

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT 'WOMAN' (NAINEN) IN FINNISH LANGUAGE NEWSPAPER TEXTS, 1830-1860

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*To put it schematically: 'women' is historically, discursively constructed, and always relative to other categories which themselves change; 'women' is a volatile collectivity in which female persons can be very differently positioned, so that the apparent continuity of the subject of 'women' isn't to be relied on...*

Denise Riley, "Am I That Name": *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History*, 1988, 1-2.

*... we have still to recognize that being a woman is, in fact, not extractable from the context in which one is a woman – that is, race, class, time, and place. We have still to recognize that all women do not have the same gender.*

Elsa Barkley Brown, "What Has Happened Here": *The Politics of Difference in Women's History and Feminist Politics*, 1992, 300.

Today, we mostly take it for granted that there are two gender categories and two corresponding concepts for these categories: in English, they are 'women' and 'men'. Yet, as Denise Riley has emphasized regarding the category 'women', such universal concepts also have their history: they have not always been with us. Reading through newspaper articles from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, I have come to realize that there has not always been a general category of 'women' in the Finnish language. For the contemporaries, it seemed to be self-evident that there

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were different categories of 'female persons'. Even if these 'female persons' could be all grouped together when sex was concerned, as in population statistics, when it came to gender, the differences *among* 'female persons' were considered to be profound. What mattered the most was one's social status and, for example, there were different forms of address for the 'female persons' of the elite, addressed as *rouvat* (Ladies), and the 'female persons' of the common people, usually addressed as *vaimot* (peasant wives/women).

Coming from a different direction to that of Riley, reflecting a very different set of concerns, Elsa Barkley Brown has reminded women's historians that "all women do not have the same gender" (1992, 300). I think her point is important. She is not concerned with conceptual history but, rather, social and economic history, making visible the ways in which the lives of women of different race, ethnicity, and class are not 'just different', but also the ways in which they exist in relation to each another: "It is important to recognize that middle-class women live the lives they do precisely because working-class women live the lives they do" (Barkley Brown 1992, 298). We could make the same point about the lives of women in any place at any time. What I find intriguing, here, is the conceptual move to group all the different 'female persons' under one common heading, 'women', focusing on the presumed similarities of 'women' – as mothers, as female bodies – and letting the differences blur into the background.

In assuming that a general category of 'women' emerged in European cultures at some point after the middle ages and before the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we are presented with an indication of a general trend, making it easy to link the category to the emergence of a 'modern' society, the nation-state, or the development of capitalism. However, this conceptual development was not necessarily accompanied by social and economic changes to make the living conditions of different groups of women similar, as Elsa Barkley Brown reminds us. Furthermore, it was not accompanied by the demand for equal political rights to all women, not until the late 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The differences persisted, yet there must have been something important at stake for the concept 'women' to take shape.

The development of gender concepts, such as 'women' or 'men', has not been studied in conceptual history. There has been a lot of interest in the development of political concepts in the process of nation-state formation in different European countries in the 19<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury (Ball, Farr and Hanson 1989; Hampsher-Monk, Tilmans, and van Vree 1998; Hyvärinen et al. 2003). Though the importance of gender in the foundation of nation-states has been noted by gender historians (Blom, Hagemann and Hall 2000; Dudink, Hagemann and Tosh 2004), the topic of gender has not been taken up by conceptual historians. Denise Riley's book "*Am I That Name*": *Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History*, is, to my knowledge, the only study of the development of the category 'women' in English.<sup>1</sup> Riley's analysis draws attention to the conceptual landscape within which the concept 'women' develops and exists, that is, the context in which the concept 'women' becomes possible or necessary.

In this article, I will focus on the development of the general concept *nainen*, meaning 'woman', in the Finnish language. By 'general concept', I mean a concept that refers to all 'female persons' regardless of their marital (married, single) or socio-economic status. The discussion is based on an analysis of a sample of Finnish language newspapers published from 1830 through 1860, collected for my dissertation. The papers were (name, dates and place of publication):

*Sanan Saattaja Viipurista*, 1833-36, 1840-41, Viipuri

*Kanava*, 1845-47, Viipuri

*Sanan-Lennätin*, 1856-58, Viipuri

*Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, 1829-34, 1836-37, 1840-41, 1852-79, Oulu

*Suometar*, 1847-66, Helsinki

I initially read the papers systematically and categorized the articles by topic. I used articles on three main topics in my analysis: Finnish nationalism, education, and gender (Juntti 2004, Appendices 2 and 3).

The dissertation focuses on the early period of Finnish nationalism, often called the period of cultural nationalism, which flourished in the 1840s and 1850s. The so-called political phase began when the Finnish Diet was convened in 1863 – for the first time since Sweden surrendered Finland to Russia in 1809. In the 1860s, Finnish nationalists and their main opponents organized into formal political groups, the *Fennomen* and the *Svekomen*, the latter defending the use of Swedish as the only official language. Nevertheless, the ideological foundation of Finnish nationalism was laid already in the period before the 1860s, especially regarding views on women and the gender order. In fact, two key discussions touching on women's position were already car-

ried out in the press during the 1840s and 1850s: one on the elementary education reform, the other on the legal status of unmarried women. The discussions converged on the question of the suitability of women as elementary school teachers: the consensus was that educated, unmarried gentry women, in particular, would be excellent teachers for small children, since they lacked any other 'vocation'. These questions were then addressed as soon as the Diet resumed legislative work: unmarried women became legally competent in 1864 and the elementary education reform act came into effect in 1866.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century terminology, two main distinctions were made among 'female persons': social status and marital status. Regarding social status, the distinction was made between 'people of status', *säätyläiset* in Finnish, and the common people, referred to as either *rahvas* or *kansa* (Alapuro 1988, 26, 38; Jutikkala 1968, 182-184; Talve 1997, 24-31). As mentioned above, the term by which the 'female persons' of the elite, the Ladies, were addressed was *rouva*, and the 'female persons' of the common people were usually addressed as *vaimo* (peasant wife/woman). These terms also indicated their marital status: in other words, they were only used to address married 'female persons'. Both terms still exist in today's vocabulary, but with slightly different meanings: *rouva* is the title of any married woman, similar to the English 'Mrs.', and *vaimo* means 'wife'. An unmarried 'female person' of the elite was addressed as *mamselli*, deriving from the French 'Mademoiselle', and later, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as *neiti*, or 'Miss'. No single title or form of address existed for unmarried 'female persons' of the common people: they could be referred to as *tyttö* (girl), *tytär* (daughter), *neito* (maiden), *piika* (maid), and so on. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, *neiti* was used as a title for all unmarried women and *rouva* for all married women. The differences of social status had become less important.

An interesting development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century terminology is the gradual disappearance of *vaimo* from written Finnish and the fairly sudden proliferation of *nainen*, in the meaning 'woman', in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. In modern standard Finnish, the word designating the general category of 'women' is *nainen*, which is more or less equivalent to the English word 'woman'.<sup>2</sup> However, in the old Finnish Bible translations, for example, *nainen* is not used. The first translation of the *New Testament* in 1548 and the *Old Testament* in 1552, the first complete translation of the Bible from 1642, and the 1776 translation by

Anders Lizelius, all used *vaimo* in the meaning 'woman'. They also used *emäntä* (matron, mistress) to mean 'wife'.<sup>3</sup> *Nainen* was used in the meaning 'woman' in the 1938 translation, but *vaimo* was also used, sometimes with the meaning of 'wife' rather than 'woman', and at others with either meaning. The latest translation, published in 1992, uses *nainen* in the meaning 'woman' and *vaimo* only in the meaning 'wife'.

On the basis of the newspaper material, I argue that, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Finnish texts, the words *nainen* and *vaimo* were used as synonyms. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, *nainen* became a more frequently used term than *vaimo*, especially in certain contexts, and was gradually developed into the general term 'woman'. Concurrently, *vaimo* was no longer used as a general category for 'female persons', but, instead, increasingly only with the specific meaning 'wife'. Furthermore, I argue that this was not just a terminological change, but a conceptual change also: the new concept of *nainen* was not the same as the old concept of *vaimo/nainen*.

Nevertheless, we should keep in mind that both *nainen* and *vaimo* are old Finno-Ugric words, and that variations of both can be found in other Finno-Ugric languages.<sup>4</sup> For example, in the Finnish national epos, *Kalevala*, which is based on oral poetry, both are used, although it is often hard to tell exactly in which meaning.<sup>5</sup> In other words, when *nainen* takes on the meaning 'woman', it is not a question of coining a new word, but, rather, of using an already existing word in a new meaning. Because *nainen* is such a common term in modern Finnish, and appears to have a rather fixed meaning, for us it is often difficult to understand what *nainen* meant before, what kinds of nuances it had. Likewise, since we understand *vaimo* as meaning 'wife' only, we tend to forget that it has had a broader meaning in the past. In what follows, I will first analyze the different uses of *nainen* and *vaimo* in the newspaper material. Secondly, I will discuss the development of the concept *nainen*.

### ***Nainen* and *vaimo* in the newspapers**

Before the first Finnish language newspapers were established in the 1820s, the only literature available in Finnish was religious in nature.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the language of the Bible had a huge influence on the development of written Finnish. As mentioned, the Finnish Bible translations

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predominantly used the term *vaimo* for 'female persons'. All of the newspapers analyzed used the term *vaimo*, albeit to a different extent. It was most commonly used in *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*. The paper also used various combined words beginning with *vaimo* as its synonyms: *vaimoväki* (women folk), *vaimo-puoli* (the female half), and *vaimoihminen* (the female person).

Since *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia* was intended to be a paper for the common people, who, until then, had mainly read religious literature, it is not surprising that the language of the paper often resembled the language used in the Bible. Moreover, the issues discussed in the paper were meant for a peasant audience, and not the educated gentry: the paper carried articles giving practical advice for farmers, as well as educational short stories (Tommila 1984, 21, 52-53). Some of the educational stories were intended specifically for women. For example, a story titled "Vaimoin luettava," or "To Be Read by Wives/Women," tells the story of three peasant men and the women they marry, the moral being that a lazy and superficial woman can ruin the fortunes of even a good man.<sup>7</sup> The story uses the term *vaimo*. On one hand, the women in the story are all married, and the advice given is, in a nutshell, that they should be selfless and devoted to their husband and children, not concerned with their own amusement. On the other hand, the story intends to teach life lessons to all women and not just 'married women':

"Hyvä kristillinen lasten kasvatusta ja Jumalan pelko tasaa kyllä kaikki epätasaisuudet niin miehillä kuin vaimoillakin... kun tytöt ja vaimotkin vaan tuntisivat Jumalansa, niin ei tulisi pahoja vaimoja eikä olisi onnettomia avioliittoja." (Vaimoin luettava, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 22, 2.6.1855, 2; emphasis added)

'A good Christian upbringing for children and fear of God will smooth out all the rough edges in men as well as women... if girls and women/wives only knew God, there would be no bad women/wives or unhappy marriages.'

Especially in the conceptual pair *miehet-vaimot* (men-women), *vaimo* refers to all 'female persons'. However, in the last sentence, *vaimo* can also mean 'wife'. From today's perspective, *vaimo* had a double meaning as both 'woman' and 'wife', or, to put it differently, its meaning was broader than that of today.

That *vaimo* indicates a general category of 'adult female persons' becomes even clearer when focusing on the combined words *vaimoväki*, *vaimopuoli*, and *vaimoihminen*. These terms all refer to women in general and not specifically to 'married women'. The combined terms were used particularly in population statistics, in which the focus is really on 'sex', and not 'gender' (see also Kinnunen 2001, 40). For example, in an article on the value of work, a subtitle declared: "Vaimonpuolet tarvittevat harjauva monenlaiseseen työhön", "The female halves have to master many kinds of work".<sup>8</sup> In actuality, the article discusses women's work in general and not just the tasks of married women. Especially when the term *vaimo-ihminen* is used, the emphasis is on all 'female persons':

*Vaimo-ihmisten pitää oppia taitavasti tekemään kaikkia hyövyllisiä töitä... Jumalan avulla ja omalla työllänsä he sitten saattavat elättää ittensä. Heijän ei piä naimista ajatella, sen kautta työtöinnä eläöksensä; sillä se vaimo, joka niillä ajatuksilla naimisiin menee, turmelee sekä omansa että miehensä onnen. (Työn kunnia, Oulun Viikko-Sanomia, Is. 11, 14.3.1840, 1; emphasis added)*

*'Female persons have to acquire the skills to do all kinds of useful tasks well... With the help of God and their own work, they will then be able to support themselves. They should not think of marrying in order to avoid work; the woman/wife who, in thinking this, enters into marriage will ruin both her own and her husband's happiness.'*

As used in the last sentence, the term *vaimo* could be understood either as 'female persons' or 'wives'. Because today we understand *vaimo* only to mean 'wife', it is easy to read that meaning into the old texts as well.

What to us looks like the confusion of two concepts, 'woman' and 'wife', is less of a puzzle when realizing that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century context, especially among peasants, there were no unmarried 'adult female persons'. That is, there were no 'women' separate from 'wives'; *vaimo* signified 'an adult female person', but built into the concept was the assumption that she was married. Therefore, I will call *vaimo* 'a wifely person' in order to separate it from the modern 'woman'.

In reality, of course, not all women were married, even if that was the cultural norm. What about unmarried women then? Where did they conceptually fit in? Did they become 'wifely persons' at some

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point anyway, for example, at a certain age, even if they did not marry? As mentioned above, besides social status, the other important difference recognized among women was marital status. In the so-called traditional Finnish society, whether a woman was married or unmarried made a big difference, not just in terms of how she was addressed in public, but also in terms of her social status within her family and the whole community (e.g. Apo 1998, 69; Ilomäki 1998, 143). Even though married women were not legally competent, in terms of social status, they were above single women and had entered an adult world (Markkola 1990, 20-21). In effect, getting married was what made one 'an adult female person'. In other words, although there were adult women who never married, they were not conceptually recognized as adults. Single adult women remained in the category of minors: a daughter or a sister. In many ways, a single woman in the countryside was equal in status to a maid (*piika*).<sup>9</sup> In fact, the term used for an unmarried woman in Finnish even today is *vanhapiika*, which has the same meaning as the English term 'old maid'.

In sum, in the written Finnish of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially that of the Bible and other religious literature, but also of some of the early newspapers, *vaimo* was the most common term for the concept 'wifely person'. However, it was also possible to use *nainen* in the same meaning. This was the case in the papers published in Viipuri – *Sanan Saattaja Viipurista*, *Kanava*, and *Sanan-Lennätin* – and also, to some extent, in *Suometar*, which was published in Helsinki. In the Viipuri papers, *nainen* and various combined words derived from it (e.g. *naisväki*, women folk) were the most common terms used for 'female persons'. For example, *Sanan Saattaja Viipurista* published a news story on the construction of a new road and reported that:

Aikamiehille maksetaan 50 kopekaa päiväpalkkaa, mutta naisille, vanhoille ja lapsille, jotka ovat täyttäneet 15 vuotta, 35 kopekaa. (Uudesta maantien teosta Parikkalan pitäjässä, *Sanan Saattaja Viipurista*, Is. 22, 28.5.1836, 4; emphasis added)

'Adult men are paid 50 kopecks per day, but women, old people, and children who have turned 15 yrs, 35 kopecks.'

Moreover, in a story on the establishment of a Finnish Literature Society in Viipuri, *Kanava* noted that:

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Epäilemättä on *naisillakin*, niinkuin *miehillä*, oikeutta tulla seuran Jäseniksi. (Suomen kirjallisuuden Seuran Apu-yhteyksistä, *Kanava*, Is. 19, 17.05.1845, 1-2; emphasis added)

'Without doubt, *women*, just as *men*, have the right to become members of the association.'

That is, *nainen* was used as a counter-concept to *mies*, 'man', in the same way as *vaimo*.

Considering the present use of *nainen*, the language in the Viipuri papers sounds more familiar, more 'modern' to our ears. The Viipuri papers also used *vaimo* in the 'modern' meaning 'wife':

Sillä *mies* ymmärryksensä jälkeen voipi varojansa käyttää niinkuin tahtoo vastenkin *vaimonsa* tahtoa... vaan ei *vaimo* vasten *miehensä* tahtoa. (Muu-tama miete kansan sivistämisestä, *Sanan-Lennätin*, Is. 40, 8.10.1858, 3; emphasis added)

'For a *man/husband* can use his funds according to his own judgment, as he wishes, even against his *wife's* wishes... but a *wife* cannot [act] against her *husband's* wishes.'

It would be easy to interpret the terms *vaimo* and *nainen* in the Viipuri papers to mean two different concepts, 'wife' and 'woman', as we understand them today. However, at times, *vaimo* was used with a broader meaning than that of the modern 'wife':

...sillä itse luoja on määrännyt *vaimon* kylvämään ensimmäiset valistuksen siemenet lapsukaisen heikkoon sydämmeeseen. (Sunnuntai- ja Raivas-Kouluista II, *Sanan-Lennätin*, Is. 29, 19.7.1856, 2; emphasis added)

'... for the Creator himself has ordained *the wife* to sow the first seeds of enlightenment in the child's weak heart.'

The passage is reminiscent of Biblical language and *vaimo*, here, means the 'wifely person' discussed above. The example of the Bible translations was so powerful that, in a religious context, the term *vaimo* was often used, even if the papers otherwise preferred *nainen*.

In sum, I would like to argue that *nainen* did not just mean 'woman', but that it also had the same meaning 'wifely person' as *vaimo*. However, whereas *vaimo* was clearly also used with the specific mean-

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ing 'wife', that is, 'married woman' as opposed to 'unmarried woman', there are not many examples of *nainen* being used in this way. In the Viipuri papers, there is only one example of this: in a play written by Pietari Hannikainen. The protagonist, pretending to be a magician, is explained to have the power to turn things upside down:

Sitte *tulevat naimattomat naisiksi*, emännät piioksi ja piit emänniksi, ah!  
(Silmänkääntäjä, *Kanava*, Is. 9, 1.3.1845, 3; emphasis added)

'The unmarried will become wives/women; matrons will become maids, and maids matrons.'

Using the modern Finnish terminology, the expression *naimattomat [tulevat] naisiksi*, would mean 'unmarried will become women', which does not make much sense. But in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century terminology, it seems to have meant 'unmarried [women] will become married women'. Since this is the only example of using *nainen* in the meaning 'married woman', it almost seems like a typo: perhaps instead of *naisiksi* it was meant to be *naineiksi* – that is, 'married'. However, when the play was published as a book, the expression remained the same.

In other words, we should be cautious in assuming that the term *nainen*, as used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, had the same meaning as that which we give it today. According to the Dictionary of Modern Finnish (*Nyky-suomen sanakirja*), *nainen* has a folksy or colloquial meaning as 'wife'. Indeed, it is sometimes still used in this meaning: when a man uses the expression *naiseni*, 'my woman', the woman in question could be his wife, but also his girlfriend, or a more casual long-term acquaintance.

Nevertheless, if both *nainen* and *vaimo* had the same meaning, why were there two terms and not just one? Since the Viipuri papers preferred *nainen*, whereas *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia* preferred *vaimo*, it is likely that differences in Finnish dialects played a part in the choice of terminology. Viipuri is located in eastern Finland, and Oulu, the town in which *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia* was published, along the western coast in Ostrobothnia. Culturally speaking, Finland is divided to two main areas: western and eastern. The division is rooted in a pre-historic settlement pattern. The oldest settled areas were southwestern Finland and Karelia. The differences between eastern and western Finnish culture manifest themselves in a number of ways, one of which is dialect (Talve 1997, 335-40, 346-49; Virtanen and DuBois 2000, 38-47).

Although linguists have studied Finnish dialects extensively, the main focus has been on phonology and not vocabulary. Some east-west differences in vocabulary have been established, but not regarding *nainen* or *vaimo* or other gender terms (Rapola 1961, 30-31, 77-79). One source enabling a rough comparison of vocabulary in folk language in different regions is *A Frequency Dictionary of Finnish Dialects*, based on oral material collected in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Jussila, Nikunen and Rautoja 1992). The dialect samples in which *nainen* appears most frequently are collected from Finnish Karelia and Ingria, a Finnish speaking area south of St. Petersburg, Russia. In these samples, *vaimo* does not appear at all. However, there were significant local differences in how frequently *nainen* was used, and it was used in some areas in the west as well, although far less so. In sum, the dialect samples indicate that *nainen* was more common in eastern Finnish dialects than western. However, what is perhaps most striking is the almost complete absence of *vaimo* in the eastern area.

The oldest written Finnish relied mostly on the western dialects (Häkkinen 1994, 12, 436-46). The first translator of the Bible, Mikael Agricola, indicated that he primarily relied on the dialect of Finland Proper, the region around Turku in which the Episcopal seat was located. However, he was originally from Häme, a region close to Finland Proper in western Finland, and went to school in Viipuri. Later research has indicated that, on the whole, his language is rather heterogeneous and does not necessarily reflect the folk dialect of Finland Proper (Häkkinen 1994, 436-41). Yet, as mentioned above, Agricola did establish the pattern of using *vaimo* and *emäntä*. This pattern continued in the 1776 translation by Anders Lizelius, who was also from Häme. The 1776 translation remained in use until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Häkkinen 1994, 83-84, 86-89, 445).

The question of which dialect to use in written Finnish has been contentious for as long as written Finnish has existed (Häkkinen 1994, 436). One of the cornerstones of Finnish nationalism was the development of the Finnish language into a 'civilized' language - that is, making it a language of education and administration, as well as creating national literature in Finnish. With this renewed interest in the Finnish language in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the battle of dialects resurfaced. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the use of western dialects in written Finnish was consciously challenged by nationalists from eastern Finland. There were a number of influential individuals who cultivated either

the Savo or Karelian dialect: Reinhold von Becker, the editor of *Turun Viikko-Sanomia* (although the paper itself was published in Turku, western Finland); Paavo Tikkanen, August Ahlqvist, and D. E. D. Europaeus, three of the four founders of *Suometar*, who were all originally from eastern Finland; Pietari Hannikainen, the editor of *Kanava*, who later also edited *Sanan-Lennätin* and *Suometar* for a while; and C. A. Gottlund, a university lecturer of Finnish language and also a newspaper editor, to mention a few (Häkkinen 1994, 447-50). In other words, the Finnish newspapers published in Viipuri, especially *Kanava* (1845-47) and *Sanan-Lennätin* (1856-58), as well as *Suometar* (1847-66), published in Helsinki, were all instruments in this challenge. During its early years, the majority of the editors of *Suometar* were from eastern Finland, and *Suometar* was a paper that very consciously set to promote the Fennoman ideology.

The fact that *nainen* became the predominant term for a 'woman', and not *vaimo*, is linked to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century battle over dialects. Because of the active promotion of eastern dialects by influential writers, written Finnish was infused with vocabulary from the eastern dialects (Häkkinen 1994, 449). Regarding the use of *nainen* in written Finnish, the most noticeable change happened in *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, since the paper did not employ the term during its early decades: *nainen* appeared all of a sudden in a few articles in the late 1850s. The articles dealt with women's education, and were part of a discussion on the elementary education reform, which had begun in 1857.

### The Concept *nainen*

In general, articles discussing women were not that common in Finnish newspapers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 1840s, the Ladies' Societies attracted attention, along with other volunteer associations. The Ladies' Societies engaged in charity work and established schools, often specifically for poor girls. In the articles published in the 1840s, the terminology fluctuated considerably. Different authors had different preferences, and it was even possible for the terminology to be inconsistent within the same article. For example, the Ladies' Societies, which in Swedish were consistently known as *fruntimmersförening*, were called *rouvasväenyhdistys*, *naisväenyhdistys* or *vaimoväenyhdistys* (or *yhteys*) in Finnish. The first of these names was the most common,

though, and the Swedish *fruntimmer*, which referred to gentry women, was usually translated as *rouvasväki*. However, in an article on the Ladies' Societies, published in *Suometar* in 1849,<sup>10</sup> the Ladies' Societies were called *naisväen-yhdistys*, whereas *vaimo*, in the singular, was used as a universal category:

'Orpolasten Ystävään' samote kuin muidenki *Naisväen-yhdisten* [sic] toimi osoittaa *vaimollekin* kunnioittavaisen tilaisuuden vaikuttamaan kansakunnan ja ihmisyyden edestystä laveammassa määrässä, kuin hänen tähän asti on uskottu voivankaan. Ja sen vuoksi emme uskosi yhdenkään tunnolla lahjoitetun *vaimon* olevan vastahakoisen antautumaan tämmöiseen toimeen, kuin hän vaan kerran näkee tien ja käsittää sen hyödytyksen. ('Orpolasten Ystävät' Helsingissä, *Suometar*, Is. 5, 2.2.1849, 2; emphasis added)

'The activities of "The Friends of Orphans," as well as those of other *Ladies' Societies*, show how the *woman/wife* can also have an honorable opportunity to influence the progress of the nation and humanity in a broader capacity than she so far has been believed to be capable of. Therefore, we would not think that even one *woman* with a conscience would be reluctant to dedicate herself to such activity, as long as she sees the way and understands its usefulness.'

Another article published in *Suometar* during the same year discussed girls' schools and was, in fact, a translation of an article by J. V. Snellman.<sup>11</sup> The translation also used the term *naisväen yhdistys* for the Ladies' Societies, but, in general, referred to 'female persons' as *vaimo*, in the singular:

*Vaimolta* on tahdottu kieltää kaikenlainen osallisuus kansakunnan julkisessa toimessa ja elannossa. (Tyttöinkoulu Kuopiossa, *Suometar*, Is. 30, 27.7.1849, 1; emphasis added)

'Some have wanted to deny the *woman/wife* any kind of participation in the nation's public activity and economy.'

Using the singular *vaimo* as a universal category for 'female persons' and *naisväki* in the name of the Ladies' Societies may strike us as being somewhat inconsistent, but this was apparently not problematic in the 1840s. What remains unclear – for today's reader – is the relationship between the two categories: does *naisväki* refer to gentry women exclusively, or is it also a universal category?

Discussion on women's position was again reinvigorated in the mid-1850s, as was discussion on social issues in general, due to a change in the political situation.<sup>12</sup> In 1856, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia* published a long article on the Ladies' Societies in a number of European cities, focusing particularly on their work to help poor women. The article was titled "Vaimoväen yhteyksistä" ("About Ladies' Societies") and it did not use the term *nainen* even once, instead employing such terms as *vaimo*, *vaimoväki*, *vaimoihminen*, *vaimonpuoli* for women in general, or in the meaning 'wifely person'.<sup>13</sup> The ladies were called *rouvasväki*, *rouvasihminen*, or *rouvaihminen*. During the following year, *Sanomia Turusta*, a paper published in Turku (not part of my sample), published an article titled "Vaimon vapauttamisesta" or "On Women's Liberation."<sup>14</sup> The language was very similar to the article "Vaimoväen yhteyksistä" in *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*: *nainen* was not used, whereas *vaimo* was.

*Suometar* published a long article on "Women's Position in Finland," or "Naisten tila Suomessa," in 1858.<sup>15</sup> Unlike the previous articles, this article predominantly used *nainen* as a general category. The term *vaimo* was only used in specific instances: in Biblical references; as a sex category (female); in the meaning 'wife'; and when quoting the aforementioned article "Vaimon vapauttamisesta," which had used *vaimo* instead of *nainen*. Overall, the article "Women's position in Finland" was the only one in the sample to use *nainen* fairly consistently, and it seems to have set an example that others followed. The author of the article was Karl F. Forsström, a judge and an ardent advocate of the use of Finnish language in courts. Even though he grew up speaking Swedish as his first language, he was influenced by Finnish nationalist ideas as a student in the Savo-Karelian student nation in the late 1830s (Forsström 2004).

In the following years, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia* published three articles on women's education that illustrate the change from *vaimo* to *nainen* starting to take place.<sup>16</sup> All three have the term *nainen* already in the title: *naisihminen*, *naiskoulu*, *naisväki*. The first was, once again, a translation of an article by J. V. Snellman, discussing whether an educated/civilized woman in Finland could benefit from Finnish literature.<sup>17</sup> Since the article is a translation, it is possible to compare the Finnish text to the Swedish original. Even though Snellman used the term *qvinna* (woman) consistently throughout the article, in the Finnish translation *qvinna* has been expressed by *nainen*, *naisväki*, *vaimo*,

*vaimoväki*, and *vaimonpuoli*. In other words, the Finnish terminology still fluctuates considerably. The same was true of the other two articles on women's education. Both authors moved from talking about *vaimo* to discussing *naisväki*, *naispuolinen kansa* (female population), *nainen*, and so on. What is important, though, is that *nainen* was used at all, since it had previously been absent in *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*.

In *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, the term *nainen* thus appeared almost as a novelty in the late 1850s. The context in which it was used – articles on women's education – suggests that the term did not come from the local folk language, but was instead part of a new, nationalist discourse. One of the central issues for Finnish nationalists was making elementary education available for the Finnish speaking population. The articles on women's education were part of a larger discussion on elementary education reform. The discussion began when the Senate set a committee to prepare proposals for the long awaited elementary education reform in 1856. The general public was also invited to submit proposals, and both the Swedish and Finnish language press actively facilitated the debate by publishing many of the proposals. *Suometar*, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, and *Sanan-Lennätin* all participated in the discussion.

Women's education, specifically education of peasant girls, was discussed at length in the Finnish language newspapers in connection to the elementary education reform. Another example of the proliferation of the term *nainen* is the coining of a new word, *naiskoulu*, in the context of this discussion. *Suometar* published an article on girls' schools in 1858, in which it was suggested that each parish should establish a school for girls of the common people, and that these schools should be called *naiskoulu*.<sup>18</sup> Prior to this, the terms most often used for 'girls' school' were either *tyttökoulu* (*tyttö* means 'girl', *koulu* 'school') or *rouvasväenkoulu* (translation from the Swedish term *fruntimmersskola*, referring to secondary schools for gentry girls). In a subsequent article in *Suometar*, *naiskoulu* was used as a general term, applied to both schools for peasant girls and gentry girls:

Mutta mistä *rahvaan naiskouluihin* saadaan opettajia?... Minun ehdotukseni olisi, että vallassäätyisille kaupunkeihimme asetetuissa naiskouluissa alettaisiin suomenkieltä niin hyvästi opettaa, että niissä käyneet tyttölapsset kielensäki puolesta olisivat mahdollisia otettaa opettajiksi naiskouluihin tyttölapsille. Vielä edullisempi ja luonnollisempi olisi, jos niissä *val-lasväen naiskouluissa*, jotka ovat asetetut suomi-seutuisiin kaupunkeihin,

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esim. Kuopiossa, Oulussa ja Viipurissa, koko opetus pantaisiin käymään suomenkielellä, niin niissä voisi käydä rahvaanki tytärlapsia, ja niistä saataisiin paraimmia ja sopivimmia opettajia *rahvaan naiskouluihin*. (Naiskouluista rahvaan tyttölapsille maalla, *Suometar*, Is. 18, 13.5.1859, 2; emphasis added).

'But where do we find teachers for *the girls' schools of the common people?* ... My proposal would be that in the girls' schools established for the gentry in our towns, Finnish would be taught well enough for the girls who have studied there to be hired as teachers in the girls' schools for girl children. It would be even better and more natural if, in *the girls' schools of the gentry* that have been established in towns in Finnish speaking regions, e.g. in Kuopio, Oulu and Viipuri, instruction would be entirely in Finnish, so that even the daughters of the common people could attend them, and they would be the best and most suitable teachers for *the girls' schools of the common people.*'

In my view, the coining of the new term *naiskoulu* is a conscious attempt to change the terminology and send a message about the character of the girls' schools. The name *naiskoulu* was intended to be more inclusive than the old names *rouvasväenkoulu* and *tyttökoulu*, which were tainted by their history. In addition, introducing the term *naiskoulu* was an attempt to unify terminology, to replace old terms with one single term suitable for all occasions. Since *naiskoulu* was used by all three newspapers in the sample published in the late 1850s (*Suometar*, *Sanan-Lennätin* and *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*), it was not just the preference of a single author, but, rather, part of a more general trend.

However, in the following decades, *naiskoulu* did not replace the other terms and, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it had disappeared from use. In practice, the terminology used for girls' schools was very heterogeneous until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, the first Finnish secondary school for girls, established in 1864 in Jyväskylä, was named *Yksityisten tyttökoulu Jyväskylässä*, Private Girls' School in Jyväskylä. However, the official name did not gain public approval, because, until then, *tyttökoulu* had only meant an elementary school for poor girls (Wahlman, Vesala and Tenhunen 1964, 17). Newspapers called the school a variety of names: *naiskoulu*, *naisten koulu* (women's school), *naisnuorison alkeiskoulu* (young women's lower elementary school), *naisnuoriso-oppila* (young women's institute), as well as *rouvasväenkoulu* (Ladies' school) (Wahlman et al. 1964, 17). Only in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century did the term *tyttökoulu* become a generally accepted name for

secondary schools for girls, and all the other terms – including *naiskoulu* – disappeared from use.

In conclusion, in the context of the discussion on women's education, and women's position more generally, *nainen* comes to mean something different than *vaimo*. It is not used with the old meaning 'wifely person', but, instead, to indicate 'an adult female person' who is not circumscribed by the same conditions as the old *nainen/vaimo*. The new *nainen* was 'a new woman': she could get an education, she could have a profession, and, as long as she remained single, she could be in charge of her own affairs. The key difference between the early 19<sup>th</sup> century concept 'wifely person' (*vaimo* or *nainen*) and the late 19<sup>th</sup> century 'woman' (*nainen*) is that the 'wifely person' makes marriage the key qualification for the status of an adult, whereas *nainen*/'woman' does not. Moreover, the new *nainen* is not associated with either the gentry or the peasantry, but can, instead, refer to a woman of any social status.

I did not use Swedish language papers as my primary source, but Alexandra Ramsay has noted that a similar development took place in Swedish. In general, the Swedish term *fruntimmer*, usually translated as *rouvasväiki* in Finnish, meaning 'gentry women' or 'Ladies', was increasingly replaced by the more general term *qvinna* (*kvinna*). According to Ramsay, in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, *qvinna*, along with the compound word *qvinfolk* (women folk), had the connotation of 'lower class woman', whereas gentry women were referred to as *fruntimmer*. The term *qvinna* was used as a general category that included all women only when coupled with the term 'man': *qvinna och man* (Ramsay 1984, 257; 1993, 13). During the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the meaning of *qvinna* then changed and it began to indicate all adult women regardless of their marital or class status. As Ramsay notes: "the fact that the word *kvinna* is class neutral today manifests a leveling process – *fruntimmer* have become *kvinnor*" (1993, 13; author's translation).

The creation of a general category of 'female persons' indicates that there was a need for a general category that did not divide women by either their socio-economic or marital status – that is, one needed to be able to talk about 'women' as one group. The emergence of the concept *nainen* happened at the same time as there was growing interest in the so-called women's question in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Legislative changes regarding women's position also began to take place. Sweden granted unmarried women full legal competence in 1857 and Finland

in 1864: unmarried women became legally competent at the age of 25 and, by special application, already at 21. However, women lost the status if they married (e.g. Markkola 1990, 20). Laws concerning women's inheritance rights were under discussion as well.

In Finland, the change in unmarried women's legal position was justified primarily by economic rationale (Kurki 1983, 77; 1986, 117; Pohls 1990, 70; Pylkkänen 1982, 48; Ramsay 1984, 258). Granting legal competence to unmarried women coincided with the reform in the status of unpropertied laborers, and Ramsay argues that these two reforms were both part of the same process (Ramsay 1983, 52-54, 86; 1984, 259). The system of legal protection was abolished in successive reforms of 1865 and 1883 (Markkola 1990, 20). According to Anu Pylkkänen, the legislators were primarily concerned with unmarried women's possibility of earning their livelihood, not women's rights per se (1982, 54). In addition, it was a question of freeing property under guardianship for investment (Pylkkänen 1982, 53-54). The system of guardianship was also cumbersome for all parties (Kurki 1986, 170-71).

In other words, when servants and other laborers were freed from guardianship, it seemed appropriate to grant the same right to all unmarried women. In practice, since peasant and working class women had traditionally been part of the labor force anyway, the change affected gentry women the most. That the main concern was unmarried gentry women is also evident from the newspaper discussion: unmarried gentry women had been identified as a 'problem'. In part, the problem was demographic. It was noted in the 1840s that there were far more women in the population than men; thus not all women could find a husband. In the press, they were labeled as 'surplus women' (Häggman 1994, 198). In the discussion on elementary education, unmarried, educated gentry women were identified as suitable teachers: becoming a teacher would provide them with the 'calling' that they were assumed to lack in life.<sup>19</sup> This would solve the economic problem of supporting them, and it would be beneficial for children, since women were generally seen as 'naturally' suited to teaching small children. In addition, hiring women was cheaper than hiring men: women teachers were paid less than men (Ketonen 1977, 114).

These socio-economic changes are part of the process through which the conceptual change happens. I argue that when, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, there was a role for (gentry) women in society and the

economy as something other than that of a wife, a daughter, or a servant – that is, when there were women who were no longer under male guardianship in any sense, there was a need to create a general category of ‘women’ that did not have the meaning ‘wife’ as well.

## NOTES:

1. Naomi Tadmor has looked at the concept 'household-family' in English in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (2001) and the language of marriage in English biblical translations (2006).
2. According to the Basic Dictionary of Finnish Language (*Suomen kielen perussanakirja*), *nainen* means "*täysikasvuinen naissukupuolta oleva ihminen*," or "an adult person of the female sex." According to Oxford English Dictionary, the primary meaning of 'woman' is "an adult female human being."
3. *Emäntä*, meaning the 'matron' or 'mistress', is a counter concept to *isäntä*, meaning the 'patron' or 'master' of a household/farm. In today's understanding, *emäntä* is not a concept equivalent to 'wife'. Even though *emäntä* is usually the wife of the master, *isäntä*, she does not have to be. The *emäntä* could also be the mother or sister of the master, or even some other woman related to him, who is performing the tasks of *emäntä*. In other words, the title *emäntä* indicates a woman's function in the household; it is more of a job description than an indication of her marital status. It is interesting that the Bible translations used the term *emäntä*, since the legal term for a 'wedded wife' has been *aviovaimo* since the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Häkkinen 1994, 84; Rapola 1960). However, in reality, the 'wife' and the 'matron' were often one and the same person, and the two roles thus overlapped, even if the concepts *emäntä* and *aviovaimo* were distinct.
4. Both *nainen* and *vaimo* are etymologically of Finno-Ugric origin, and variations of both can be found in other Finno-Ugric languages. An older meaning of *vaimo* is 'spirit', 'soul' (*henki, sielu*), or perhaps 'heart'. These meanings have been preserved in Estonian in which *vaim* means "spirit, soul; fairy, ghost," and in Sámi (Lappish), in which *vaimo* (or *vai'bmo*) means 'heart' and, in some parts of Lapland, a person's disposition or character (*mielenlaatu, luonne*). The origins of the word *nainen* are in Vogul, from which the stem *nai-* carried over to the various Finno-Ugric languages. In various Vogul dialects, the words *näji, nōj, naj, nāj* mean 'married woman; goddess, princess; fire' (*rouva; jumalatar, ruhtinatar; tuli*). See *Suomen sanojen alkuperä* and *Suomen kielen etymologinen sanakirja*.
5. For example, in the passage describing Lemminkäinen, one of the male heroes, leaving for battle after a dispute with his newlywed wife, Kyllikki, Lemminkäinen declares: "En usko unia naisten/enkä vaimojen valoja" (*Kalevala* 12: 57-58). Translation: "I don't believe women's dreams/nor the oaths of wives" (Poem 12: A Bond Broken, Lönnrot, *The Kalevala*, transl. Bosley 1989).
6. The very first attempt to publish a newspaper in Finnish already took place in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The paper was *Suomenkieliset Tieto-Sanommat* (1775-1776), edited by Anders Lizelius. The paper only lasted a year. The next attempts took place in the 1820s: *Turun Viikko-Sanommat* (1820-32), and *Oulun Viikko-Sanommat* (1829-34). Tommila 1988.
7. *Vaimoin luettava, Oulun Viikko-Sanommat*, Issues 22-25, 27, 29, 1855.

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8. Työn kunnia, 3. Luku: Vaimon-puolet tarvittevat harjauva monenlaiseseen työhön, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 11, 14.3.1840, 1-2.
9. Daughters did not usually inherit the farm, unless the family had just one child. Even in that case, the title of the farm would go to her husband, not her. After the death of her father, an unmarried woman could either continue to work on her family farm for her brother, or she could find employment elsewhere, usually as a maid.
10. 'Orpolasten Ystävät' Helsingissä, *Suometar*, Is. 5, 2.2.1849, 2.
11. Tyttöinkoulu Kuopiossa, *Suometar*, Is. 30, 27.7.1849, 1-2. Original: Flickskolor. (I Kuopio.), *Litteraturblad*, Is. 5, 1849, 140-143.
12. England and France had defeated Russia in the Crimean war (1853-56), which changed the balance of power in Europe. Czar Nicolai I had died in 1855 during the war and the new czar, Alexander II, was more liberal in his politics. He initiated a number of reforms in the Grand Duchy of Finland.
13. Vaimoväen yhteyksistä, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Issues 20-23, 1856.
14. Vaimon vapauttamisesta, *Sanomia Turusta*, Is. 17, 28.4.1857, 1-2.
15. Naisten tila Suomessa, *Suometar*, Issues 6, 9-11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 1858.
16. The articles were: (1) Saattaako Suomessa sivistyneelle naisihmiselle olla hyötyä suomalaisesta kirjallisuudesta? *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 27-28/1859. (2) Naiskouluin toimeen saamisesta kansalle, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 37-38, 1859. (3) Onko Suomessa naisväelle korkiampi oppi ja täydellisempi sivistys tarpeellinen? *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 4, 26.1.1861, 2. It is not clear who the authors of these articles were. The editor of *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Johan Bäckvall, was a Lutheran minister. He was originally from Ostrobothnia and, despite his Swedish last name, came from a Finnish speaking family (Tommila 1984, 56-57; *Kansallinen elämäkerrasto* 1927). It is possible that he translated Snellman's article, since he had also translated other texts. The second of the three articles, "Naiskouluin toimeen saamisesta kansalle," discusses girls' schools and, since no author is mentioned, it is possible that Bäckvall was the author. The third article was published under the pseudonym "-i.", but I have not been able to track down the author.
17. Kan i Finland en bildad qvinna hafva gagn af finsk litteratur? *Saima*, Is. 11, 21.3.1846, 2-3.
18. Naiskouluista rahvaan tyttölapsille Suomessa, *Suometar*, Is. 51, 24.12.1858, 1.
19. See especially: Sunnuntai- ja Rahvas-Kouluista II, *Sanan-Lennätin*, Is. 29, 19.7.1856, 1-3; Naiskouluista rahvaan tyttölapsille Suomessa, *Suometar*, Is. 51, 24.12.1858, Lisälehti 1-3. Swedish language papers also published articles on the topic: *Lärarinnor för folket*, *Helsingfors Tidningar*, Is. 28, 5.4.1856, 2-3.

## NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

- Flickskolor.** (I Kuopio.), *Litteraturblad*, Is. 5, 1849, 140-143. [J. V. Snellman]
- Kan i Finland en bildad qvinna hafva gagn af finsk litteratur?"** *Saima*, Is. 11, 21.3.1846, 2-3. [J. V. Snellman]
- Lärarinnor** för folket, *Helsingfors Tidningar*, Is. 28, 5.4.1856, 2-3.
- Muutama** miete kansan sivistämisestä, *Sanan-Lennätin*, Is. 40, 8.10.1858, 2-3. [S. R-nen.]
- Naiskouluin** toimeen saamisesta kansalle, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 37, 17.9.1859, 1; Is. 38, 24.9.1859, 1.
- Naiskouluista** rahvaan tyttölapsille maalla, *Suometar*, Is. 18, 13.5.1859, 2.
- Naiskouluista** rahvaan tyttölapsille Suomessa, *Suometar*, Is. 51, 24.12.1858, Lisälehti 1-3.
- Naisten** tila Suomessa, *Suometar*, Issues 6, 9-11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 1858.
- Onko** Suomessa naisväelle korkiampi oppi ja täydellisempi sivistys tarpeellinen? *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 4, 26.1.1861, 2. [-n -i.]
- 'Orpolasten Ystävät'** Helsingissä, *Suometar*, Is. 5, 2.2.1849, 2.
- Saattaako** Suomessa sivistyneelle naisihmiselle olla hyötyä suomalaisesta kirjallisuudesta? *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 27, 9.7.1859, 1; Is. 28, 16.7.1859, 1. [J. V. Snellman]
- Silmänkääntäjä**, *Kanava*, Issues 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 1845. [Pietari Hannikainen]
- Sunnuntai-** ja **Rahvas-Kouluista II**, *Sanan-Lennätin*, Is. 29, 19.7.1856, 1-3. [Potu]
- Suomen** kirjallisuuden Seuran Apu-yhteyksistä, *Kanava*, Is. 19, 17.05.1845, 1-2. [W. Kilpinen]
- Tyttöinkoulu** Kuopiossa, *Suometar*, Is. 30, 27.7.1849, 1-2. [J. V. Snellman]
- Työn** kunnia, 3. Luku: **Vaimon-puolet** tarvittevat harjauva monenlaiseen työhön, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Is. 11, 14.3.1840, 1-2.
- Uudesta** maantien teosta Parikkalan pitäjässä, *Sanan Saattaja Viipurista*, Is. 22, 28.5.1836, 3-4.
- Vaimoin** luettava, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Issues 22-25, 27, 29, 1855.
- Vaimon** vapauttamisesta, *Sanomia Turusta*, Is. 17, 28.4.1857, 1-2.
- Vaimoväen** yhteyksistä, *Oulun Viikko-Sanomia*, Issues 20-23, 1856.

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