

REFLECTING A TRANSITION IN THE GENDER ORDER – CASE OF *NÕUKOGUDE NAIN/EESTI NAIN* MAGAZINE

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In my article I analyse how an Estonian women's magazine, *Nõukogude Naine/Eesti Naine*, represented gender during the late 1980s and early 1990s. I will argue that although the magazine in question took part in constructing a traditional gender image, there were also articles which questioned the image of a masculine man and a feminine woman.

The theme is relevant because *Eesti Naine* was the only women's magazine in Estonia until 1991 and it was one of the most wide-spread women's magazines throughout the first years of the 1990s. As a result, it can be assumed that the magazine had quite a significant effect on Estonian women.

During the Soviet period, gender order had been produced in Estonia within the socialist equality rhetoric, according to which work opportunities were propagated for both men and women. Equality was not, however, seen as a part of the private sphere and due to that women were carrying a double burden on their shoulders.¹ During the last years of the 1980s, the structures of the socialist system fell apart and Estonians struggled for their independence.² At the same time, the concepts of man and woman gained new meanings when the development towards more traditional gender roles – which had already begun during the last years of Soviet rule – strengthened. In this new gender structure, also the public sphere became

¹ **Narusk, A.** Gender and rationality: the case of Estonian women. – In: Unresolved Dilemmas. Women, Work and the Family in the United States, Europe and the Former Soviet Union. Eds K. Kauppinen, T. Gordon. Ashgate, Aldershot, 1997, 112–113, 115–117; **Kaskla, E.** The national woman: constructing gender roles in Estonia. – Journal of Baltic Studies, 2003, XXXIV, 3, 305.

² See e.g. **Alenius, K.** Viron, Latvian ja Liettuan historia. Atena, Jyväskylä, 2000, 276–277; **Lauristin, M.** Context of transition. – In: Return to the Western World. Cultural and Political Perspectives on the Estonian Post-Communist Transition. Eds M. Lauristin, P. Vihalemm, K. E. Rosengren, L. Weibull. Tartu University Press, Tartu, 1997, 25, 40; **Lauristin, M., Vihalemm, P.** The transformation of Estonian society and media: 1987–2001. – In: Baltic Media in Transition. Ed. P. Vihalemm. Tartu University Press, Tartu, 2002, 17–24.

gendered: the ideal Estonian woman had to be a mother of at least three children and a man had to be the breadwinner of the family.³ In addition to these traditional values, there was, however, also room for a new kind of thinking as homosexuality, for example, started to get attention in the public discourse.⁴

Glasnost – known as openness – was a part of Mikhail Gorbatsšov's perestroika-policy.⁵ In Estonian media, journalists were, however, sceptical concerning the phenomenon and it was only in 1987 that they started to trust the new openness. During the last years of the 1980s, the media became the central forum through which citizens' political activism was inspired.⁶

The role of media in transitional Estonia has been widely researched⁷ but the role of the only Estonian women's magazine has not been examined. According to my interpretation, an analysis of the magazine in question, which was published under the names *Nõukogude Naine* and *Eesti Naine*,⁸ has a significant meaning when studying the Estonian gender image. Until 1991, it was the only women's magazine in the country. Thus it can be assumed that the magazine had quite a significant effect on Estonian women.

Sociologist Anu Narusk has pointed out that Estonian women were, during the transitional period, next to men in the construction of the traditional gender structure.⁹ Inspired by this, I will ask if Narusk's argument was really true among female journalists through an analysis of how this particular Estonian women's magazine represented gender during the late 1980s and early 1990s. I will argue that although the magazine in question took part in the construction of a traditional gender image, there were also parts in texts which questioned the image of a masculine man and a feminine woman and brought contradictory elements to the writings of the magazine. The discussed time period covers the years between 1987 and 1991.

³ See, e.g., **Hansson, L., Laidmäe, V.-I.** Naine, töö ja perekond Eestis – muutuvad hoiakud ja väärtushinnangud. – Ariadne Lõng, 2000, **I**, 1/2, 62, 66; **Narusk, A.** Gender and rationality: the case of Estonian women, 113, 124–126.

⁴ See, e.g., **Veispak, T.** Homosexuality in Estonia in the 20th century: ideological and juridical aspects. – In: *Sexual Minorities and Society: the Changing Attitudes toward Homosexuality in the 20th Century Europe*. Eds U. Parikas, T. Veispak. Institute of History, Tallinn, 1991; **Nõgel, I.** How homosexuality is regarded among students in current Estonia. – In: *Sexual Minorities and Society: the Changing Attitudes toward Homosexuality in the 20th Century Europe*. Eds U. Parikas, T. Veispak. Institute of History, Tallinn, 1991, 115–116.

⁵ See, e.g., **Alenius, K.** Viron, Latvian ja Liettuan historia, 277.

⁶ **Lauristin, M., Vihalemm, P.** The transformation of Estonian society and media: 1987–2001, 25–27.

⁷ See, e.g., *Return to the Western World. Cultural and Political Perspectives on Estonian Post-Communist Transition*. Eds M. Lauristin, P. Vihalemm, K. E. Rosengren, L. Weibull. Tartu University Press, Tartu, 1997; *Baltic Media in Transition*. Ed. P. Vihalemm. Tartu University Press, Tartu, 2002.

⁸ Between the years of 1945–1988 the magazine was published under the name *Nõukogude Naine*. The name was changed to *Eesti Naine* in 1989.

⁹ **Narusk, A.** Gender and rationality: the case of Estonian women, 113, 124.

The article is based on a historical approach which, in this particular case, means qualitative analysis of the writings in the frame of their historical context. In addition, the approach can be defined as feminist and its cornerstone relies on Joan W. Scott's definitions. Gender is, according to Scott, a social construction which is legitimized through biological differences between genders. In addition, it is an on-going process which is produced through different institutions, cultural symbols, normative conceptions and gendered identities.¹⁰ Scott's view of history has been criticised especially due to its strong emphasis on the discursive nature of gender.¹¹ However, it is well-suited in research that deals with a women's magazine and its manner of producing gender from the media historical point of view. The article will, in other words, work on the discursive level while trying to identify different discourses on femininity and masculinity produced by journalists at a women's magazine.

GENDERED SOCIETY AS AN IDEAL

Media is said to be a central institution which reproduces the prevailing gender order.¹² This can be seen, for instance, in the *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine in which the prevailing gender order was produced through three different ideological points of views. During the years 1987 and 1988, it was the socialist gender rhetoric which still had an influence on the way female journalists wrote about gender and especially gender relations. In 1988, on the other hand, a nationalistic gender image was introduced in the magazine and it turned back to the values of the first Estonian republic. Furthermore, at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, a Western tradition of writing in the women's magazines started to have an impact on the writings of Estonian journalists.¹³

The combining element between all the above-mentioned discourses was the basis rooted in natural gender roles. Like socialist and nationalistic rhetoric, *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine did not really question traditional gender roles but, rather, took part in the patriarchal pattern of producing an image of a stronger (male) and a weaker (female) sex. Although the discourse which began to highlight individuality reduced the division alongside gender lines, maleness and femaleness were produced within a gender order which was based on biological gender roles.

¹⁰ **Scott, J. W.** *Gender and the Politics of History*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1988, 41–50.

¹¹ See, e.g., **Östman, A.-C.** Joan Scott ja feministinen historiikirjoitus. – In: *Feministejä – Aikamme ajattelijoita*. Vastapaino, Tampere, 2000, 281, 283.

¹² In addition to the media, institutions such as the school, medicine and the legal system are central in reproducing the prevailing gender contract: **Pilvre, B.** Kes räägib teleekraanil? – In: *Sugu telepildis*. Ed. B. Pilvre. Tartu, 2004, 30. <http://www.jrnl.ut.ee/telesugu/sugutelepildis.php>

¹³ **Kurvinen, H.** Sosialistisen järjestelmän perinteistä tasavallan ajan ihanteisiin. Sukupuoli virolaisessa *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine*-lehdesä vuosina 1987–1991. Oulun yliopisto, 2006, 152–157. (Unpublished master's thesis.)

Instead of a socialist or nationalistic rhetoric, Estonian man became the norm which defined the roles of an Estonian woman in the magazine in question.¹⁴

The biology-based gender order produced by journalists can be seen throughout the magazine during the different periods of the transitional era. For instance, in its early stage the task to formulate the norms of a right kind of womanhood was entrusted to an Estonian male actor, Peeter Kard. He spoke about the masculinization of Estonian women in the following way:

I would like to talk a little bit about a woman, a modern-day woman... If she continues to become more masculine, she will soon be, well, I'll have to show you, look, she's tall, broad and rectangular – like a chest of drawers. The only thing men can do is to lean their elbow on it and live... Do I exaggerate?¹⁵

The journalist Mare Ots also committed herself to the restoration of biology-based gender structure. According to her, social change should mean “that society would become gendered again, that people would talk about men and women, not people in general”¹⁶.

While the nationalist consciousness was at its peak, biological gender roles were employed in the struggle for national independence. In other words, male masculinity and female femininity were associated with the survival of the Estonian nation. This can be seen, for instance, in an editorial published in the last issue of 1988. In the editorial, radio journalist and academic Ivar Trikkel claimed that in the struggle for independence Estonians needed “first and foremost a stable family, and only after that the Popular Front”.¹⁷ Editor in chief Aimi Paalandi referred to the same matter when she encouraged Estonian women to dedicate themselves to their families by saying that: “everything starts with a woman, and goes to ruin without her”¹⁸. At the beginning of the 1990s, the national survival rhetoric diminished and the biologization of gender now concentrated on the relations between man and woman. One example of this new intimacy discourse can be found in an article written by the well-known photographer Kalju Suur:

There is therefore reason to be thankful and because of that I say to a lady I know: thank you for offering me an aesthetic experience. And her mood changes for the better. Before she was unhappy and had wrinkles between her eyebrows, whereas now she has laughter lines around her eyes and mouth.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “Tahaksin ma natuke naisest rääkida, tänapäeva naisest... Kui ta niimoodi edasi mehestub, siis varsti on ta, nooh, seda peab päris ette näitama, vaat, nii pikk, nii lai ja neljakandiline – nagu kummut. Mehekesel jääb siis lihtsalt küünarnukk kummutile toetada ja elada... Kuidas ma liialdan?": **Üts, J.** Kilud *à la* Kard. – Nõukogude Naine (NN), 1987, 8, 14, 19.

¹⁶ “Ühiskonna taaspööramist sooliseks, seda, et räägime meestest ja naistest, mitte inimestest”: **Ots, M.** Mis on muutunud naise elus. – NN, 1988, 6, 1.

¹⁷ “...ennekõike püsivat perekonda, siis alles Rahvarinnet” (**Trikkel, I.**) – NN, 1988, 12, 1.

¹⁸ “Naisest algab kõik ja naiseta läheb ilm hukka”: **Paalandi, A.** Oma koht päikese all. – Eesti Naine (EN), 1990, 1, 1.

¹⁹ “Selle eest tasub olla tänulik ja sellepärast ütleni tuttavale daamile: tänan sind esteetilise elamuse eest. Ja temakese tuju läheb paremaks. Kui ta enne oli murelik, korts kulmude vahel, siis peale seda lauset poeb silmadesse või suunurka naerukurd”: **Suur, K.** Suudlen kätt. – EN, 1989, 12, 28.

The preservation of the ideals of biological determinism²⁰ can be viewed as an indicator of a strong connection between the values of female journalists and the traditional gender order. One possible explanation can be traced back to the Soviet period. For example, Peggy Watson has claimed that the Soviet order supported traditional identity politics because it entailed a longing for traditional gender images.²¹ From this angle, the ideals of a masculine man and a feminine woman can be seen as remnants of the Soviet rhetoric, which was based on gender equality but, at the same time, also made it possible for the traditional gender image to be preserved and strengthened.

On the other hand, it is important to take into account that during the late 1980s and early 1990s the official socialist gender rhetoric had negative connotations in the writings of an Estonian women's magazine. For example, the lack of motherhood skills was seen as a result of the socialist era and its prevailing image of a working woman. This kind of heritage seems to have been preserved during the whole nationalist era and the manner of thinking continued even at the beginning of the 1990s. When the image of a working woman came back to the pages of the magazine, she was in some cases seen as a woman who did not want to have children but wanted to be a career woman without a family. Pille Paalandi, for instance, wrote as follows: "in addition to baby-boomers, we should be positive towards those who want to dedicate themselves to work instead of starting a family"²².

In addition to the socialist explanation model presented above, the development which took place in *Eesti Naine* magazine, can be seen as a part of the overall wish to reproduce Western ideals which was typical in Estonian society at the time.²³ For instance, Elena Gapova has stated that the transition in post-Soviet countries was a class project. According to her, one of its goals was to return to the masculine hegemony based on the Western model. Soviet men had not had the opportunity of superiority over women and, because of that, nationalism became a means towards a new kind of a class society. In that society a woman and a man were fixed in their biological places in which a man represented the propertied class.²⁴ Peggy Watson has also paid attention to the same phenomena when writing that the post-socialist transition created men's worlds where power relations were

²⁰ Biological determinism refers to the way of thinking, according to which men and women are supposed to follow culturally accepted conventions of gender in their behaviour. Men are expected to be masculine and women feminine: **Liljeström, M.** *Emansiperade till underordning – Det sovjetiska könssystemets uppkomst och diskursiva reproduktion*. Åbo Akademis förlag, Åbo, 1995, 65–66.

²¹ **Watson, P.** Eastern Europe's silent revolution: gender. – *Sociology. The Journal of British Sociological Association*, 1993, 27, 3, 471–487.

²² "Beebibuumiga kaasaminejate kõrval tuleks sallivalt suhtuda neissegi, kes pere loomise asemel end tööle pühendavad": **Paalandi, P.** *Feminism maailma val(1)utamas*. – EN, 1991, 5/6, 40–41.

²³ **Kaskla, E.** The national woman: constructing gender roles in Estonia, 307.

²⁴ **Gapova, E.** On nation, gender, and class formation in Belarus... and elsewhere in the post-soviet world. – *Nationalities Papers*, 2002, 30, 4, 653–660.

arranged alongside masculine views. According to Watson, this can be seen, for instance, in the public sphere which has become extremely gendered after the main years of the national movements.²⁵ In the context of Estonian female journalists and their manner of producing gender, these arguments are meaningful when supplemented with Tatiana Zhurzhenko's observation. According to her, Ukrainian women felt guilty because of the subordinate position of Soviet men which they thought ensued from the gender equality rhetoric.²⁶

Similar arguments to those offered by Gapova and others cannot be found in the literature concerning Estonia. However, there is a familiar pattern which supported the male norm and, through that, also the above quoted arguments in the writings of the *Eesti Naine* magazine. In this sense, the national conversation around gender could be part of the wider development towards traditional gender roles which took place in Eastern Europe. However, also the legacy of the first Estonian republic should be taken into account. During the last years of the 1980s, Estonians turned to the past and the first Estonian republic became a nostalgic and inspirational reference point in their minds.²⁷ That affected also the nationalist gender image which relied on the myth of motherhood and a strong division along gender lines²⁸: a gender image which had prevailed in the Estonian society between the two world wars and even during the first national awakening in the latter part of the 1800s.²⁹

HETERONORMATIVITY AND FEMALE JOURNALISTS

The biology-based gender image was emphasized in the writings of *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine also through its heteronormative³⁰ nature which seems to have been almost indisputable. This can be seen in the manner of

²⁵ **Watson, P.** Eastern Europe's silent revolution: gender, 472–474.

²⁶ **Zhurzhenko, T.** Free market ideology and new women's identities in post-socialist Ukraina. – *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 2001, **8**, 1, 47.

²⁷ See, e.g., **Kivimaa, K.** Teise tootmine – Ida-Euroopa ja feminism. – *Ariadne Lõng*, 2000, **I**, 1/2, 43; **Järviste, L., Mälksoo, M.** Feminismist ja selle võimalikkusest tänase Eesti ühiskonnas. – In: *Eesti naine sillakohtust võrdõiguslikkuseni*. Korp! Filiae Patriae, Tartu, 2001, 50–51; **Kurvinen, H.** Sosiaalistisen järjestelmän perinteistä tasavallan ajan ihanteisiin, 72.

²⁸ See, e.g., **Kurvinen, H.** Sosiaalistisen järjestelmän perinteistä tasavallan ajan ihanteisiin, 74, 77.

²⁹ See, e.g., **Kivimaa, K.** Teise tootmine – Ida-Euroopa ja feminism, 43; **Kivimaa, K.** Naine rahvusliku mõtte ja tunde kujundina 19. sajandi teise poole eesti kunstis. – *Ariadne Lõng*, 2001, **II**, 1/2, 62; **Järviste, L., Mälksoo, M.** Feminismist ja selle võimalikkusest tänase Eesti ühiskonnas, 50.

³⁰ Heteronormativity refers to a societal structure that defines heterosexuality as natural, normal and superior to other sexualities. Heteronormativity has an effect on the way gender is perceived by setting the norms for a “right kind” of masculinity and “right kind” of femininity. See, e.g., **Berlant, L., Warren, M.** Sex in public. – *Critical Inquiry*, 1998, **24**, 547–566; **Rossi, L.-M.** Mainonta sukupuolituotantona. – In: *Sukupuolishow*. Johdatus feministiseen mediatutkimukseen. Eds A. Mäkelä, L. Puustinen, I. Ruoho. Gaudeamus, Helsinki, 2006, 72–74.

producing a sexuality discourse which was strongly based on the natural roles of a woman and a man.³¹ For instance, sexologist Helvi Rammul emphasised the speciality of a male companion to her female readers in the following way: “female friends, regardless of how dear and close they are, can never replace a man’s friendship or the man himself”³².

Homosexuality had been a taboo in Soviet societies and it emerged in the Estonian media discourse only in the last part of the 1980s. A kind of a turning point was the year 1989 when the young people’s magazine *Noorus* published a letter from a young gay man who was struggling with his sexual identity.³³ The example of *Noorus* magazine can be seen also in other media channels where homosexuality became in many cases a trendy topic³⁴, which was given a lot of media attention from the 1990s onwards in particular.³⁵ Homosexuality, lesbianism or bisexuality were not unknown words in *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* either, but sexual minorities were mentioned in six articles only very briefly.³⁶ In addition, homosexuality was mainly classified as perverse behaviour and the topic was dealt with in negative contexts like in articles about AIDS³⁷. Ignorant attitudes became clear, for instance, in an article in which journalist Hille Karm tied homosexuality to two negative phenomena: commercial sex and the decadency of society. “It is exciting to read *Eesti Ekspress*. Especially its personal ads, which show how crazy we have already become. Apartments, cars, televisions, sexual partners – lesbian or gay, whoever you want – any time for hard currency!”³⁸ she wrote.

The abnormal nature of homosexuality was stressed also in an article in which an anecdote from a Finnish photojournalist was published. In the anecdote, lesbianism was presented as the opposite to a decent mother of the family.³⁹

³¹ **Ruus, A.** Kas oleme frigiidsed? Minu vastus doktorile. – EN, 1989, 1, 18; Mare Lillemäe refereering raamatust “Mann & Frau”. – EN, 1989, 7, 24–25.

³² “Sõbrannad olgu nad nii head ja lähedased kui tahes, ei asenda kunagi mehe sõprust ega meest ennast”: **Rammul, H.** Seksuaalsus, üks keha vajadusi. – EN, 1991, 3/4, 17, 40.

³³ Ma teile kirjutan. – *Noorus*, 1989, 2, 30–31.

³⁴ Homosexuality seems to have become a trendy topic in the Estonian media from 1990s onwards. The representation of homosexuality it produced was, however, over-sexualized and stereotypical: **Kurvinen, H.** Homosexual representations in Estonian printed media during the late 1980s and early 1990s. – In: *Beyond the Pink Curtain: Everyday Life of LGBT People in Eastern Europe*. Eds R. Kuhar, J. Takacs. Peace Institute, Ljubljana, 2007, 287–301.

³⁵ **Nõgel, I.** How homosexuality is regarded among students in current Estonia, 115–117.

³⁶ See, e.g., **Üts, J.** Helsingist Petserisse. – EN, 1990, 1, 13–14; **Soomets, A.** Soovitud lapsed. – EN, 1991, 10, 10.

³⁷ **Märtin, J.** Haigus, mille nimi on AIDS. – NN, 1987, 9, 30; **Rõigas, E.** AIDS ja naised. – NN, 1988, 3, 32.

³⁸ “Eesti Ekspressi on põnev lugeda. Eriti selle kuulutusi. Nende järgi on näha, kui kõrgel meie hullusekraadid juba on. Kortereid, autosid, telereid, seksipartnereid – lesbisid või geisid, keda soovite – ikka valuuta eest!”: **Karm, H.** Isiklikud lapsed. – EN, 1990, 12, 22–23.

³⁹ **Üts, J.** Helsingist Petserisse. – EN, 1990, 1, 13–14.

One day we went to do an interview with a brave single mother from Helsinki. About how well she brings up her child as a single parent. The journalist was an old-fashioned mother from our editorial office. When we got there, the young woman said very openly: by the way I am lesbian... Three girls lived there together. The one whom we wanted to interview had a son, but he was raised by his grandmother. Our old-fashioned mother conducted a quick interview, I took photos of all three girls, but it was never published. We just needed something else. Not something about lesbians...⁴⁰

The way homosexuality was tackled in a women's magazine can be partly viewed as a result of the heteronormative nature of the Soviet gender image. Male and female homosexual behaviour had been accepted in Estonia during the 1920s and 1930s. Male homosexual behaviour was, however, criminalized after the Soviet occupation in 1940 when the Soviet penal code was put into action in the country. Female homosexual behaviour was not mentioned in the law, but that did not mean that lesbianism would have been socially acceptable in Estonia.⁴¹

The concept of heteronormativity as an explanatory element in a historical study is meaningful in the light of previous research. Queer historians have pointed out that the borders of normality in the heteronormative world will be revealed when mapping the borders of homosexuality.⁴² According to my interpretation, the same kind of a configuration will be attained when examining the absence of homosexuality in the representations of sexuality and partnership. Thus the limited amount of homosexual representations⁴³ can be seen as an indicator of the heteronormative nature of the magazine in question. Joanna Mizielińska who has studied the relationship between Polish nationalism and lesbianism, has also used the same standpoint when arguing that the invisibility of lesbianism is an indication of the heteronormativity of the national discourse.⁴⁴

Historian Teet Veispak has claimed that the liberal view towards homosexuality in Estonia of the 1920s served only the interests of state authorities and did not reflect the public opinion. Tolerance towards homosexual behaviour was, in other

⁴⁰ "Läksime kord lugu tegema ühest Helsingi vaprast vallasemast. Noh et üksi ja hästi kasvatab. Jutu kirjutaja oli meie toimetuse eriti korralik pereema. Kui kohale jõudsime, tutvustas noorik lahkesti: mina see lesbi olengi... Elased kolme tüdrukuga kokku. Sel, kelle pärast läksime, oli ka poeg, aga vanaema kasvatas. Meie eriti korralik pereema tegi virilalt selle intervjuukese ära, mina kõigest kolmest ka pildid, aga žurnaali see ei jõudnud. Meil oli lihtsalt muud vaja. Ei, ega sellest, et lesbid...": **Üts, J.** Helsingist Petserisse. – EN, 1990, 1, 13–14.

⁴¹ **Kotter, L.** Estonia. – In: IGLHRC Book, 2003, 53. http://www.iglhrc.org/files/iglhrc/reports/9UR_Estonia.pdf; **Veispak, T.** Homosexuality in Estonia in the 20th century: ideological and juridical aspects, 110.

⁴² See, e.g., **Chauncey, G.** *Gay New York. Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890–1940.* BasicBooks, New York, 1994, 26.

⁴³ It is important to take into account that a positive development in the number of homosexual media representations does not automatically mean that attitudes towards homosexuality were more positive. However, the limited number of homosexual representations tells at least about the hidden nature of same-sex love.

⁴⁴ **Mizielińska, J.** The rest is silence... Polish nationalism and the question of lesbian existence. – *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 2001, 8, 3, 282.

words, an instrument in the building of the image of a democratic society.⁴⁵ However, it can be assumed that the liberal legislation affected the values of Estonians to some degree. I have argued elsewhere that this was the reason for the strong visibility of homosexuality which developed all of a sudden in the Estonian media at the turn of the 1980s and 1990s.⁴⁶ My view is that the apparent tolerance towards homosexuality has probably affected the ideals of Estonians more positively than negatively, in the same way that the invisibility of homosexual representations reputedly functions against it in the public opinion.⁴⁷ Homosexuality had at least been a recognized category among citizens in the first Estonian republic. Against this background it is interesting to reflect why the return to the past did not happen in the discourse of homosexuality in *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine in the same way it happened in other media channels and its own national discourse.

One explanation for this could be the relation between the magazine in question and the conventions of writing in women's magazines. From this point of view, the magazine's way of writing reflects the wish to reproduce the prevailing gender order. Media researchers have claimed that women's magazines began to question the prevailing gender order only when the change had already started in the society.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the invisibility of homosexuality can be viewed as a consequence of the traditional gender image which seems to have prevailed among editors. This assumption is verified by the fact that themes which questioned the prevailing gender order emerged on the pages of the magazine in the year 1995 when the editorial staff changed radically. In addition, the editor in chief, Aimi Paalandi, has stated that the magazine was, in her period, a conservative rather than liberal publication.⁴⁹ This presumably affected the way of writing about sexual minorities as well.

DECONSTRUCTING THE TRADITIONAL GENDER ORDER – A MASCULINE WOMAN AND A FEMININE MAN

Although all the earlier mentioned writings of the Estonian women's magazine strongly supported the traditional image of gender, there was also some room for images which deconstructed the biology-based gender roles. Thus, there are

⁴⁵ **Veispak, T.** Homosexuality in Estonia in the 20th century: ideological and juridical aspects, 108–109.

⁴⁶ **Kurvinen, H.** Homosexual representations in Estonian printed media, 291.

⁴⁷ Among others, Joanna Mizielińska has written about this. According to her, the invisibility of lesbianism in the public discourse affects the opinions towards lesbianism among Polish people: **Mizielińska, J.** The rest is silence... Polish nationalism and the question of lesbian existence, 282.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., **Töyry, M.** Käytösoppaasta naistenlehteen. – In: Sukupuolishow. Johdatus feministiseen mediatutkimukseen. Eds A. Mäkelä, L. Puustinen, I. Ruoho. Gaudeamus, Helsinki, 2006, 214.

⁴⁹ **Uesoo, R.** Eesti naisteajakirjad aastatel 1975–1993. Tartu, 1993, 47. (Unpublished master's thesis.)

signs on the pages of *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* of the potential that media is said to have in producing representations which deconstruct the traditional gender image.⁵⁰

The idea of deconstructive elements in the media's image of gender comes, to a large degree, from Judith Butler's definition that gender is a construction which comes into existence through repetition. According to Butler, gender does not have a particular origin but is, rather, constructed through continuous repetition and re-enactment.⁵¹ Anu Koivunen has stated that the Butlerian view has been used as a manual to look for alterations.⁵² The current article follows this tradition. However, I do not think that elements which deconstructed the biology-based gender structure will automatically represent something new. Instead, I look at these deconstructive elements against the ideals of biological determinism which prevailed in the Estonian society and examine the relations between these reconstructive and deconstructive images of gender.

Deconstructive elements in the writings of *Nõukogude Naine* magazine can be seen, for instance, in an article published in 1987 about a young Estonian mother who was studying in Leningrad and who was going to continue her studies when her baby would be old enough. It was also mentioned that the father of the child would then be responsible for the upbringing. The article deconstructed the prevailing image of motherhood as a woman's responsibility and, at the same time, constructed a more feminine image of a man.

The traditional image of a masculine man and a feminine woman was deconstructed also in other ways during the first years of the perestroika period. In the magazine a woman was seen doing housework such as unblocking a drain and sharpening the cutters of a mincer, which in the traditional gender order, can be viewed as masculine.⁵³ Masculine femaleness was constructed also in the illustrations of the magazine where a woman might be pictured, for example, as an active person concentrating on her work.⁵⁴ This is quite meaningful because, in the illustrations of female magazines, women are normally portrayed as passive and they pose for the camera. Men, on the other hand, are active and dominate the space by concentrating on an activity.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ **Nikunen, K.** Ruudun sukupuoli: Kuohuntaa pinnan alla. – In: Nainen viihteenä, Mies viihdyttäjänä – viihtyykö Katsoja? (Yleisradion tasa-arvotoimikunnan julkaisuja sarja, 1996, A: 1.) Yleisradio Oy, Helsinki, 1996, 27, 38–41; **Pilvre, B.** Kes räägib teleekraanil?, 30; **Rossi, L.-M.** Heterotehdas – televisiomainonta sukupuolituotantona. Gaudeamus, Tampere, 2003, 11.

⁵¹ **Butler, J.** Gender Trouble. Feminism and Subversion of Identity. Routledge, London, 1990, 134–141.

⁵² **Koivunen, A.** Mihin katse kohdistuu? Feministisen elokuvatutkijan metodologinen itsereflektio. – In: Feministinen tietäminen. Keskustelua metodologiasta. Ed. M. Liljeström. Vastapaino, Tampere, 2004, 246.

⁵³ **Paikre, T.** Hakkmasinat saab ise teritada. – NN, 1987, 5, 31; **Paikre, T.** Esmaabi kanalisatsioonile. – NN, 1987, 9, 18.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., the photos in NN, 1987, 1, 5; the cover image of NN, 1987, 9.

⁵⁵ **Heiskala, R., Luhtakallio, E.** Sukupuolen julkisivu – sukupuoli suomalaisten aikakauslehtien kansissa 1950-luvulta 1990-luvulle. – Naistutkimus–Kvinnoforskning, 2000, 13, 3, 11.

Elements which deconstructed the traditional image of gender were, however, repeatedly produced within the frames of a socialist gender order. A masculine woman and a feminine man had been part of the socialist gender structure⁵⁶ for decades and, through that, they were common images of gender. Although images which deconstructed the biological gender roles had also been criticized in society, the images of a masculine woman and a feminine man were reality for people who had lived in Soviet societies. This includes the female journalists of a women's magazine. These deconstructive elements produced by a women's magazine's journalists can thus be viewed more as remains of the past than reflections of a new gender order.

The division between the writings and illustrations which produced the traditional gender order and those which deconstructed it was not, however, clear as contradictory elements can be seen in the articles. This contradiction is evident for instance, in an interview with the artist Aili Vint⁵⁷ in which the journalist highlighted the masculine elements of her work. Journalist Evi Pihlak wrote as follows:

Lyricism is usually seen as a feminine experience of nature but Aili Vint's emotional texture is different. Her scale of emotions is more forceful, grander, with almost a masculine grasp.⁵⁸

The manner of highlighting masculine elements in this particular article can be seen both as deconstructing and constructing the traditional gender roles. In addition to the masculine femaleness, the article at the same time produced an image expressing an idea of the right forms of masculinity and femininity.

A strong tendency towards traditional gender roles alongside recognising the categories of a masculine woman and a feminine are also evident in a quote from psychologist Tõnu Ots. In an article published in 1987, he wrote:

If a boy is not raised to be masculine, he will become a feminine man, and deficiencies in fostering femininity will produce a masculine woman. It is possible that these kind of creatures are accepted in the future but at the moment it is a painful question.⁵⁹

During the years of the new national awakening, family-centred rhetoric became a central theme in the writings of the *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine⁶⁰ but also

⁵⁶ Feminine features among Soviet men are, for instance, interpreted to be due to the fact that the Soviet system did not allow men to construct their identities surrounding the traditional masculinity: **Gapova, E.** On nation, gender, and class formation in Belarus... and elsewhere in the post-soviet world, 653.

⁵⁷ **Pihlak, E.** Majesteetlik meri. – NN, 1987, 10, 22, 29.

⁵⁸ “Tavaliselt on naiselikuks jooneks peetud lüürilisust, kuid Aili Vindi teoste emotsionaalne kude on siiski teiselaadne. Tema tundeskaala on jõulisem, suurejoonelisem ja miks mitte näha ka selles teatavat mehelikku haaret”: **Pihlak, E.** Majesteetlik meri. – NN, 1987, 10, 22, 29.

⁵⁹ “Kui poiss pole kasvatatud mehelikuks, tuleb tast naiselik mees, ja puudused naiselikkuse kasvatamises annavad tulemuseks meheliku naise. Võib-olla tulevik harjub selliste olenditega, praegu on see aga valus küsimus”: **Ots, T.** Sündinud meheks või naiseks. Vestlusi soorinevustest. – NN, 1987, 2, 26–27.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Noort peret märgates. – NN, 1988, 8, 9; **Innos, S.** Perekonna planeerimine. – EN, 1989, 5, 19; ENi perepilt. Kullavalguses. – EN, 1990, 1, 9.

the elements which deconstructed the natural gender roles were faced in the national discourse. Although biology-based gender roles were highlighted even more than before, deconstructive images of gender were seen as necessary in fighting for independence. This pattern could be seen, for instance, in an article about Rene Eespere.⁶¹ In that particular text, Eespere was pictured with his wife and children. He was simultaneously a nationally spirited composer and a father. The portrait expressed masculinity while saying that Eespere was a vital actor in the national movement because he had composed one of the main melodies of the Singing Revolution. At the same time, the manner of highlighting Eespere's role as a father revealed male femininity. Feminine sides of manhood were, however, justified in different ways. For example, his profession can be seen as an element which justified close family relations. As a musician, Eespere represented softer values than, for instance, a politician, and thus it was possible to portray him with his family. However, the elements which deconstructed the stereotypical image of a man function here also in another way. Through fatherhood and family a male musician was tied to heterosexuality and, through that, the prevailing gender norm.

The Estonian woman represented in *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine also had an opportunity to break down traditional boundaries of representing women during the national awakening. This could be seen in portraits which supported an active role of a woman in social sphere.⁶² However, a woman needed a man next to her even when she was portrayed as an active citizen.⁶³ Journalists could, for instance, encourage Estonian women to actively take part in politics but, at the same time, their role was tied to motherhood and through that male and female political activity was separated. This became clear, for example, when the editor in chief Aimi Paalandi wrote at the beginning of 1990:

When we are talking about independence, freedom and survival, women need to be politicians as well. We need to stand next to our husbands. Sensibly, intelligently and in a time-honoured way, creating the future for our children.⁶⁴

Paalandi's opinion is an excellent example of the social discourse produced by the *Eesti Naine* magazine in which a woman could bring only a complementary view to politics and the norm of an active citizen continued to be an Estonian man.

Both above-mentioned examples show that texts that deconstructed the traditional gender roles in a national discourse were tied to a gender image which was split alongside gender lines in the same way it had been in the first years of perestroika. This can be verified by the fact that active femaleness and family-centred maleness were seen as temporary phenomena. In addition, social activity was strongly divided into masculine and feminine spheres. This is understandable

⁶¹ **Kaik, M.** Lummus. – EN, 1989, 3, 6–7.

⁶² See, e.g., Eestimaa naistele. Eesti naiste V kongressi eel. – EN, 1989, 2, 2.

⁶³ See, e.g., **Jagomägi, J.** Elamiseks on vaja eluruumi. – EN, 1989, 1, 14; **Paalandi, A.** Kes me täna oleme? – EN, 1990, 4, 1.

⁶⁴ “Kui küsimus on iseseisvuses, vabaduses ja püsima jäämises, siis peavad ka naised olema poliitikud. Peame seisma oma meeste kõrval. Arukalt, targalt, alalhoidvalt ja ometi edasiviivalt, laste tulevikku loovalt”: **Paalandi, A.** Kes me täna oleme? – EN, 1990, 4, 1.

in the light of the overall structures of national discourses. For example, Tamar Mayer has pointed out that masculinity and heterosexuality are always dominant ideas in a nation-building. According to her, in nationalist processes a man defines the ideals of masculinity and femininity also when the heteropatriarchal norm is questioned.⁶⁵

The division between masculine and feminine space cannot, however, be viewed only as a negative phenomenon in the context of Estonian society. The manner of writing in the magazine in question includes similarities with the nation-building process in Finland at the beginning of the 20th century. According to Irma Sulkunen, the early Finnish women's movement saw feminine space as an emancipatorial space and its activists took part in constructing it.⁶⁶ From this angle, it can be argued that the manner of producing feminine citizenship in the *Eesti Naine* magazine could have aimed to highlight the role of Estonian women in the national process.

The meaning of the national discourse diminished when the peak of the national movement was over and Western influences were became visible in the writings of *Eesti Naine* as well. Gender roles were no longer produced alongside socialist and national rhetoric and the gender image of the magazine acquired new elements. A more varied gender image can be seen especially in the manner of describing manhood. An Estonian man was given more space in the magazine and also his roles became more varied.⁶⁷ One of the clearest examples of this is an interview with Ilmar Kesselman⁶⁸, the first Estonian man who had attended a childbirth according to the magazine. It was also said that Kesselman looked after their children every day and that their younger child preferred her father's lap to her mother's.

At first reading, the article appears very radical in its concentration on fatherhood. However, when reading it more closely one cannot miss the fact that the article generally produces traditional gender roles very strongly. This can be seen in the manner of questioning Kesselman's masculinity by comparing him to a good mother. The journalist wrote, for example, that Kesselman was after the birth, "immediately like a good Estonian mother"⁶⁹. In addition, it was mentioned that he had "several senses like a good mother"⁷⁰. In other words, the article made

⁶⁵ **Mayer, T.** Gender ironies of nationalism: setting the stage. – In: *Gender Ironies of Nationalism. Sexing the Nation*. Ed. T. Mayer. Routledge, London, 2000, 14.

⁶⁶ **Sulkunen, I.** Naisten järjestäytyminen ja kaksijakoinen kansalaisuus. – In: *Kansa liikkeessä*. Eds R. Alapuro, I. Liikanen, K. Smeds, H. Stenius. Kirjayhtymä, Helsinki, 1987, 157, 162–164; **Sulkunen, I.** The mobilization of women and the birth of civil society. – In: *The Lady with the Bow. The Study of Finnish Women*. Eds M. Manninen, P. Setälä. Otava, Helsinki, 1990, 50–51.

⁶⁷ See, e.g., **Zupping, E.-K.** Muutused raseda organismis. – EN, 1990, 8, 14; **Soomets, A.** Argijuttu haridusministriga. – EN, 1990, 9, 5; **Karm, H.** Mehed ise vajavad teist vahetust. – EN, 1990, 11, 9.

⁶⁸ **Pihlaja, O.** See esimene hetk, kui tütar ilmale tuli, oli võrratu. – EN, 1990, 11, 6–8.

⁶⁹ "Kohe selline nagu korralik eesti ema": **Pihlaja, O.** See esimene hetk, kui tütar ilmale tuli, oli võrratu. – EN, 1990, 11, 6–8.

⁷⁰ "Mitu meelt nagu heal emal": **Pihlaja, O.** See esimene hetk, kui tütar ilmale tuli, oli võrratu. – EN, 1990, 11, 6–8.

the implication that a man who was interested in his children was automatically feminine and restricted the accepted role of a man to traditional, masculine behaviour. At the same time, doing housework was seen as a feminine task.

Although the writer of the article was a Finnish journalist, the manner of describing masculinity seems a representation of the gender image produced by the editorial board. Verification for this can be found in the overall structures of the media sphere. Each paper always has its own concept and also the articles written by a freelance journalist have to fit that particular concept.⁷¹ Because of that, it is likely that the journalist Outi Pihlaja had discussed the main idea of the article with the editor in chief or with some other journalist of the magazine. In addition, articles which pictured fatherhood and described male femininity were often translated from Finnish women's magazines.⁷² It can be assumed that *Eesti Naine* adopted the image of a feminine man⁷³ as a role model from Finnish magazines which represented the Western ideals. From this perspective, it can be argued that the editorial board really wanted to produce a more feminine image of a man in a positive light.

Alongside male femininity, female masculinity also returned to the women's magazine's gender image which could be seen, for example, in an interview of Evelin Liivamaa.⁷⁴ In that particular article the journalist Inga Raitar associated Liivamaa, who was an entrepreneur, with motherhood and traditional female roles. Alongside this very feminine image of a woman, the article also produced an image of a woman who was active and could manage without a man in her life. Raitar wrote, for example, that Liivamaa had "sporty energy"⁷⁵. These qualities are traditionally seen as masculine and, because of that, the choice to use these words can be interpreted as a wish to highlight Liivamaa's masculinity. However, femininity and masculinity were not equal forms of womanhood. Hidden comparison can be found according to which active women were more masculine than "real", feminine women. This comparison is evident, for example, in a sentence where the journalist wrote that Liivamaa was a "surprisingly open and warm woman"⁷⁶. In my opinion these words indicate that the journalist did not think that those qualities could be a part of an active woman's image.

Evelin Liivamaa's interview was one of the articles which introduced an active and independent woman to the pages of the *Eesti Naine* magazine. Despite

⁷¹ According to Marjorie Ferguson, women's magazines are culture-bounded as well as category-bounded publications which affect the contents of the articles published in those magazines: **Ferguson, M.** *Forever Feminine. Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity.* Heinemann, London, 1983, 158.

⁷² See, e.g., Kulda väärt nõuandeid nārvide säästmiseks. – EN, 1989, 11, 22–23.

⁷³ It is argued that a feminine image of a man started to be produced among Western advertisements as well as magazines during the 1980s. See, e.g., **Rossi, L.-M.** *Heterotehdas – televisio-mainonta sukupuolituotantona*, 88.

⁷⁴ **Raitar, I.** *Jonne.* – EN, 1990, 1, 6–7.

⁷⁵ "Sportlik tarmukus": **Raitar, I.** *Jonne.* – EN, 1990, 1, 6–7.

⁷⁶ "üllatavalt aval ja südamluk daam": **Raitar, I.** *Jonne.* – EN, 1990, 1, 6–7.

this, as a whole, the image of a woman it produced was tied to the traditional gender order. Although it deconstructed the tradition of biological determinism, at the same time it, maintained the ideal of a feminine woman. This cannot, however, be seen as a solely negative phenomenon but rather as a wish to produce a specific kind of femaleness. According to the Estonian women's magazine, women were now allowed to enjoy their femininity which had not been allowed during the Soviet period.⁷⁷

CONCLUSION

Researcher Mary Buckley has claimed that women's magazines were a central forum through which the male norm was questioned in the Soviet societies of the 1980s.⁷⁸ In the light of my research, this argument can be only partly verified. In the *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine, the prevailing gender order was, as I have attempted to show, deconstructed within the frames of biological determinism which maintained the roles of a masculine man and a feminine woman. In addition, the basis for its gender image was created around heteronormativity.

According to my interpretation, the contradictory elements in the writings of the *Nõukogude/Eesti Naine* magazine show that female journalists had the opportunity to produce discourses which opposed the dominant discourses. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that female masculinity and male femininity were not equal categories for the editorial board of the magazine. According to the gender order produced by the magazine, a man's feminine behaviour was in many cases exemplary but not masculine. Female masculinity, on the other hand, did not have the same kind of positive connotations, although Estonian women were not automatically ready to abandon the opportunities the Soviet period had opened for them.⁷⁹ At the turn of the 1980s and 1990s, journalists were, in other words, ready to question the ideal of motherhood but not to deal with masculinity of women in a positive light.

Many different explanation models can be found for the strong tendency towards traditional understanding of gender, as well as the different views towards female masculinity and male femininity. On the one hand, it can be assumed that female masculinity threatened the structures of the dominant gender order more than male femininity. On the other hand, there were negative connotations towards the masculine woman of the Soviet period in the late 1980s and early 1990s Estonian society⁸⁰ and it is possible that journalists of *Eesti Naine* attempted to

⁷⁷ See, e.g., **Narusk, A.** Gendered Outcomes of the Transition in Estonia. – *Idäntutkimus*, 1996, 3, 3–4, 28.

⁷⁸ **Buckley, M.** Introduction: women and perestroika. – In: *Perestroika and Soviet Women*. Ed. M. Buckley. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992, 7.

⁷⁹ **Narusk, A.** Gendered Outcomes of the Transition in Estonia, 32.

⁸⁰ See, e.g., **Kauppinen, K.** Women's coping strategies in social change: positive life control and well-being. – *Idäntutkimus*, 1996, 3, 3–4, 52; **Kivimaa, K.** Teise tootmine, 41–43.

avoid these negative images on the pages of their magazine. Finally, it should not be forgotten that, from the 1970s onwards, the images of a feminine man and a masculine woman were criticized in public discussion⁸¹ and the critique became more visible during the new national awakening. This reversion to the traditional gender order has probably also had an effect on the writings of the women's magazine's journalists. In addition, some implications of the discourse of femininity,⁸² which arguably prevails in the world of women's magazines, can be found in the writings in the *Eesti Naine* magazine.

⁸¹ Liljeström, M. Emansiperade till underordning, 347; Ashwin, S. Introduction, 16.

⁸² Ferguson, M. Forever Feminine, 185, 188; Töyry, M. Varhaiset naistenlehdet ja naisen elämän ristiriidat. Neuvottelija lukijasopimuksesta. Helsingin yliopisto, Helsinki, 2005, 82–86.

SOOROLLIDE KÄSITLUSE MUUTUMINE AJAKIRJAS NÕUKOGUDE NAINE/EESTI NAINE

Heidi KURVINEN

Eesti soorollide käsitus muutus dramaatiliselt, kui Nõukogude Liit hakkas 1980. aastate lõpul lagunema. Ühiskonnas traditsioonilisi soorolle ja sugudevahelist võrdsust lubanud nõukogude retoorika kaotas oma tähtsuse. Artiklis on analüüsitud, kuidas käsitles aastail 1980–1990 soorolle naisteajakiri Nõukogude Naine/Eesti Naine ja kuidas järgiti sotsioloog Anu Naruski bioloogilist soorollide käsitlust. On väidetud, et ajakirjast on võimalik leida ka jooni, kus on lammutatud traditsioonilist soorollide käsitlust.

Nõukogude Naine/Eesti Naine oli 1991. aastani Eesti ainuke ja väga loetav naisteajakiri. Seega võib arvata, et ajakirja soorollide käsitusel oli teatav mõju ka eesti naiste mõtlemisviisile.