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Female Narratives and National Identity in Globalizing Finland
- *A Reflection from the Field of Cultural Studies*

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Thesis: Soc 344, 41-60 p
Autumn Semester 2001
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Abstract

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Problem/ Background: The study leans on nationalism and globalization debate in the schools of cultural studies and feminist sociological research. The study discusses how gender is constructed in frames of nationalist projects and identity. We concentrate on the situation in Finland in the late 1990s. The question is examined through application of discourse analysis, focused on narratives of three women. The narratives have been gathered from interviews published in women's magazines in 1999 and 2000.

The essay implies that withdrawing from a traditional aggressive (masculinized) understanding of nation and national identity – and gaining a more tolerant and curious understanding – could benefit societies when facing globalization and challenges of multiculturalism. Following the theories presented in the schools of cultural studies and semiotics, we recognize that myths play a central role in reinforcement of certain identities in society.

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Core, Periphery and Identity

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Cultural Studies

2.2 Gender

3 Methodology

4 Analysis

4.1 Marjo Matikainen-Kallström

4.2 Elisabeth Rehn

4.3 Anne Pohtamo

5 Discussion

1 Introduction

This study leans on nationalism and globalization debate in the schools of cultural studies and feminist sociological research. In this study we will discuss how gender is constructed in frames of nationalist projects and identity. The question is examined through application of discourse analysis, which we focus on narratives of three women. The narratives have been gathered from interviews that were published in women's magazines in 1999 and 2000.

We decided to concentrate on the situation in Finland and Finnish narratives, since Finland is the native country of the author. Following Zygmunt Bauman we thought that as an **insider** one has better knowledge of the cultural peculiarities, and understanding of the phenomenon is more deep, than when studying a culture where one is an **outsider** (Bauman, 1990).¹

Gordon and Lahelma debate that nationalist identity in Finland is promoted by the **school system**. Bearing in mind the definitions of nationality by Eric Hobsbawn and Michael Billig, Gordon and Lahelma argue, that the nationalism promoted in Finnish schools is **banal** in its self-evidence, as it is constructed to a set of social, cultural and spatial understandings (1998:251). We remember that in Hobsbawn's definition nationality was not linked into a special language, country of birth, place of habitation, religion or race, but nationality would lean on a personal experience, a feeling, of belonging to a specific group (Hannula, 1997:10).

Furthermore, Gordon and Lahelma note that nationality is based on gender biased images. In their research, which took place in the mid 1990s, they observed and interviewed Finnish school youth.

¹ A weak side in choosing a 'familiar' culture for the study was that it was quite demanding to stay conscious about personal values, appreciations and pre-understandings possibly affecting the research.

In the interviews they inquired what the young interviewees understood by Finland or a Finn. The answers they received were dominated by rural and male images, even if the interviewees were female and living in urban areas.

Today an essential part of banalized nationalism (signified by for example the national flag) is that people hardly react to its symbols. Gordon and Lahelma note that nationality is often present, but silent. Our everyday life is full of nationalized signs that produce and reproduce our (national) identity, even if we do not actively participate in this reinforcement.

Nationalism, aside religion, is a powerful discourse. We find it important that the logic and essence of these discourses be "unriddled" and make explicit that, which often remains implicit in texts and practices.

Aside others Jill Steans has written that nationalism rises from gendered symbolism. The country may be pictured as a vulnerable mother or maiden in danger and the duty of the male-citizens is to fight in war for "their woman" or for the "love of their country" (1998:66). Furthermore, Steans writes that the concept **state** is highly masculine (1998:46). The citizen of the state (=the man) is to serve the state in arms and this **potential for violence** legitimizes his rule also during peace time (Steans, 1998:81).

It has been assigned that nationality is a strongly gendered concept, and yet a great amount of the research on nationality and ethnicity is **gender-neutral**, as Gordon and Lahelma point in their essay (1998:251). Following Nira Yuval-Davis we recognize that when discussing national **production** or **reproduction**, academic literature rarely relates to women. Instead the literature relates to state bureaucrats, elites and intellectuals (1997:2).

In the projects of nationalism the woman is presented, not as an active subject, but as a sign. We want to study the **self-representation** of women today. We want to ask how women's identities are defined and whether there could exist a place for a woman, as a subject, in the national identity project.

As we have chosen to lean on a tradition from the cultural studies school, we want to emphasize that the point of cultural studies is not to present a total **validity**. The truth lies in the person who tells the stories and in the theories constructed in accordance to the stories. This essay wishes not to

present absolute answers. Instead we want to follow an ideal presented by Stuart Hall, that it is necessary for academic research to approach the central, difficult and upraising questions in society and culture. If this piece of work succeeds to raise some new thoughts around the themes of identity, national representation or gender, the writer considers her aim achieved. Or to follow Jacques Derrida's thoughts - let's hope that the writing will lead to some more writing.

1.1 Core, Periphery and Identity

While discussing the subject, we were faced by a question, whether some phenomenon is typical for **Finland** in specific, or typical for **Nordic countries** (or Nordic women) in general? Indeed, this is not a question, which we could easily pass. We recognize that Nordic countries share a great deal in history, as well as in socio-economic reality today. Such shared experiences could be e.g. the Reformation in the 16th century; Social Democratic welfare state policies during the 20th century; the relatively small size of Nordic states; determination in Sweden and Finland to stay outside alliances during the Cold War; and in more recent years, information technology as a common denominator, having produced a race in the realization of Information Society, as described by sociologist Manuel Castells.

The greatest shared experience may after all come from the side of basic **geography**: The states in this area form a region - Norden. One could also refer to harsh climate, in some sense affecting the population in the area.²

But which are the elements that create the big difference between the countries? Why is this paper only about female identities in Finland? Why not on Nordic countries in general?

One of our starting points leans on the classical work of Immanuel Wallerstein and the **world-system theory**. In his work Wallerstein drafts an interpretation of world politics, where he divides states and actors to three categories known as the core, the semi-periphery and the periphery. The **core states** are characterized by their hegemonic position as leaders in the world-system. Generally they possess the necessary military power to overrule the less dominant states. The ambition of the

² Not to deny the author's personal experience, that there is a difference between a winter in Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland – and a winter in Copenhagen.

semi-periphery is to rise into the league of core states. The semi-periphery is characterized by relatively coherent and well-managed administrative structures, when compared with the periphery administration. The **periphery** in Wallerstein's analysis is incapable in creating stable administrative structures and left to be influenced and abused by the leading world-powers (Baylis & Smith, 1997:136).

Following Wallerstein, Finnish historian Heikki Ylikangas has written about the deep contradiction between the core and periphery: When the hegemonic core puts pressures on the periphery, the reaction of the periphery may be a defensive one. Ylikangas implies that a natural reaction for the periphery is to create itself a strong identity (1990:214). Ylikangas conceptualizes this phenomenon under a category he calls **the creative periphery**. According to Ylikangas, in Finland this can be witnessed in that the southern parts of the country, with the most capital, do not have strong identities. "The northern provinces need special characteristics, distinction, to raise the self-esteem of the population", as Ylikangas notes (translated from Finnish, Ylikangas, 1990:214).

What we want to point out here is that the difference in Nordic countries lies in the fact that **Sweden** and **Denmark** share a history as core states, or at least very close to being core states in European *status quo* in early modern time. – The case of Finland (as well as Norway and Iceland) has been to stand in peripheral area and only gradually raise to become part of the contemporary semi-periphery.

To gain the new, independent position Finland needed to have a strong national identity, national characteristics expressed by for example national arts. The constructions of "the typical Finnish" were created by a small elite. This growing out of periphery to a confirmed position in semi-periphery could not have succeeded without a strong determination to lift Finland into the league of independent European states. Interesting enough here is that Finnish national identity was created when pressure from the ruling Russian Empire³ in the late 19th century threatened and eventually abolished Finland's **autonomy** as a part of Russia (see e.g. Siltala, 1999).

Yet it is typical for the Finnish, according to Satu Apo, even today, carry a sort of **self-racism**. Following Erving Goffman, Apo talks about a **self-spoilt identity** (Apo, 1998:85); The nation shares a sense of some kind of **inferiority** based on determinist grounds such as biology, culture or

³ Finland was part of the Russian Empire 1809-1917, having being before that a part of Sweden for more than 700 years.

language. As Ari Jääskeläinen has noticed, the more positive sides of Finland and Finnishness have been linked with Europeanness (Alasuutari & Ruuska, 1998:10).

This cultural inferiority is based on an idea that Finnish culture is young and even after high culture has been produced in Finland, the situation is seen so that Finnish culture is always a few steps behind the old cultures of the world. Most Finns may relate to this idea. Therefore, traditional Finnish self-representation is about “staying outside” Europe, civilization. According to Castells and Himanen, Finnish identity (Finland being part of Sweden and Russia) has long traditions in being a **minority identity** (2001:138).

We want to point out this difference in **national self-representation**, as it is fundamental for understanding when reading and interpreting the narratives of the women in the three articles.

We recognize that there exist indeed several common **European myths of womanhood** (e.g. the holy mother, praised Madonna) and we have tried to reach also these myths in the narratives. Moreover we recognize that there exist a few typically **Nordic myths of womanhood** (e.g. around the ideal of equality), which we have also tried to reach in the articles.

Yet we can note this: A common denominator for the European and Nordic myths is that even if their origin is regional, their determination is to become **universal**. These myths are in one sense aiming to become hegemonic ideas. My hypothesis is that the specifically Finnish myths of womanhood do not share this potential of becoming universal. When studying the narratives of the Finnish women, I want to point that we are studying a discourse that could be framed as “a periphery within a periphery”. Nevertheless, for further interest on the subject, it might be rewarding to form systematic comparative research on the matter and look more profoundly at the similarities and differences in narratives coming from various cultures and see how much nationality really counts in the stories – or whether it is just gender that matters.

2 Theoretical Background

This paper is based on theories and methods coming from the school of cultural studies. Therefore we will next highlight the key concepts in the subject.

2.1 Cultural Studies

The Cultural Studies discipline was first established in Birmingham, in the **Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies** in the 1960s. So far the discipline has been developing in fairly loose frames, so that the scholars of cultural studies are simply those writers who call their work cultural studies. To give some names of ‘founding fathers’ one can mention Stuart Hall, Tony Bennett and Raymond Williams. The subjects the cultural studies school has shown interest in puzzle around the themes of class, race/ethnicity, colonialism and gender. However, one can note that these frames are by no means restricting. Key concepts in theorization that can be mentioned are e.g. culture, ideology, representation, power and subjectivity/objectivity.

Even if the areas of interest and practice among cultural studies scholars are fractured, some common features exist as well: One of the leading ideals is that cultural studies should be **historical** – in the sense that scholars should share a certain conscience about the past and its influence on the contemporary. Moreover, some scholars join a political ideal into their research. The discipline’s interest for history and politics implies that discussions in cultural studies frequently share a somewhat Marxist point of view. The theory and methods of cultural studies rise from a thought by Karl Marx, where he calls upon people to do ‘their own history’.

Furthermore, cultural studies has taken influence from Gramsci’s theories of **hegemony**: Culture is a place of struggles, where new identities are taking form and hegemonic and anti-hegemonic groups fight with each other. In cultural studies there are always at least two truths, or stories, to be heard: The formal, hegemonic state narrative – and the informal anti-hegemonic civil society narrative. Here we must bear in mind that the positions and relationships of these narratives are not self-evident so that they would be static – one could rather put it so that the elements on the setting are in constant dialectics with one another. This **dynamics** in the cultural field also influences our identities both on an individual and a collective level.

A central concept in cultural studies is the concept of **culture**. Now, culture is indeed one of the most difficult concepts to define. The traditional polarization in defining culture has been between an understanding of culture as high art (classic works of literature, painting, music and philosophy – “the best that has been thought”) and a more modern version of culture definition, where the category of culture can include even widely distributed forms of popular music, publishing art,

design or literature and activities of leisure-time and entertainment (Hall, 1997:2). This ‘other’ field of culture has been categorized as separate from ‘the real culture’ and has been discussed as ‘mass culture’, or ‘popular culture’. Moreover from the denial of ‘the popular’ as part of culture, the polarization has reached forms where high culture is approved as ‘good’, and popular culture ‘debased’, as Stuart Hall has noted in his work (1997:2).

Cultural Studies has traditionally studied themes raising from the “popular section.” Yet so that social scientists wish to reach beyond this evaluating definition of culture. Cultural studies scholars wish to discuss culture as a ‘way of life’ for certain people, communities, nations or social groups. The definition is known as the **anthropological definition**. Included with an aspect of ‘shared values of a group or society’, the definition of culture receives a more sociological emphasis, as Hall speculates (1997:2).

According to Hall culture is about “shared meanings” represented in the form of a common **language** among the group (or society) members (1997:1). Language operates as a representational system. The sounds, written words, images, musical notes – even objects – that are a part of our language, work as signs and symbols to represent thoughts, ideas and feelings. Following Stuart Hall, we recognize that language is central to the processes by which meaning is produced (see Hall, 1997). This implies, that it is possible for us to acquire knowledge of our culture by examining the signs and symbols produced and reproduced within the society.

Yet it is a fundamental part of the cultural studies school to bear in mind that our achieved knowledge of culture can remain only as a mere **interpretation** of the meanings people give to reality – and we cannot describe the reality in itself. It is the participants of a culture who give meanings to objects, stories and events. As Hall notes, things ‘in themselves’ have rarely, if ever a single, fixed meaning:

“Even something as obvious as a stone can be a stone, a boundary marker or a piece of sculpture, depending on what it means – that is, within a certain context of use, within what the philosophers call different language games...” (Hall, 1997:3)

Roland Barthes has in his work studied the process of **signification**, how meanings are produced and put into circulation. John Storey points that Barthes’ guiding principle is to “irrigate the falsely obvious” and make explicit what often remains implicit in texts and practices (Storey, 2001:65).

A crucial part of Barthes' work is the distinction between **primary** and **secondary significations** of signs. Following Ferdinand de Saussure, Barthes separates not only the *signifier* (word) and the *signified* (a mental image) in demonstration of a sign, which Barthes call *denotation* of a sign, but furthermore a second level in signification - the *connotation* of a sign. To follow Barthes' further argumentation we need to understand this polysemic nature of signs, that is, that signs have a potential of signifying multiple meanings.

Barthes claims that it is at the level of the secondary signification – the connotation – where **myths** are produced. By myth Barthes refers to “ideology understood as a body of ideas and practices, which by actively promoting the values and interests of the dominant groups in society, defend the prevailing structures of power” (Storey, 2001:65).

The reading of signs and myths is known as the academic discipline of **Semiotics**. According to Barthes, for a proper semiotic analysis one must be able to outline precisely the different *steps* by which broader meanings for a piece of material have been produced. For example, when interpreting an image, let's say an advertisement – one should first discuss the signifiers – that is, the elements of the image – and the signified – that is, the concepts of the image – and how these form a sign, a simple denoted message. The second stage in semiotic analysis is to link the signified (=concepts) in the image to a broader, ideological discussion (Hall 1997:39). Finally one takes the first denoted message as the signifier and the second, 'ideological link' as the signified to the actual semiotic interpretation. And it is this second level of signification that Barthes calls the level of myth (Hall, 1997:39).

2.2 Gender

Gender is a 'code word' for women, stating the way in which dominant groups normalize or naturalize their own identity - "naming others while remaining unnamed" (Pettham, 1997:488). Gender does not refer to what men and women are *biologically*. From the concept of gender the feminist school has evaluated the ideological and material power relations that lie between the sexes. All societies and cultures produce certain emotional and psychological characteristics, which are then held to be essentially 'male' or 'female' (Steans, 1998).

Gender can be seen as a **personal identity** – the experience of being a woman; as a **social identity** – what others expect from someone who is a woman; and as a **power relation** – why women as a social category are underrepresented in relations of power (Pettham, 1997:488). In addition, gender can grant a basis for **political identity**, such as ‘feminist’.

We want to call this essay feminist research, but we wish to reach beyond the traditional understanding of feminism. We want to point out feminist perspective as a **silent discourse** in society, such as described by Michel Foucault (see Sahlin, 1999), bearing in mind Steans’s definition of feminism as ”a point of departure, a position from which contending values and practices are assessed and evaluated and from which one’s own actions are given social meaning and political significance” (Steans, 1998:15).

Most of the various feminist schools recognize the **system of patriarchy** as a fundamental system of domination and submission in society. According to these theories patriarchy is the most significant and yet the least recognized structure of social inequality. Traditionally, patriarchal submission has been discussed as forming tyrannical standards and ideals for fashion and beauty, motherhood, monogamy, heterosexuality, underpaid wage work etc. However, more recently this feminist perspective has even reached fundamental structures of state and nation (see e.g. Yuval-Davis 1997, Steans 1998).

To mix the deck we are now turning to the work of sociologist Manuel Castells. Castells argues in his influential book *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture: The Power of Identity*, that several indicators point to a **crisis** in the patriarchal order. Castells points to an increase in the rate of divorces and marital crises; the growth of single households, as well as single-parent households; and to a crisis in population replacement. Castells recognizes an end of a family institution based on patriarchal domination (1997:139).

Furthermore:

“If the patriarchal family crumbles, the whole system of patriarchalism, gradually but surely, and the whole of our lives, will be transformed. This is a scary perspective, and not only for men. This is why the challenge to patriarchalism is one of the most powerful factors presently inducing fundamentalist movements aimed at restoring the patriarchal order ...” (1997:136)

But why should this **crisis** be occurring just now? Castells proposes that the reason lies in four elements: 1) The transformation of the economy and labor market, with a close association with opening of educational opportunities for women; 2) The technological transformation in biology and medicine, which has allowed a growing control over child bearing; 3) The growth of the feminist movement in the aftermath of the social movements of the 1960s; 4) The rapid diffusion of ideas in a globalized culture, “where people and experience travel and mingle” (1997:137).

Globalizing culture has also affected movements around questions of identity (see e.g. Bradley, 1996). Or as Manuel Castells writes:

“The age of globalization is also the age of nationalist resurgence, expressed both in the challenge to established nation-states and in the widespread (re)construction of identity on the basis of nationality, always affirmed against the alien. This historical trend has surprised some observers, after nationalism had been declared deceased from a triple death.” (Castells, 1997:28)

Globalization has almost become a new *grand narrative* in social sciences – even something whose existence should not be questioned. From the perspective of feminist research we want to ask what the role of gender (women) in the globalization process is. Feminist research emphasizes the importance of the **‘private’**. Here we see that globalization talk has very much been about the **‘public’**: While privileging the public sphere – governments, corporations and international institutions – we develop only a partial understanding of our times and the processes going on underneath (see Suzanne Bergeron in ”Signs”, 26/4/2001:991).

We want to bear in mind the challenges the newly developing global and multi-ethnic culture brings to members of society. We interpret Castells’ writing in such a way that members of the native group are simultaneously facing a question “who are we ourselves” while wondering who the newcomers actually are. And besides a certain confusion and curiosity, natives may also be generating more anguished and hostile feelings towards the newcomers: this mass behavior includes **xenophobia**.

In Western Europe **skinhead cultures** have been connected to desperate situations of working class young men: Skinhead ideology is discussed as a rebellion against loss of neighborhoods and families, weakening social relations and unemployment (Puuronen, 2001:14). Moreover, according to Michel Wieviorka the frustration young people have towards traditional party politics is an

essential part in the establishment of skinhead culture. As Vesa Puuronen approves, the rise of skinhead-culture is also in Finland timed with the recession in the beginning of the 1990's. Puuronen notes that young people were disappointed with the political system and to its unwillingness to arrange them a secure future. According to Puuronen other such subcultures could have been radical animal rights and animal liberation movements (Puuronen, 2001:15).

As sociologist Päivi Harinen from the University of Joensuu has shown, young skinheads as a rule came from broken homes, where parents had either divorced or the other parent had died or was in prison. Socio-economical background did not play such a major role among them as it did in the Western European cases studied by Michel Wieviorka (Puuronen, 2001:78).

Finnish sociologist Jaana Lähteenmaa has claimed that skinheads or skinhead ideology have gained popularity among young people in Finland, because skinheads have in their slogans – such as “Finland for Finns” – reached much of the opinions and ideas that the population have in general. Furthermore, Lähteenmaa explains the popularity of the ideology by pointing to the masculine essence of the skinhead subculture. Lähteenmaa sees that skinhead culture is an answer to the crisis of **male identity** – a result of the changing gender roles in present-day society (Puuronen, 2001:15).

Even if this interpretation – skinheadculture as the **rehabilitation of masculinity** – offers only a partial explanation to the complex phenomenon of xenophobia, it is an interesting addition for the discussion when connected to the theories Manuel Castells presents - the crisis of patriarchal power structures.

3 Methodology

The methods used in this essay are based on qualitative research. However, there has been talk whether discourse analysis can be considered a part of qualitative research. One can namely separate quantitative type of characteristics in discourse analysis, say for example in counting word or concept frequencies in some text or in some types of texts (Sahlin, 1999:89). Yet one can note that the general principles in doing discourse analysis rise from a tradition more similar to qualitative method than the quantitative. More similar in the sense, that discourse analysis cannot share the point of departure of the quantitative method, where objectivity in science is reached by an agreement that there exists one general understanding of social life (see May, 1997).

“To concentrate on subjectivity we focus on the meanings that people give to their environment, not the environment itself.” (May, 1997:13)

The **meaning** is the main point a cultural studies researcher should be looking for: In which ways the environment is produced/reproduced, represented or interpreted from an individual point of view?

An advantage in doing cultural studies and applying the qualitative method comes when we consider the case of **preconditions**: it is impossible to enter a field of investigation without having a pre-understanding of the phenomenon in question. The researcher uses his/her frame of reference to understand the events taking place. This aspect of the method just shows how our observations can never be “pure”, as they are influenced by our (subjective) concepts (Becker, 1998:18).

By taking this stance we become aware of our limitations of being objective: we are not able to present a general truth. Yet we must bear in mind that a scientist is not basing research on shared principles or values in the social life, but on the **data** that has been gathered (Alasuutari, 1995:7).

Discourse analysis was first developed in the disciplines of Literature and Linguistics before the method came to be applied in sociology. The linguistic school was mainly interested in studying how texts are organised in terms of grammar, or how the argumentation in the text is built (see Sahlin, 1999).

In sociology, discourse analysis has been connected with sociologist Michel Foucault. Following the footsteps of Foucault the school of cultural studies has also produced some amount of research based on discourse analysis. For example Stuart Hall has discussed the subject. Hall sees that discourse analysis is mainly about how knowledge and meaning are produced through language application (Sahlin, 1999:85). In discourse analysis it is essential to focus on the **structures** and **patterns** of the text, instead of the actual information offered by the specific writer whose text is being studied. Moreover considering discourse analysis – the text material is studied as data, not as information about the reality it is referring to.

In sociological discussion discourses describe, structure and constitute **social realities** in the sense that the discourses give meaning to these realities. However, the relation of discourses and social realities is dialectic, as Fairclough has pointed (quoted by Sahlin, 1999:85).

Since discourses include a wide branch of subjects, the work of Michel Foucault has been quite essential in separating which fields and concepts cannot be discussed as discourses. Foucault excludes as **non-discursive practices** those practices that are connected with the institutional, economic, political or social – in short, elements that help to create the infrastructure for the 'true discourses' in society.

Foucault also sees an area of **silent discourses** – thoughts, ideas and practices that do not belong to any discourse – in other words, thoughts that have not been formed into words. As Sahlin points, this leads us to a difficult ontological and epistemological problem: whether there can exist such entities that have not been defined in words. How can we know anything about such entities?

In cultural studies it is common knowledge that people – the audience – give their own meanings for texts and it is very hard or impossible for the researcher to actually say what the audience finally sees in some text. When conducting the analysis on these particular articles we wondered about letting actual women read the texts, analyze them and form some kind of **reception analysis** from this basis. Wondering about this we recognized that it would be impossible to have any form of **fair** conversation with the audience reading the articles, if the point of departure for the study remained the same. Hence reception analysis was not seen relevant in this case.

4 Analysis

Women's Magazines

Representations of feminine identity in women's magazines do not accurately reflect the lives and identities of real women, as Bignell notes in his book "Media Semiotics" (1997:60). The representation consists of different kinds of signs. We can 'decode' the representations by studying the meanings of the signs. When applying semiotic analysis methods we discuss the ways in which women's magazines construct mythic social meanings of femininity.

Janice Winship has studied American and English women's magazines in her research "Inside Women's Magazines". According to Winship women's magazines appeal to readers due to the combination of entertainment and useful advice (Storey, 2001:133). The appeal is arranged around a set of 'fictions' including both advertisements, items on fashion, cookery, family and home as well as pieces of actual fiction, that is, short stories. According to Winship these fictions aim at drawing the reader into the world of the magazine and ultimately into the world of consumption. Winship continues, that this often leads women "being caught up in defining their own femininity, inextricably, through consumption" (Storey, 2001:133).

Moreover, Winship argues that women's magazines attempt to build an image of a women's world – this world being mythic, constructed out of signs (Bignell, 1997:61). The "women's world" is created precisely because it does not exist outside the magazines' pages.

According to Winship the "women's world" – the representation of mythic feminine identity promoted in the magazines she studies – consists of the following attributes: a fundamental distinction between femininity and masculinity; preference of youth; promotion of sociability, worldliness and fashionableness; and confidence (Bignell, 1997:60). Bearing in mind Queer Theory, we could even consider adding heterosexuality to the list.

It is not of great relevance to this study to know who the reader of the articles presented is. In most cases the reader is obviously an adult female, but naturally also men and children have access to women's magazines. It may only be of general interest to know that the magazine "*Eeva*" (in English the name "Eve"), from which the studied articles have been picked from, has in its most recent numbers focused on questions concerning divorce (or in contrast, happy marriages), health issues and introduced politicians and artists, which may pave the way farther from traditional consumption-based ideals so apparent in Winship's research material. "*Eeva*" is more focused on social issues – and indeed on producing (female) icons.

At some point we considered finding interviewees and posing them a blunt question "what does Finland and being Finnish mean to you?", but very soon we left behind such thoughts and concentrated on doing discourse analysis. The decision was made on first hand because of fear of getting too banal answers. We found it more interesting and useful to study texts where the question of national identity was not all that obvious and present.

But why did we choose to study texts in women's magazines? First, we saw that the very essence of these kinds of texts is to allow a subjective confidential conversation from the part of the interviewee. Second, the articles seemed to offer data on various sides of life. And even if the question of nationality was not explicit in the articles, an application of some basic methods in discourse analysis helped to reach beyond the banal 'lip service' and capture the ideals reproduced between the lines.

The articles applied us with a great source of data. What captured us first was the fact that all the women shared some experience of living abroad. This was the starting point when beginning to look upon the representations of their feminine identities. Were these women more powerful, more masculine because of their life outside the traditional home base?

The second observation – and reason to analyze these specific articles – was that all the women had some kind of mission in life – a project. They may have been insecure or doubtful about the essence of the project, but they were presented as having a strong determination of working for this mission. Indeed this project may not have been lifelong. In this case we tried to remember the women's ages: Matikainen-Kallström is the youngest in her 30s (born 1965), Pohtamo is in her mid 40s (born 1955) and Rehn in her 60s (born 1935).

Leading one's life for a project seemed to demand sacrifices. As one of the greatest sacrifices possible pointed in the articles was giving up one's femininity and denying one's female nature. In some part of the article the interviewee was always confronted to witness her feminine character: she would either "smile" like Elisabeth Rehn; "be good-looking" as Marjo Matikainen-Kallström (she is dressed and made-up for the article); or her role as wife and mother would be emphasized, as in the case of Anne Pohtamo.

Taking in terminology from the discipline of Anthropology, the emphasis on **female nature** seemed to speak of a risk where the woman, having stepped in the big world (or in **men's world**) would somehow be contaminated and be endangering her femininity – and her environment.

But why would the woman be contaminated after leaving the home area? Yuval-Davis notes that "*women's positionings in and obligations to their ethnic and national collectivities, as well as in and to the states they reside in and/or are citizens of, also affect and sometimes override their reproductive rights*" (1997:26). Furthermore, Steans writes that women "*not only bear the burden*

of being the mothers of the nation, but their bodies may also be used to reproduce the boundaries of the national group, transmit its culture and become the privileged signifiers of national difference” (1998:66). In strictly anthropological terms this would imply that the articles have a role in demystifying the woman, ‘stained’ after leaving ‘the tribe area’. The icon is witnessed to be a woman of her tribe, capable to ‘transmit its culture and reproduce boundaries.’

4.1 Marjo Matikainen-Kallström

The article on Marjo Matikainen-Kallström is published in magazine *Eeva* in January 2000. Matikainen-Kallström, former skiing star and Olympic medalist, present Member of the European Parliament (Samlingspartiet, Conservatives), is reflecting the changing of her life after the birth of her daughter, then 4 months old. The focus of the article is on Matikainen’s decision to carry on with her mandate in the European Parliament, even if she now is a mother of an infant.

The colors in the article are nature-toned and mild. Matikainen appears on the first page smiling, dressed in a light beige suit and brown-toned collar. Aside the picture there is text stating that *“Marjo Matikainen-Kallström had only some three months of parental leave. During this time she managed her MEP-job via telephone and email. –The networks I established during my previous mandate and the efficient assistant system made this possible, she says”*. Furthermore, the title states: *“The baby changed my world”*. On a denotative level the article focuses on describing *“Matikainen’s world”* – how it was before the baby and what has happened after the baby. One can sense the reporter’s slight amazement in front of Matikainen’s international life: the life in airplanes, restaurants and hotels. During the article the reader will learn about parental leave for fathers, email and working at a distance.

The drama in this article comes from the contradiction between having a career – taking good care of one’s tasks – and leading a private life and participating in leisure activities. What the article implies is that a woman, as portrayed by Marjo Matikainen, can slip the private until she finds a family...

“Before [the birth of Matikainen’s child] I did not have any leisure time in Bruxelles, so there was no point for me to ask about the leisure activity possibilities downtown. Now, with the family, we

will be spending longer times in (Bruxelles) and we may have more time to get acquainted with the city.”

...or at least has children – the **significant other** is mentioned only as “the father of her child” without referring to a particular emotional partnership. On the other hand this might be traced to previous agreement between the interviewee and the journalist, such as the interviewee refusing to discuss her marriage etc. The reader will not know about it.

It is a clear structural decision in this article to bring about both the public career aspect and the private, family aspect in a **dialectic** order within the different chapters. The chapters are titled as follows: 1) Private Family Matter; 2) Worrying about Drugs; 3) Where to get Euro-money?; 4) My Work is a Challenge; 5) Worrying about Food. In each chapter the article introduces themes from Matikainen’s life both related to work and family.

The first chapter talks about how friends and strangers wondered about Matikainen’s pregnancy and whether she would have enough time for the child - and right after how Matikainen then got prepared for the European Parliament election, and about her ongoing tasks in the Parliament. The title of the chapter is “Private Family Matter”, but the text implies clearly that the matter (of bearing a child) has not been entirely private, as Matikainen’s colleagues have rescheduled their appointments to suit her new situation.

The second chapter talks about things close to Matikainen’s heart: she is worried about drugs gaining popularity among young people and youth violence. She is asked whether she doubted having children in “such a bad world”. Matikainen answers that one shouldn’t think in that way. Life must go on. One cannot be afraid. After these comments the writer gives a few generalizing adjectives to describe Matikainen – steady, formal and calm.

The third chapter again refers to Matikainen’s work in the European Parliament – this time also drawing the Finnish public into the conversation and asking what Finns can gain from the European Union. Quite suddenly the text then turns into Matikainen’s experience of the old-fashioned fax-system in the Parliament and enormous piles of paper. And again quite suddenly to discuss Matikainen’s leisure time in Bruxelles.

If we consider the titles of the chapters we notice that they each speak about **a stress** on some level, as if some danger or force was upsetting the happy mother: she worries; she feels pressure; she “maps” things. She is confronted to think about safety, convenience, the future. Or maybe it is just the world outside that is loading her with these pressures, *now that she is a mother*.

We have already mentioned the reporter’s amazement in front of Matikainen’s life, but we must also note that even Matikainen herself is somewhat amazed. Not of herself of course, but of the world (Europe). The overall impression we get from the interview is that Matikainen is telling a lot about her work abroad in the Parliament and about living in a foreign country, but the meaning of these things is left open. Why is she after all doing the things she is?

One agreeable answer could come from the theory of **cultural inferiority**, as discussed earlier in the Introduction of this essay. If we take this idea seriously, we could re-interpret Matikainen’s energy, as well as the stress so apparent in the article. Matikainen’s narrative could be interpreted so that she wants by her example to pull down (imagined) national self-representation as if she came from a somehow inferior culture. If we take as a starting point a theory of a young culture, we must work as hard as we can and even better to witness that young age does not make us worse. In Matikainen’s case her task is even harder because she herself is young (she is born 1965), and female.

The “helping hand” comes, here again, from the side of information technology. Matikainen soon realizes in Bruxelles that the Parliament is working with old-fashioned tools and often inefficiently. Because she is an engineer, she has understanding of the technical things and she sits in boards where questions of industry , science and energy are discussed.

Matikainen’s interview describes shortly and yet charmingly how Finland (the periphery) opens up for Europe (the core). From shyness and self-racism (Satu Apo’s term) to a narcissistic experience of belonging to the side of “winners.”

The idea of winning, in connection with this article, comes in no means out of the blue. As we mentioned earlier, Matikainen is a celebrated Olympic medalist, and she first became famous as a skiing champion.

The idea of winning comes deliciously at hand when Matikainen speaks about the things that worry her, for example young people using drugs. We will not go further into drug politics, but we want to point the polarization here: if the discourse of winning is a central positive thesis, then drugs could come to represent everything that is negative, connected with “losing.” Or maybe drugs are just the mystical **other**, the stranger at door, the chaos you do not want to let in.

4.2 Elisabeth Rehn

Elisabeth Rehn is former Member of the Parliament (Svenska Folkpartiet, Swedish People’s Party), Minister of Defense, Presidential candidate (1994, 2000), Member of the European Parliament and United Nations Special Rapporteur for the Situation of Human Rights in Former Yugoslavia. Her interview is published in the magazine *Eeva*, in December 1999. According to the article, Rehn has returned from her mission in Former Yugoslavia to take part in the shortly coming presidential election (2000). On a denotative level Rehn talks in the interview about her experiences in the war zone and what it has taught her. The article follows Rehn’s past, discussing her marriage, family and previous work tasks.

The first opening of the article gives a huge, two-page-wide picture of Rehn dressed in a simple dark suit, gray shirt and pearl necklace. The title of the article, presented on the first opening is “Elisabet Rehn: -In Sarajevo I learned to pray.” On the third page we find a smaller picture of Rehn standing in a stairway. The overall impression of the outlook is sophisticated, serious, even distanced. In the first opening Rehn is not looking at the camera/the reader, but is gazing somewhere far away (to former Yugoslavia, or maybe to her past or the future?). She is not smiling. The text beside the picture quotes “A human being cannot be the same after having stood by a newly opened mass grave.” In the third page picture Rehn is looking at the camera from a down-left position and she has a somewhat ironic smile on her face. As if to explain this expression there is a text below the picture, where Rehn is quoted: “Even my much mocked smile helped many, who had not seen a smile in ages”, referring to her work in Yugoslavia.

The article is problematic when we come to think of the shortly coming presidential election of 2000: Rehn is not a poll leader. We remember her tight defeat in the 1994 election when she was second. In this context we have to be conscious that Rehn maybe wants to tell the public “I am not the same I was in 1994 – I may be better or worse and it is left for you to judge on that”.

We can see that the article shares an interest for the coming presidential election. The presidential election of 2000 was interesting for women's magazines, because there were four female candidates in the election. Only one of the major parties had a male candidate (The Center with Esko Aho). However, here we do not want to pay too much attention on the article's nature as some kind of propaganda.

Rehn's position in politics is problematic in a couple of ways. She carries two difficult attributes, which she must constantly explain to the press: She is a woman and she belongs to the Swedish-speaking minority. The Swedish-speaking population has a somewhat ill reputation among the Finnish-speaking majority. At least, inside "Forest-Finland" ("metsä-Suomi"; Apo), away from the South and West coasts, where the fractional amount of Swedish-speaking Finns is at its greatest. The ill reputation is maybe no more than an understanding, a rumor, that the Swedish-speaking minority is in general better off than Finnish-speakers. This understanding is from time to time openly noted in the media, discussed and judged gazing at annual statistics. So it is again that Rehn must in the article emphasize her Finnishness, explain, that she does not consider herself as "bättre folk", "better people" – and that she has experienced poverty and misery.

Why did we find this article on Elisabeth Rehn interesting? Taking into consideration our discussion on core and periphery, in the Introduction, we see, that Rehn's "case" mixes the deck quite totally. In a way her position as a native Swedish-speaking woman in Finland would set her to belong to "a periphery with in a periphery" – but then suddenly she is moving in an international diplomatic arena, chatting with world leaders – with the heroes as well as the crocks. Her figure becomes almost intolerable, and indeed her image is an object of dislike for many, when she takes all this with an ironic, ever-lasting smile on her face. "A smile can be a mask", Rehn says in the article. The quote is left open. What does it mean? A mask to protect oneself? To protect from what?

The text in the article is divided into nine chapters. The titles are highly dramatic, and perhaps even anguished, reflecting a sense of hardship: "Face-to-face with Death"; "A smile can be a mask"; "The weak woman surprises"; "I hit with a hard hand"; "Smile brings comfort"; "Having company from cats"; "The best Christmas"; "Upper-class lady?".

The impression we get from the article is that life and the world are one big a struggle. The metaphors used in the article rise from the vocabulary of **army** and **war**. For example, right after the caption Rehn is described as General in her headquarters (the presidential campaign office). Another theme that is repeated continuously is **loneliness** (also subjects concerning family and friends are approached from the context of loneliness). The two themes, war and loneliness, are connected in the article with a discussion on death. Death, as Rehn has seen it personally – when suffering cancer (now “a defeated enemy”) and after having landed in Sarajevo in 1995 to start her task as a UN Representative.

It is this contradiction between moving in the world of war and loneliness and, as the article praises, being a really feminine woman, that creates the interest into Rehn’s character. What is Rehn’s mission? What is her project? The article quotes her at two points: First, Rehn describes a cemetery nearby her flat in Sarajevo. She is depressed, as she explains, because there are so much evil things happening. “Hate made me make through it”, she says. “There was so much injustice, which I hate.”

The theme “against injustice” is lifted again when discussing Rehn’s image as a Swedish-speaking upper-class lady. Rehn considers such talk highly unjust. Maybe this part of the text can be taken more from the propaganda side, where the reader is “tricked” to develop a new image of Rehn’s character. It seems that Rehn (or the reporter) has a hard time proving that Rehn’s values and lifestyle are comparable with the public’s.

The article does not refer to Rehn’s childhood explicitly (she reveals that her father was a community doctor). But we can tell that, since she was born in 1935, she was a young child during World War II. Over the years she must have experienced the horror, the pain, but also the national pride connected with the war. She was a girl, but did she dream of being a fighter? During her mandate as Minister of Defense she introduced a voluntary military service for women.

From the article we can sense a great pride over the fact that “things have been hard, but I have made it through”. This we consider an extremely important part of the Finnish national identity discourse, also noted by Castells and Himanen (2001:134). Such a discourse can find birth only in areas and cultures of war and misfortune, maybe only in peripheral zones where mere surviving can be considered a victory.

We see that Rehn's work as United Nations Rapporteur is demonstrated in the light of constructive ideology: people (and especially women) in the violence-torn region could, too, learn an ideology of surviving.

The myth behind Rehn's narrative is surprisingly an universal myth of the good-bringing fairy. Fairies are indeed something feminine, delicate, but not weak as they possess secret, even dangerous, powers. We considered also a more Christian myth of angels, but the angel-myth was dumped, because Rehn kept emphasizing in the article her autonomy in decision making – where angels are most commonly messengers of upper forces.

Rehn's narrative speaks also of a slight mistrust in systems of governance (she criticizes for example the Finnish welfare society as cold and hard) and her preference of individual humanity. This might of course derive from her political view in the liberal, right-wing Swedish People's Party, but it brings about also a primitive touch to her narrative.

4.3 Anne Pohtamo

The interview of Anne Pohtamo, Miss Finland and Miss Universe of 1975 is published in *Eeva* magazine in December 1999. The title of the article is “Anne Pohtamo's most important choice: Good life was found from the family” and suggests what the article is mainly focusing on: the celebrated beauty is today a mother of four, happily married and has adopted a (neo)religious world view.⁴

The general look of the article is glossy and colorful: on the first opening the reader sees a picture of smiling Pohtamo, dressed in red evening gown and wearing a golden cross necklace and other golden jewelry. In the margin of the first page there are five pictures of different phases in Pohtamo's life – and the pictures continue on the second opening of the article as well.

In the pictures Pohtamo appears smiling from age 16 to her 40s: in the first picture up she poses alone as a teenager (text stating, “Model career begins at age 16”); In the second picture she is crowned Miss Universe (text: “Miss Universe of 1975”); In the third picture she is with Armi

Kuusela, Miss Universe of 1952 (also a Finn); Below in a fashion picture from New York (text: "There was plenty of model jobs in New York and the rest of the world"); In the fifth picture down Pohtamo is with Jacques, her former boyfriend (with a note: "Jacques knows how to charm.").

In the latest pictures on the second opening Pohtamo is shown with her family and praying in ceremony: the first picture is from her wedding (text: "Wedding in October '80 in the church of Kemiö"); second with her two sons, the other an infant (text: "Jimi's birth was an answer for Anne's prayers"); down below, Pohtamo is praying beside a cross (the note says: "Faith brings peace to life"); the fourth picture is on Pohtamo with her husband and two sons (text: "Anne, Arto and sons Jesse and Joni watching basketball"); the last picture is about Pohtamo with her ten-year-old daughter in some celebration, the girl holds a rose (text: "Anne's little princess Jasmin").

Anne Pohtamo's interview is structured as a chronology of her past: the reader meets Pohtamo first at her home in Grankulla, Finland, where the "imagination journey" (sic!) to the years past begins. The reader then reads of different phases in Pohtamo's life, starting when she is five years, and ending at 45. The different parts of her life are structured under titles "Lively and Shy"; "Falling in Love"; "Sacrifice"; "Infatuation"; "The Return"; "Family"; "Age"; "Faith" and "Together". In short, the article tells a story of Pohtamo's life, where her destiny and meaning of her life is built in the frames of her husband and children.

Pohtamo's narrative holds several mythical levels, which I will next try to highlight:

The first myth that is offered to the reader, is found from the caption below the article's title "Anne Pohtamo's most important choice: Good life was found from the family". The caption says: "Anne Pohtamo has made three big decisions in her life. They could be called Departure, Return and Faith." What the caption suggests is that Pohtamo has already made her choices in life and that no great events can be awaited from her side anymore. This idea is joined with the title of aging later on in the article: the reader is offered a myth of mature adulthood, no more capable or willing to go for "infatuation". The caption also suggests that it is religious faith that has led Pohtamo to this state of maturity.

⁴ Here we will note, that Pohtamo is no stranger for Finns reading women's magazines, or Boulevard papers. In recent years she has actively promoted her religious beliefs in the media. She has also been working as a model. She is interviewed from time to time in different papers.

Second, the reader is taken to Pohtamo's kitchen, where "two hungry young men are waiting for dinner". This part exhibits the myth of a nourishing mother – actually Pohtamo herself is not even mentioned as the cook, nor is she first mentioned even to be present. What instead is present, is "peace...in this house. Right at this moment peace is almost at hand." This entry suggests that as long as all members of the group (here obviously the family: mother and boys) keep their rightful places, the result is harmony.

When Pohtamo begins the story of her life, she first mentions her childhood family in Helsinki: Her mother is a nurse and her father an engineer. She also has a brother. When the children are small, their mother is a housewife. From Pohtamo's childhood the most outstanding myth to be found is the absence of sorrow. Pohtamo pictures herself as innocent, playful and lively. "The wonderful childhood years", as she refers to them.

Not to go further in detail with the different stages of Pohtamo's life (after all, we are not studying *Pohtamo's* life, but a **representation** of her life) – we want to emphasize: compared with the two other articles analyzed in this essay there is one special characteristic in Pohtamo's interview. The characteristic is based on material culture.

Compared with the two other interviews, Pohtamo's narrative is a discussion around the discourse of **prosperity**. Or maybe better, a discourse of **plentitude**. Earlier we wrote that the Finnish national identity discourse is based on a myth of surviving. The surviving is connected with poverty, harsh climate and peripheral position. As if to combat this point of departure, Pohtamo's narrative holds a number of elements of prosperity and beauty. The chronological storyline refers to scenes in Pohtamo's life. Quite often, the scenes are approached from a material level: when Pohtamo is asked to describe "You are Anne, X years. Where are you? What are you doing?", Pohtamo draws her past to pieces of furniture, clothing, or to her hairstyle. But this may not be that essential. More important is that the article leaves an impression of richness and warmth. How is this impression constructed?

One thing is that Pohtamo is asked to describe her life chronologically. This creates in the reader an impression of following a piece of drama. The sentences in the article are short, usually presenting only one state of emotion. Therefore the narrative carries an air of scenography. This makes the reader link the narrative into a film or television series. The reader is offered an image that life really works according to the rules of classical drama – with a climax and an ending.

In Pohtamo's narrative this climax comes with a possibility for loss, when she breaks the engagement with her boyfriend Arto during her Miss Universe period in New York. The climax is perhaps a bit surprising, especially when Pohtamo's success in beauty contests is noted with only one sentence: "Model queen in December '74, Miss Finland in March '75, Miss Universe in July '75." The loss will only be short-term, since Pohtamo re-establishes the relationship some years afterwards and marries Arto. The aspect of loss and misfortune comes as a quote "I didn't want to lose Arto again. I won't take that risk." Pohtamo moves back to Finland and after the re-establishment of the relationship nothing seems to upset Pohtamo. Her life goes on with the birth of four children, furnishing her home and summer house, and later, in faith.

In comparison with this idyllic domestic scene Pohtamo's years abroad are pictured as a series of wondering chaos. She moves to New York, from New York to Paris and to New York again. She experiences violence from the side of her former boyfriend Jacques, and her best friend dies of cancer. She is pictured insecure and anguished.

How is a narrative of success and wealth welcomed in Finland? Can we learn something from Pohtamo's narrative? Pohtamo's faith in God has raised some questions in Finland. How can one be a beauty queen ("material and superficial") and share religious ("serious, profound") beliefs? Pohtamo has been praised with good-fortune. What is the part of a narrative on success and richness in a country where "preparing for the worse" is an ideal and surviving hardships is a virtue? We can only wonder.

5 Discussion

Our conclusion is that, on the basis of the articles analyzed, one cannot separate a special feminine comprehension of national identity. However, we can note that the relationship the women have towards their national culture and history is somehow delicate, even problematic: on one hand they are attracted and drawn by **the other**, foreign countries and cultures, but there seems to exist a tension that denies a complete exposition and dedication for this other.

We did not recognize a separate discourse from the traditional (masculine) nationality discourse, but we believe we found a place for a female narrative within the discourse, perhaps best present in the article on Elisabeth Rehn.

Let us first point to the context where the articles were found: women's magazines. Women's magazines are a medium, which is quite easily accessible, at least for women. Even if we skipped reception analysis, we see that the articles have a role in reinforcing and reproducing female identities. Here we come to the role of women's magazines. We recognize that the *genre* these specific articles represent is unique – the audience cannot find such discussions anywhere else in the public media. In the modern world women's magazines represent a serious source of information for a big audience of women, not to exclude men and children.

In Finland the role of the magazines shows up especially clear when we consider some parts of national characteristics and self-representation, that is, the idea of "Forest-Finland" (see e.g. Satu Apo, p. 84). The idea, that Finns (especially Finnish men) were somehow incapable of expressing their thoughts and feelings and be unaware of the changes taking place in society and the world.

We believe the women's magazines come to fill this gap, whether it was actual or imagined. This task is practiced so that the interviewed women are "forced" to give detailed, personal information about their life. They will not only "reveal" the facts, but they are made to speak about the difficult and emotional things in their past. This would imply that women are left to weep the tears of the whole nation.

Finally, allow us a moment of criticism: missing the gender aspect is not only a characteristic of nationalism and globalization discussion, but increasingly also a characteristic of the Information Society discussions. Here we want to put some critique upon the work of Manuel Castells and his colleagues. Recently Castells has published together with the Finnish philosopher Pekka Himanen a book called "The Finnish Model of the Information Society" (2001). Castells and Himanen argue that today, Finland is one of the leading Information Societies in the world due to the following actors: 1) State; 2) Business Companies; 3) Universities and 4) Hackers.

"The Finnish Model of the Information Society" promotes, and somehow admires the newly risen Information Era in Finland. Castells and Himanen are sketching out Information Society as the new national project for Finland; the project rises from national identity and simultaneously builds

national identity. As a problem, or a challenge, for Finnish Information Society Castells and Himanen see the prejudices (some) Finns have towards people coming from other cultures than Euro-American (2001:176).

We see in Castells's and Himanen's analysis a continuum for a national identity defined from masculinized rhetoric and the exclusive system connected with the discourse. "The Finnish Model of the Information Society" has a tendency of glorifying and idolizing hackers and other information technology workers and it is no secret that people working on the IT field are mostly men. In Castells's text the information technology heroes are linked with Finnish myths of the "Seven Brothers" (novel by Aleksis Kivi) or the "Unknown Soldier" (novel by Väinö Linna) (2001:137). We want to ask whether the national project will again be led without the presence of women.

Even if we did not find alternative discourses beside the traditional nationality discourse, we see that it would be essential to withdraw from an aggressive conception of nation and national identity. As Castells and Himanen also recognize, gaining a more tolerant and curious understanding of nationality could benefit the society when facing globalization and challenges of multiculturalism.

To take our discussion on the level of myth and metaphor: What we could try, is seeing our society more like novelist Tove Jansson's Moominvalley. In Moominvalley the diversity of creatures exhibits a source for comedy and adventure.

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