

LATVIJAS SOCIĀLĀ ATMIŅA UN IDENTITĀTE
MANUSKRIPTI

SOCIAL MEMORY OF LATVIA AND IDENTITY
WORKING PAPERS

Klīnta Ločmele

NATIONALISM AND CONSTRUCTION OF AN IDEAL WOMAN

THE CASE STUDY OF THE WOMEN'S MAGAZINE «ZELTENE»
(1926–1934)



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PĒTĪJUMU PROGRAMMA
NACIONĀLĀ
IDENTITĀTE

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Paper has been presented in the 3rd European Communication
Conference (European Communication Research and Education
Association (ECREA), Hamburg, October 12-15, 2010)



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LATVIJAS SOCIĀLĀ ATMIŅA UN IDENTITĀTE
MANUSKRĪPTI. 2010. 2. LAIDIENS

SOCIAL MEMORY OF LATVIA AND IDENTITY
WORKING PAPERS. 2010. VOLUME 2

ISSN 1691-9017

Lauras Āboliņas un Mārtiņa Zandberga vāka dizains

The Latvian women's magazine *Zeltene* (1926–1934) served two functions: Besides offering women practical advice, such as how to dress, cook, and raise children, it seemingly promoted nationalistic goals. Firstly, relationship articles called on women to give birth to more children to guarantee a stable family life and assure the future of the Latvian nation. Secondly, work at home was presented not just as a practical activity but also as an excellent way to revitalize the Latvian lifestyle. The ideal Latvian woman needed to fulfill both of these expectations.

Key words: nationalism, women's magazines, *Zeltene*, Latvian woman, mother, the 1920s and 1930s

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NATIONALISM AND CONSTRUCTION OF AN IDEAL WOMAN

The Case Study of the Women's Magazine *Zeltene* (1926–1934)

In the Latvian language *zeltene* is a poetic term for an ideal: the virtuous Latvian maiden who wears a folk costume and a wreath in her hair and who venerates her country's traditions and cultural values. Since 1926, *Zeltene* was also the name of the women's magazine in the first Republic of Latvia with the longest and steadiest life during the interwar period. Naming the new magazine *Zeltene* disclosed the desired feminine image upfront in the title. The interwar years of the newly created state of Latvia were very significant economically and politically. It was a period of influencing public sentiments, including patriotism, and developing a common national identity. For this reason the Latvian political and intellectual elite invested considerable effort in disseminating nationalism among Latvians and creating the willingness to sacrifice one's life for the nation. The perception was that a people's spiritual strength, national conscience and morality were more important than military armament (Akuraters, 1919).

Women were a special group since reproduction was a major physiological function of theirs. During World War I, Latvia had lost about one million of its inhabitants, and thus the country was particularly concerned about population growth. The mass media were an influential means of urging the public to realize this goal. Analyzing the relationship between gender, women's magazines and nationalism is the focus of my study.

NATIONS AND NATIONALISM

Nationalism can be perceived not only as an ideology, but also as a cultural phenomenon. Anthony Smith (1997) has pointed out that consciousness of the nation is one of the strongest pillars for a nation's safety and prosperity. He offers western and eastern models for nations. If a nation emphasizes its historical territory, laws and judicial-political community, it belongs to the western model. If instead a community is proud of its ancestral history and national culture, it belongs to the eastern model. Because interwar Latvia placed great importance on national culture, ideology, language and symbols, it conformed to the eastern model. National identity strengthens the ties between individuals through shared values, traditions and symbols, Smith also notes.

From the perspective of Ernest Gellner (2006), the national elite, depending upon its interests, will adapt, make and remake the diversity of cultural heritage. Traditions may be restored and fictive values may be presented as real in the name of nationalism. Therefore, Gellner believes that nationalism imposes culture upon society.

Benedict Anderson's widely known approach of "imagined communities" also helps to explain this study's results (2004, 295). This concept suggests that a nation is built only in the minds of its people. They may not know each other and may never meet, but they live with the illusion of interrelatedness. Mass media are tools that help the nation's members realize themselves as one community.

Collective national identity ensured popularity because of its cross-class phenomenon and ability to unit different people socially, materially and culturally, explains Delanty and O'Mahony (2002). Renewed ancient traditions help in positioning the nation as an ideal and a source of pride. But it is not enough to develop nationalism as social and political power, according to Hagendoorn and Pepels (2000). They believe that nationalism becomes a social force only when the individual's identification with the nation creates a desire to participate in its life, to protect it or act on its behalf. The activity of citizens, however, depends upon their leaders' ability to motivate them.

In an attempt to motivate the readers of the magazine, the editors of *Zeltene* configured the characteristics for their ideal of Latvian womanhood. It reflected all the duties they hoped their readers might perform for the nation as representatives of their gender.

GENDER AND NATIONALISM

It has been argued that gender is a social not a biological construct, which is defined through the enactment of social roles. Feminist philosopher Judith Butler (1999) explains that it is not possible to separate gender from the politics and culture in which it was created and is then maintained. Jane Sunderland (2004) points out that distinctions between men and women are

socially and culturally taught, mediated or configured. Gender is a social process, composed of complicated, contradictory and flexible social norms; it has no fixed meaning (Weatherall, 2002).

Expectations differ toward women and men, which contributes to the differentiation of gender roles. The definitions of femininity and masculinity are dependent on society and culture. For example, women are supposed to be physically attractive, nonaggressive and emotional. They are expected to love children and be good housewives (Wood, 2003). If mass media are an important part of society and reflect its values and social norms, women's magazines can be very influential tools for distributing perceptions about gender and, depending on the circumstances, other phenomena and/or ideologies that influence society as well as nationalism.

Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) explains that women as members of society have always been given specific instructions about what is expected of them. Gender and nation, which are different social phenomena, may be closely related in certain circumstances. Her view corresponds to Smith's point that nationalism requires everyone's participation in social life. Yuval-Davis explains that women are seen as the main nation-builders because of reproduction.

Since the beginnings of the feminist movement, women have demanded freedom to choose if, when and how many children they will have in opposition to the viewpoint that a woman's primary mission is to be a mother and wife. Yuval-Davis explains that families with many children are accorded special value in the nation's self-conception especially during crucial periods. If rapid population growth was needed, calls soon sounded to increase the number of children in families. In such cases national leaders turn to women to ask them to give birth and make sacrifices to create families.

According to Yuval-Davis, there are three main discourses concerning the limitation of female reproductive rights: (1) The discourse "power of nation" considers growth of the next generation as obligatory to the nation's interests; (2) the discourse of Malthusianism sees a decrease in the number of children as a prevention of national catastrophe; and (3) the discourse of eugenics represents the idea of improving the national stock, increasing the number of children in families of the higher strata of society while limiting the population in lower classes.

Nationalism also demanded that women's sense of mission include the maintenance of national culture, including traditions, language, dress and demeanor, literature and other arts. If a woman is no longer of childbearing age, she can then become the teacher of national culture. Fulfillment of these two primary obligations to the country – reproduction and maintenance of culture – as considered the norm and ideal of what a woman should be. Any shift from the norm was considered deviant behaviour.

NATIONALISM IN LATVIA (1920s-1930s)

In the territory of Latvia, the first manifestations of nationalism took place during the first awakening in the middle of the 19th century, but it flourished particularly after the establishment of an independent republic of Latvia in 1918. The national idea formed the basis of the new state, which became the framework for spreading a national ideology. (Dribins, 1997). The Republic of Latvia developed economic, political and communication systems, and for the first time, all Latvians (including women) became citizens of a democratic state and had the right to vote. Agriculture was the main sector of the national economy. Exports increased, and the middle class expanded. The postwar generation longed for entertainment and enjoyment. Growth was slowed in 1930 by the world economic crisis, unemployment, a decrease in exports, and the auctioning of newly built farmsteads. At the same time, ideas of nationalism were disseminated simultaneously with various social changes in the new country.¹

DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONALISM IN LATVIA

Writing about the 1920s, Helēna Šimkuva (in Bērziņš, 2003) points out that the expansion of national culture was one of the main directions for politics in the new state. Mass media were used as instruments by the government to unite the nation and provide a common identity. For example, Jānis Akuraters (1919) emphasized that in newly established states national culture is no longer a private matter but an important object of government policies. Also Alfrēds Goba (1934) indicated that Latvianness needed help from the state just as the state provided support to agriculture and medicine. Goba invited everyone to work and strengthen Latvianness in all spheres of existence. He expressed pleasure that the idea of nationalism was becoming more popular and implemented practically. He emphasized that nationalism shows everyone's place in the nation and state.

In Ernests Blank's vision, the centre of national politics should always be the growth of national culture. Writing about nationalism Arturs Kroders (1921), said that the state should be grounded in Latvian values and national ideas, which can only be done by targeted state policy.

The Latvian philosopher Jurevičs (1936) argued that being emotionally tied to the nation and its objectives is the only mode of fulfillment for an individual's personal life. The nation should be the main inspiration for all works. But in Latvia nationalism was not homogeneous.¹ In this study

¹ After taking an ideological and political turn, publications about nationalism in Latvia during the 1920s and 1930s have been classified into three groups by historian Leo Dribins: (1) nationally radical essays, (2) nationally liberal publications (for example, opinion that nationalism is a positive movement with the aim of cultivating Latvianness and uniting Latvians into one nation), and (3) papers with ideas about cosmopolitanism and internationalism. For more details, see Dribins, L. (1997). *Nacionālais jautājums Latvijā: 1850–1940 (The National Question in Latvia: 1850–1940)*. Rīga: Mācību apgāds. P. 152–156.

“nationalism” is understood as a peaceful ideological movement, which is tolerant of other nationalities and minorities, and emphasizes the creation of (Latvian) national culture.

LATVIAN WOMAN IN THE 1920s AND 1930s

The democratic political system expanded women’s opportunities. Although Latvian women had begun to prove themselves in various professions outside the home, statistics about the proportion of working women and the numbers of newborns indicate that most women’s lives unfolded mainly in the private sphere.

LATVIAN WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Latvian women won the right to vote when the republic was established in 1918. Earlier women had not been accustomed to taking an interest in politics, because they were busy caring their families and households. Women who expressed an interest in the political process aimed a single target: the election of women to parliament in order to achieve gender equality in such areas as employment legislation and civil rights (Lipša, 2005).

Although society slowly accepted the idea of women as active members of the public sphere and the labour market, there was no equality because of biases. Vita Zelče (2002) explains that it was widespread situation that women received lower wages than men doing the same job. The national census in 1925 revealed that 68,5% of men and 56,3% of women were employed. Yet after five years in paid employment, just 46,9% of Latvian women remained in the labour market.² One explanation is the increase in the birthrate. The Ministry of Social Affairs produced a list of occupations that “are harmful for women’s health”. It suggests that women’s employment was considered uncommon. In the public sphere, the highly visible exceptions were those women who had successful careers as businesswomen, singers, actresses, and writers (Zelče and Sprugaine, 2005). The central substance of the vast majority of woman’s lives was child-bearing and taking care of husband and children.

² In 1930, the majority of women (about 89%) were occupied with housekeeping. In agriculture women and men (about 52%) were employed almost equally, but in industry women workers were close to 31%. For more about women's employment in Latvia, see Švābe, A., Būmanis, A., & Dišlērs, K. (eds). (1939). *Latvijas konversācijas vārdnīca (Latvian encyclopedia)*. Rīga: Grāmatu apgādniecība A. Gulbis. Column 38586.

LATVIAN WOMEN IN THE PRIVATE SPHERE

In Latvia the number of married women increased during the postwar period. Establishment of normal living conditions resulted in more than 15 000 newly married couples in one year, according to census data. However the number of divorced women remaining alone increased, while the divorced men were more likely to remarry.

Along with the increase in marriages came an increased number of children. In 1920, for example, there were 22 264 infants under one year of age; five years later there were 37 670.³ The law provided paid maternal leave for mothers and created a system of support for rearing healthy children. An organization called the Latvian Women's National League had a special sector "Mother and Child". Each spring it sponsored competitions for the healthiest children and awarded prizes after inspecting those youngsters who were entered. Nurses visited registered newborns at home and advised their mothers about infant hygiene (Vītole, 1932). There were classes and practical training in baby-sitting for teenage girls. Thus, a specially developed system for encouraging mothers and future mothers was in place.

In Latvia reproduction was linked to the state through its interest in the protection of women's health. The necessity of addressing women's reproductive capacity as key to the nation's future was caused by the great loss of lives during World War I. Of the 2,6 million inhabitants in Latvia's territory in 1914, six years later only 1, 6 million were left (Dunsdorfs, 1998). Repopulation by means of large and stable families was crucial to the country's survival. The Latvian statistician Skujenieks pointed out that a noticeable increase in the proportion of ethnic Latvians (73,4%) in the country's total population had stopped around 1925.⁴ He believed the reasons why this trend ceased lay in the passivity of the government, and thought the state needed to promote the numerical growth of the Latvian nation.

Marriage laws prohibited divorce when requested by only one of the partners. Even if she had her own property, a wife could not act freely without her husband's permission. In the home the husband had the last word. Because of this situation, parliamentary candidate Milda Salnais (1925) described women as slaves of their husbands.

Overall, during the interwar period the traditional family and the division between women's and men's roles were strengthened, Zelče and Sprugaine (2005) conclude.

³ This trend lasted until the beginning of the 1930s. The number of the youngest children persistently increased throughout the postwar period. In 1920, there were 102, 725 children under the age of five; in 1930, this cohort had increased to 168,815. See Skujenieks, M. (Ed.). (1925). *Otrā tautas skaitīšana Latvijā 1925. g. (The Second Latvian Census)*. Rīga: Valsts statistiskā pārvalde. P. 199; and Skujenieks, M. (ed.). (1931). *Trešā tautas skaitīšana Latvijā 1930. g. (The Third Latvian Census)*. Rīga: Valsts statistiskā pārvalde. P. 215.

⁴ By comparison Latvians made up 68,3% of the population, in 1897, while in 1925 Latvians had become the only nationality in Latvia that had increased since 1897. For more information, see Skujenieks, M. (1930). *Latvieši svešumā un citas tautas Latvijā. Vēsturiski statistisks apcerējums par emigrāciju un imigrāciju Latvijā (Latvians in exile and other nationalities in Latvia. Historically statistical essay on emigration and immigration in Latvia)*. Rīga: Valters un Rapa. P. 133–134.

The nation's cultural heritage as the responsibility of women

First of all, women were responsible for giving birth to at least several children and teaching them the Latvian lifestyle. Secondly, women had to maintain everything Latvian, such as traditions, clothing and home furnishings.

The Latvian Women's National League organized classes on weaving and other Latvian decorative textiles with the aim of eliminating the foreign impact in the women's handicrafts (Eše, 1932). The publicist Ernests Blanks (1926, 52) sought to shame Latvian women who did not adopt Latvian styles, but "aped foreign fashions in clothing and other nonsense." In his view, the nation should be culturally proud of all the beautiful customs that its spirit had formed over the centuries. Blanks thought that the essence of Latvianness could be felt only during the song festivals when the youth from the countryside came to the capital, Rīga. He stressed the contrast between urban and rural life, the latter being where true Latvian values had been preserved. Goba (1935) also criticized mothers who served food (especially for celebrations) that copied urban trends. He wanted women to follow Latvian traditions in furnishing their homes; he also supported the wearing of folk costumes on a daily basis. Significantly, Blanks concluded in 1932 that the democratic state had not been able to unlock the forces of Latvian national culture forces and bring them to fruition. He blamed the media, which he termed "a troop of reporters," and not the ideological and cultural journalists they needed to be. In 1926, at a critical moment in the development of this kind of thinking, the magazine *Zeltene* first appeared and became one of the most influential among women's media.

WOMEN'S MAGAZINES: A BRIEF HISTORY AND SPECIFICS

According to Conboy (2004), most publications addressed to women readers have had the common goal of advising them about their social roles to ensure social order. In general, articles reported on beauty, housekeeping practices, love, marriage, clothing fashions, etc. The audience for early women's magazines were well-educated bourgeoisie ladies, but by the middle of the 19th century, *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* was aimed at lower-class women. Somewhat surprisingly, female participation in the labour market actually contributed to the popularity of women's magazines. With less leisure time, women still found an escape in entertaining reading material.

At the beginning of the 20th century, women's magazines developed a more important role than nowadays, despite the fact that they chose to follow public opinion. Magazines helped women to create their values, habits and societal goals (Walker, 1998).

Anna Gough-Yates (2003) suspects that women's magazines were significant tools for constructing and legitimizing gender inequality. Thus, they also contributed to the formation of women's identity. Gough-Yates explains

that media production, including messages about femininity, supported patriarchalism; media staff frequently manipulated how gender was represented. Usually the content of magazines reflected the male viewpoints of editors-in-chief and journalists concerning women's dreams, interests and needed advice.

Magazines were like guidebooks, teaching women how to dress, cook, raise children, improve marriage, plan the future, and spend their time. They reflected an ideal of womanhood that readers had to reach. Representing male opinions, most magazines placed women in minor roles as cleaners, cooks and babysitters, whose main duty was to make their husbands (the breadwinners) feel comfortably cared for. In Latvia, *Zeltene* had an additional function: to remind women of their responsibilities and obligations to the state.

INSIGHT INTO THE LATVIAN MEDIA SYSTEM

The period of the first Republic of Latvia was one of the most productive times in Latvian journalism both qualitatively and quantitatively. Approximately 2000 publications such as newspapers, magazines and newsletters were produced in ten languages (Treijs, 1996). According to Hoyer, Lauk and Vihalemm, (1993), Latvia ranked fourth in Europe in the ratio of newspapers and magazines per 100 000 inhabitants (19,2) in 1925.

Most people employed in media fields did not hold academic degrees. Media catered to specific audiences. Students, teachers, government ministries, agriculturalists, and other social groups had their own newspapers. In addition to illustrated weekly magazines, satirical and literary journals, and regional newspapers, women's magazines were a genre.

ZELTENE

The first women's magazine in Latvia was *Darba Sieviete* (The Working Woman) in 1923 and a year later *Sieviete* (Woman). *Zeltene* first appeared as a monthly in 1926. By the end of 1927 its popularity led to twice monthly issues. Publicist Pēteris Ērmanis (1928) claims it was intended to teach Latvian woman to search for pleasure and value in their lives through work and virtue, to take care of their health, decorate their apartments, cook healthy meals and fill their dowry chests with Latvian folk ornamentation.

In the first issue of *Zeltene* (September 1926), the editor expressed hope that "*zeltenes*," mothers and housewives would not only enjoy the magazine, but would also feel encouraged to work for the benefit of themselves and the nation. The magazine's mission statement in 1928 was to produce "an

illustrated women's magazine for socio-ethical education, literature, hygiene, housekeeping and handicrafts."

The first editors-in-chief (in contrast to trends elsewhere in the world) were women, V. Vilka, and later, K. Osvalda. The magazine contains many articles without bylines or only signed with initials. Mostly these articles contained radical views, for example, calling for the prohibition of marriages when the couple could not have children. Unfortunately, no data exist about circulation, although according to Ērmanis the magazine was widely read.

At the same time, other women's magazines were published: *Nākotnes Sieviete* (The Future Woman), *Sieviete* (Woman), *Sievietes Balss* (The Woman's Voice), and *Sievietes Pasaule* (The Woman's World). However, *Zeltene* was the only one that lasted until the Soviet occupation in 1940, when subscribers found they were to receive *Darba Sieviete* (The Working Woman) in place of *Zeltene*.

RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

To find out how *Zeltene* went about constructing the ideal Latvian woman image, I used content analysis and critical discourse analysis. Content analysis, which involves coding text in closed categories, seemed appropriate because of its objective and systematic nature (Wood & Kroger, 2000). Some of the categories were cover design, topics, and emphasis on women's role.

Since content analysis does not offer grounds for interpretative explanation, I chose critical discourse analysis with the intent of revealing relationships between nationalism and gender in media representation. In this study discourse identifies language practice and represents social practices from one or another perspectives (Fairclough, 1995). Phenomenon acquires its meaning only in discourse. Being unstable and changeable, it is configured by creators of discourse, which in this case were the media.

Norman Fairclough (2003) also explains that critical discourse analysis of communicative cases requires analysis of three dimensions of the event: text, practice of discourse and sociocultural practice. Text may be oral, written or visual. The practice of discourse is the process of creation and consumption of the text. Sociocultural practice implies social and cultural events, one of whose components is context in this communicative case.

The specific target of critical discourse analysis is interpretation of the text to identify ways in which the readers can be manipulated. An example is text that includes a set of social values (O'Halloran, 2003). Critical discourse analysis explains relations between texts and the wider social and cultural context as well as how this context can affect text interpretation. Relationships between discourse, power, dominance and social inequality were analysed (Dijk, 2001). Proponents of critical discourse analysis believe that a critical perspective is especially suitable for analysis of relations, identity, gender, and representation; for example, it can reveal text effects

that inspire and support ideological changes (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Sunderland, 2004).

Theories of social constructivism emphasize the role of text (language, discourses) in configuring the social world. In this particular case, I am studying the construction of the Latvian woman in the magazine *Zeltene* and its ideological impact. I analysed eight years of the magazine, more than 40 issues from September 1926 (the first issue) until May 15, 1934, when the state system became authoritarian. (Advertisements were not examined.)⁵

RESEARCH RESULTS

Zeltene spoke to women about their various roles, but most frequently (36% of the time) the magazine reminded them about their large investment in the nation's development as good mothers to their children, raising them in the Latvian spirit. Women who enjoyed handicrafts (28%) were the second group. They could also reinvigorate the nation by making clothing and decorating their homes with objects bearing Latvian folk motifs. *Zeltene* also emphasized the duties of wives (8%) and of female representatives in the public sphere (8%) as significant contributors to the nation's growth.

More than half of the magazine's content (57%) had a practical orientation, for example, recommendations about children's upbringing, handicrafts, and harvesting, which included the clearest indications of women's roles. Entertainment and educational materials (fictional short stories, lyrics, stories of remarkable women's lives) accounted for 38% of the content.

MOTHER

Being a mother is a key role, which the magazine attributes to a woman. More than one-fourth of the front covers of the magazine (26%) had children as the subject (see Figure 1 and Image 1).

A woman with a child or children was the second most popular cover design. Most of these children were infants, or youngsters between the ages of about three and nine years. *Zeltene* covers showed mother and children engaged in pleasant pursuits: at the seashore, around the Christmas tree, etc.

⁵ The order for selection was as follows: from the first issue in 1926 till October 1927 (when the magazine started to come out twice a month), I analysed every other issue (for example, issues for September, November, etc.). Beginning with October 1927, I looked at the first issue of every month in odd numbered years (for example, the first issue for January 1, 1929, March 1, 1931), but the second issue of every month in even-numbered years (for example, issues for February 15, 1928, April 15, 1930, etc.). Throughout the rest of this paper, I will refer to specific *Zeltene* articles by the numbers assigned them at the end of the References section.



Image 1. Some examples of Zeltene covers (1926–1934)

Covers showing the whole family were especially significant – the mother in folk costume, holding the baby, and the father looking on proudly. Similarly, issues created the expectation that a baby would bring the couple together and discourage the husband from carousing or taking up with another woman.

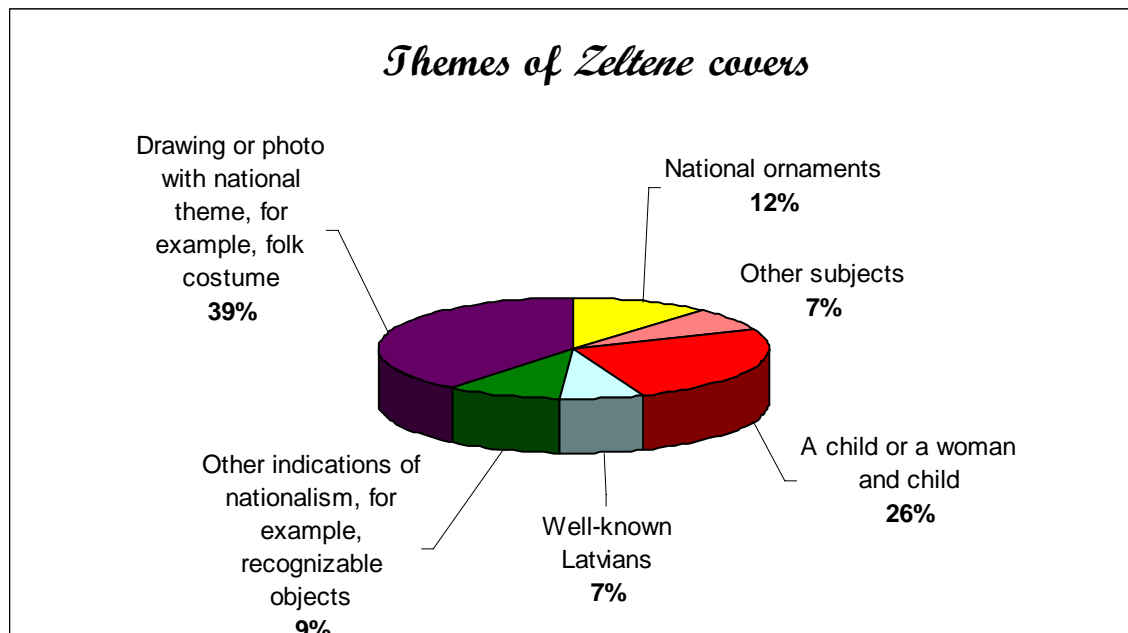


Figure 1. Themes of *Zeltene* covers (by percent)

PARADISE WITH CHILDREN

Not only the visual material, but also the content of articles emphasized the significance of the mother's role. Articles addressed to mothers (15%) were the third most popular category (first was women in neutral roles and second was housewives). Among practical articles (57%), 8% were about taking care of the baby. Being a mother, however, was not enough to completely fulfill the expectations of society. Woman had to tend the family hearth as well. *Zeltene* represented the view that a family without children was not real a family; a baby guaranteed the immortality of the marriage (11).

The magazine encouraged women to give birth, with articles such as "When a baby is expected" (9) declaring that "shopping, making and sewing these little things [the layette] are one of the happiest hours in a woman's life." It published drawings and outlines of infant's clothes and other things, which mothers needed to provide. Maternal obligations were sanctified: "To be a mother! Since olden times it is and will remain the holiest assignment, the highest fulfillment of her femininity!" (16) and "Mother's kingdom is sanctuary" (5). Or seen as inexpressibly valorous: "In life there is no greater

heroism than a mother's assignment." (10). Repeatedly contributors to the magazine reminded their readers that every physically and mentally healthy woman was obliged to give birth and nurture her children because "the majority of women find their fulfillment in life only in their children" (5).

To undermine women's willingness to nurse only a few children, *Zeltene* spoke negatively about mothers who did not want a large family. Families with only one or two children were characterized as the biggest mistake in child-rearing. The magazine promised that they would grow up happier and healthier if they had more siblings. (Such claims were not supported by scientific evidence in any of the articles.) Selecting particularly expressive words, the magazine characterized women without children negatively, arguing that in society childless women were condemned and always considered inferior (16). *Zeltene* predicted that in old age women would regret having chosen to remain childless. It outlined the sad situation when a married couple waited too long to have children. The wife's destiny would be tragic; the husband would lose interest when lacking a true family, which is the aim and reason of life. Women were threatened: "your husband will find interests outside the home" and the emptiness could only be filled by a child (3). A complete family was characterized as "the most precious paradise".(5)
By glorifying the benefits of large families and belittling childless wives, the magazine strengthened public expectations that every "normal" woman's aim in life is to create a family and raise children.

THE NATURAL CRADLE HAS TO BE HEALTHY

The magazine regularly reminded its readers that the future of the country depended on women: "In the woman's lap sleeps the nation's welfare, the nation's future. Are women aware of this important task which has been imposed on them? Women are required not only to bring up their darlings, but also to protect them from vices that corrupt the body and spirit" (18, p. 21). The woman was considered "the natural cradle" (32).

That is why the magazine turned to health issues, because "first a woman needs to maintain her own health to be at the peak of performing her mission" (1). The magazine disseminated the view that the only way to restore society was to create healthy and well-rounded children. Discourse about eugenics discussed how the structure of the population could be improved. Articles condemned drunkards who search for fulfillment of their sexual desires and produce offspring with various mental and physical defects (22).

The magazine insisted that marriage between two mentally-ill people should only be allowed if both were sterilized (19). *Zeltene* articles also criticized marriages in which a large age difference existed between the couple, writing that an old wife looks miserable with a young husband, while an old husband with a young wife is laughable (20). Perhaps this statement masked the idea that such unions may present barriers for producing healthy children.

Zelče (2006) notes that the concept of eugenics was quite popular among scholars and journalists in Latvia during the 1920s, just as it was elsewhere in Europe. Inese Priedīte (2003), analyzing the topic of sexuality in the Latvian press during that same period, found that a frequent theme was the nation's future resting in the hands of the women whose most important assignment was giving birth and bringing up healthy children, who would become good citizens.

Yuval-Davis (1997) notes that a child's incorporation into society was not just a biological question. *Zeltene* devoted a lot of attention to the question of how to raise girls, because "girl's virtue is the strongest guarantee of life and the future" (4). This message was carried in almost every article about childcare. Contributors to *Zeltene* were convinced that moral education developed a person who is virtuous, active and would strive not for just for personal gain but to bring dignity and well-being to the nation (23). The magazine repeatedly reminded mothers that they had to accustom their children to hard work and train them to be polite and precise (2). Women had to ensure that children acquired the highest standards and finest traditions of the nation.

WIFE

The editorial staff of *Zeltene* represented marriage and the family as the norm and aim of life (6, 25,). It censured flirtations, a profligate lifestyle, and short-term relationships and supported the ideal of monogamy (11, 21, 25, 33).

Only 1% of the magazine's articles were about sexuality. In studying the prevalence of this topic in the Latvian press, Priedīte (2003) found that during the 1920s sex was directly linked to the nation's health and to procreation. In *Zeltene*, this 1% of articles gave advice on the avoidance of and therapy for venereal diseases, and on how to answer children's questions about their birth.

MARRIAGE AS A PREREQUISITE FOR CHILDREN

Zeltene suggested the prohibition of marriage in which a couple could not answer affirmatively to the question "Are you able to create the next generation?" (19). If the answer was "no" (for example, if one of the partners was infertile), it was considered seriously wrong to establish that marriage. Happiness in marriage and family was connected to civic duties. That is why the magazine advised women to maintain stable marriages. For example, a couple needs to be patient, avoid jealousy and provide pleasant surprises for each other. The husband should not be stingy, but the wife should not spend money wastefully (12, 17, 28). A woman should dress up prettily just before her husband comes home to keep him interested (30).

Divorce was described negatively as a search for new enjoyment; marriage was a union to protect children and increase the birthrate (24). Divorce decreased a woman's potential for fulfilling the reproductive function. Even if a husband was guilty in a family conflict, *Zeltene* urged women to try to be cheerful and kind (30). Yuval-Davis explains that the patriarchal family and control over women are the ideological basis for social order. If the family is stable, stability will also exist at the state level. Therefore, women become the means and actualizers of this political ideal. The magazine spread the opinion that if married life is bad, it is the woman's fault (30). Women cannot just take care of their progeny, they must also strive for marital stability because stable families were part of the "plan of state" and one of the indicators of female normalcy.

ACTUALIZER OF NATIONAL TRADITIONS

The greatest proportion (39%) of analysed front covers of the magazine contain nationalistic themes: drawings or photos with a Latvian motif, for example, women in folk costumes (see Figure 1 and Image 1). Latvianness was emphasized by the use of national objects or common pastimes, printed folksongs and traditional celebrations. Women in folk costumes were usually shown in a rural environment. *Zeltene* posited that a city with the latest European fashions "destructively affects the best features of real Latvian good taste" (7). Anthony Smith (1993) explains art is a tool to help to "renew" the concept of nation directly or associatively, to create images of sight and sound, which are "archeologically" close and believable for society.

National ornaments (for example, knitted mittens and woven table linens) are the third most popular motif of *Zeltene* covers (12%). Nine percent of cover designs contained some other indicator of Latvia and nationalism, for example, photos or drawings of typical landscapes and buildings. In general, 60% of the covers expressed some national attitude. If the 26% of covers representing mothers and children are added on, then 86% included some nationalistic theme.

LATVIAN HOMES AND CLOTHING

Abstract speeches alone were not sufficient; nationalism also had to be reinvigorated practically and visibly. With the aim of nurturing such patriotic feeling in children, their living environment and clothing had to express Latvianness. In the magazine, 28% of the articles emphasized the needlewoman's role in the development of the country. Such articles included photos showing how ancient Latvian ornamentation could be incorporated into modern life. *Zeltene* devoted special attention to sewing folk costumes. At the beginning of the 1930s, the magazine even started to publish drawings

of folk costumes from various Latvian regions on the cover of each issue and praised Latvian designs in jewelry and textiles made with "elegant taste" (13).

Zeltene also focused on "Latvianization" of the home and urged women not to hang foreign posters or movie stars' images on their walls. It was considered phony and trashy. In the view of *Zeltene*, Latvian artists' paintings were real art (27).

Women were told that when a stranger first entered a room, he quickly developed an opinion about housekeeping ability. The magazine announced: "We will not let this stranger blush (with embarrassment) about us; we will not let him think badly about Latvian women!" (27) Although a housewife would create a good impression if her rooms were furnished in a Latvian manner, it was not so easy. The magazine taught women to spend money prudently even for such a good purpose. There was no greater threat to the family's happiness than a housekeeper unable to arrange the home while staying within the budget. Taste, comfort and coziness were signs of perfection. It had to be a place where the husband could find pleasure and carefree rest after a hard day's work (31). Otherwise if he did not feel at home there, the husband was more likely to seek pleasure elsewhere.

Thus, *Zeltene* shows that all woman's assignments in development of nationalism were tied together. If women could not fulfill society's expectations about any one of them, it would affect success in realizing her other roles. For example, the inability to stay within the family's budget or to furnish the flat in a Latvian style could lead to conflict with the husband and may be even divorce. It would definitely signal that the woman was not a good helpmate.

THE LATVIAN LIFESTYLE

Celebration of holidays is one way a nation organizes its self-consciousness. *Zeltene* recognized with regret that national traditions disappear (15, 26). The magazine used various foreign words and jargon to reinforce the impression that modern activities were alien to Latvians. The design and content of *Zeltene* followed the calendar of national holidays. One writer admitted that his mother became lovelier when she told him about traditions (29). This positive example was a hidden promise that by teaching Latvian traditions parents would receive more love from children in return. The magazine condemned city life because of its demoralizing effect on teenagers and adults. *Zeltene* offered a solution by recommending books, and publishing a list of the most valuable Latvian literature (14).

LATVIAN WOMAN IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Zeltene ran stories about famous people, their biographies and achievements. It published news about women's organizations, as well as

series about prominent Latvian women. From the 44 issues I examined, only one cover featured a photo of a foreigner, the Swedish writer Selma Lagerlöf, first woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. A total of 7% of the covers were photos of popular Latvian women – writers, singers and actresses. Yet the practical advice inside the magazine was oriented towards perfecting women's roles in the private sphere.

Appealing to women to live in a Latvian style, the magazine contradicted itself. On one hand, it urged Latvian women to stay home and look after their families, while on the other it highlighted the achievements of women who succeeded outside the home in the public sphere.

CONCLUSIONS

Zeltene supported the women's obligations to the nation and offered its opinion of their mission. The magazine mainly addressed women as mothers, wives and actualizers of national traditions. These roles were of primary importance and (except for the wife) were widely represented on the front cover.

Initially, *Zeltene* emphasized the maternal contribution to the development of nationalism. At least 56% of the articles were related to the private sphere: cooking 10%, fashion 10%, child raising 8%, advice on daily life 7%, needlework 6%, housekeeping 6%, agriculture 5% and beauty 4%. Clearly the emphasis was on the woman as mother and family person, who did not aspire to higher education and/or a career. (Only 1% of articles were about working women.) *Zeltene* represented women concerned about appearance, traditions, children and husbands. The magazine described the ideal woman as "hostess, wife, proud of home and marriage, soul; in men's lives more happens outside, in women's – at home" (30).

Zeltene participated in the strengthening of nationalism and patriarchy. It construed the ideal woman and urged its readers to imitate the image thereby staying in the private sphere. The magazine used threats and vain promises to achieve its goal – threatening divorce, a wayward spouse or a miserable old age. Meanwhile, it claimed that a baby would help to save the marriage, and that children from large families were happier and healthier. Yuval-Davis writes that reproductive rights are an important aspect of emancipation. Research results suggest that *Zeltene* was an important medium in Latvia for reducing women's reproductive freedom based on national interests. In the social context a woman had greater worth if she married and became a mother. Childless women were condemned in the magazine. Yuval-Davis explains that strict cultural codes that determine what a woman should be are often used to keep her in a low social position. Since Latvia was interested in population growth, quite possibly such codes benefited the country. A guideline of the magazine was that children are the greatest happiness, and a strong nation is numerically large and united in

traditions. *Zeltene* shows that a Latvian woman might give more to the nation if she remained in the private sphere (see Figure 2)

*The ideal Latvian woman in the magazine “Zeltene”
(1926 – 1934)*

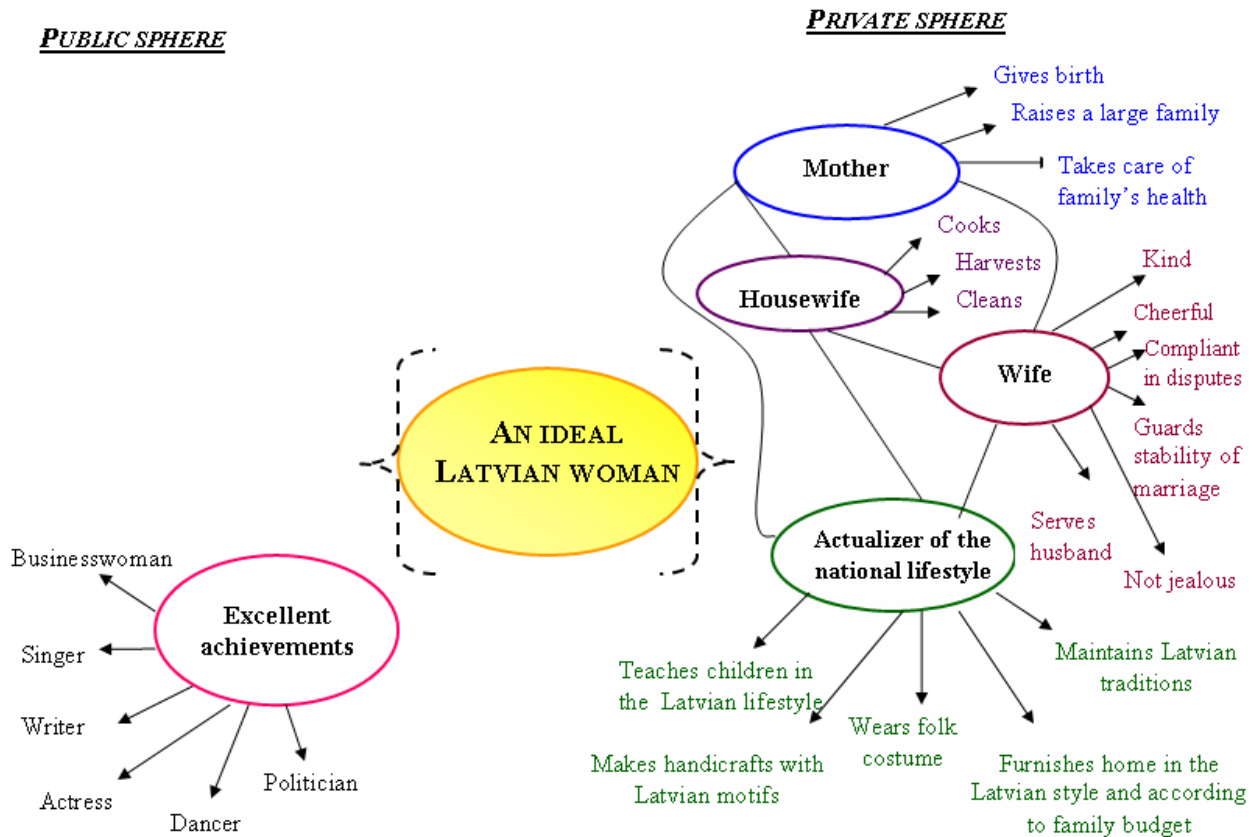


Figure 2. Characteristics of the ideal Latvian woman in the *Zeltene* (1926–1934)

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