral norms"[35].

In the 1880s, in a letter to Aron Matis, Marija Medinska (1830-1888) stressed the significance of men's and women's co-operation in the development and further building of the nation:

> "Only through the co-operation of men and women can we develop spirituality in younger generations, and it is impossible for men to perform this task without women. Decent Latvian women provide the most powerful basis of the nation in the hands of Latvian men. A woman in her nation is the location where the nation's heart beats, and the nation's heart has to be remembered"[36].

Medinska wrote a play entitled *Serdeniete* (The Small Heart), in which she focused on a woman as a symbol of women's leadership in spiritual and national ideals. It is noteworthy that Aron Matis described Marija Medinska as a woman "with masculine spirit combined with feminine self-consciousness"[37], an ideal embodiment of a future "androgenous" individual.

The 1890s were marked by a significant change in young women's aspirations, which was already evident during these women's school

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34 Cited in BRANT, Latviešu sieviete (see note 22), p. 43.

35 KLARA KALNIŅA, Liesmainie gādi: Atmiņi vija (The Fire Years: Memories). Stokholma 1964, p. 20.

36 Cited in BRANT, Latviešu sieviete (see note 22), p. 171.

37 Cited ibid., p. 41.

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years, and by new understandings of women's subordination in contemporary society. As Klara Kalniņa remembers:

> "At that time, social differentiation in Latvia was not strongly expressed. Among the schoolgirls there were those who longed for women's equal rights with men and higher goals in life. What these goals should be, we were not able to define precisely. Central was our longing for the highest welfare of humankind and full rights for women, according to the model offered by Clara Zetkin and women from other nations."[38]

Although it is now difficult to assess the public impact of debates around the "woman question" of those times, it is obvious that the issues were generally dealt with in moral and populist terms. Latvian women's social and political activism was engendered in the context of religious influences that had been appropriated in the course of cultural and ethnic identification and nation-making. The "feminization" of the ideological discourse "for the realization of rational, and highly laudable, political ends"[39] by virtue of women's "inclusion" eventually relegated itself to the goal of "restoring the ancient powers of our women as mothers" of the nation, outside the public and political realms of modern citizenship.

In general, politically and socially active women and women's groups in Latvia were confronted with problems similar to those of Russian women's movements. Linda Edmondson has made an argument about the latter that holds true in the Latvian context that "a very close association was established between the personal liberation of women and the liberation of society, which distinguished it from feminist movements in other countries and which was to influence its further development to a profound degree"[40]. Latvian men and women were powerless in the realm of political influence, and women's equality in the nation was contextualized within the opposition of "oppressor-oppressed", not only under the tsarist regime, but also through strong German cultural and economic pressure. In the Russian empire the sphere of politics was not a legally open channel for women's emancipation; thus, the issues of female suffrage or any other political issues related to the "woman question" were inaccessible to Russian feminists. In Finland, Russification politics involved many women in the oppositional democratic movement and in

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38 KALNIŅA, Liesmainie gādi (see note 35), p. 25.

39 PARTHA CHATTERJEE, Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World – a Derivative Discourse, London 1986, p. 2.

40 LINDA EDMONDSON, Feminism in Russia. 1900-1917, Stanford 1984, p. 8.

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political life, whereas in Latvia all means by which citizens could participate actively in political life were excluded, since there was no political autonomy. While in Finland the issue of women's suffrage was part of the movement toward national political involvement, this dynamic of the women's movement was practically absent in Lativa.

A significant factor in the development of a Latvian women's movement was the gap between educated women and the majority of women, who were engaged in the labour of small households. The management of small households represented the major means of production in the mainstream of the economy in the first half of the 20th century. It is not surprising that Latvian women's organized activities in the Republic of Latvia of the 1920-1930s strongly reflected the values and customs of an agrarian society. There was no place in this strongly agrarian society for a militant suffragist movement and influential polemics over equality. The Latvian situation was similar to that of Russia, where "industrial power began to have a noticeable effect upon the economy nearly twenty years after the 'woman question' first became a burning topic, and where the peasant population still formed 80 per cent of the total in 1917"[41].

On the other hand, in Russia, during a very active process of the formation of national and cultural identity in the nineteenth century, revolutionary and emancipatory ideas were directed against the patriarchal institution of the family. In contrast, in Latvia, particularly in the 1880s, there was a dominant public discourse on the purity of ethnic rural locality versus the dangers of urban acculturation and the possibility of national dissolution. The family was constructed as a fermenting institution that stabilized the nation. In it both ideas – that of the nation's emancipation and that of women's equality – were interconnected.

Dramatic changes in the self-consciousness and choices of the new Latvian woman were reflected in the life of Marija Tauija, one of the first Latvian women scientists. Tauija wrote in her diary about her childhood in the late 19th century:

> "I was engaged in household work, too. I was the best milkmaid among the maids ... In those days I cherished no other idea than that of becoming a true farmer's daughter – a household manager. My aunt, my father's sister, the owner of Lāči farmstead, was my ideal"[42].

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41 Ibid., p. 7.

42 Marija Tauija, Atmiņas (Memories), in: Women in Latvia-75, ed. by Pārsla Eglīte, Rīga 1993, p. 162.

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At the age of 16, she wrote:

> "I want to educate good people with high morality and let them be true Latvians – this wish is above all: no matter whether they should be entrusted to me or be my own children. I want to prove one more thing: that a woman is a human being with every right to be an individual"[43].

Tauija's diary and life show the close relation between the active development of the national culture, of education, and the progress in women's education on the one hand, and specific features of cultural gendering of women's national consciousness on the other hand. Cultural nationalism was part of Tauija's consciousness as a citizen of Latvia and as a woman. A growing gender consciousness, though, was inseparable from the development of national self-consciousness among educated women of the late 19th, early 20th century. These two forms of social collectivity, so picturesquely described in Tauija's memoirs, interacted later, in the interwar period of the Republic of Latvia. During this period, the formation of national and gender identities would be closely related to the constructions of nationhood and statehood ideologies.

The era of the 1880-1890s displayed a diversification in women's views regarding the roots of women's exclusion and subordination and in women's demands to have equal rights and influence on legislation and political processes. The development of the women's movement of that period reveals all possible trends in the development of Latvian women's self-consciousness, as well as women's active political and civic awareness. The failure of the Revolution of 1905 brought disastrous results among the educated strata and social-democratic circles. The women's movement in Latvia was stripped of any politically alternative, radical feminist vistas, and moved more and more in the direction of advocating women's cultural, educational, and professional activity, with a stronger stress on the uniting role of Latvian women in maintaining the nation.

The events of World War I were no less disastrous to the nation because Latvian territories became the battlefields of the German and the Russian armies. Tens of thousands of Latvians emigrated eastward during this era, to mainland Russia. For example, in Kurzeme, out of 800,000 inhabitants, only 230,000 stayed in their homes during the war. In the words of Berta Pipiņa, the future chair of the Latvian Women's League in the Republic of Latvia, it was then the role of Latvian women

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[43] Ibid., p. 163.

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to collect and unite Latvians scattered all over the world. This statement expressed in a nutshell the place of the woman in the gender politics of the future independent Latvian state, which would eventually grant voting rights to women.

Our analysis reveals an interplay of several 19th century events and processes that were significant for future developments. Among those processes were the ways that women were choosing their roads in the nation – whether in the camp for radical changes in women's self-determination, or as "pillars and hearts" of nation-uniting ideologies. These choices coincided with the nationalist discourse of the oppressed European nation – in which women were instrumentalized – in the periods of religious enlightenment and national consolidation. These 19th-century developments account for the specificity of tensions between nationalism and feminism, and between belonging and marginalization, which were bound to be re-emerge in the Latvian women's dramatic course in the 20th century.

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