In a religious poem written in 1754 a female poet expresses her feeling towards Jesus:

1. Saved bride come to you bridegroom, to receive your treasure, don’t be afraid to go in to him, and give praise at his foot; rest pleased and happy at his bosom, enjoy a sweet calmness in his arms, every day and moment. (Kom köpta [frälsta] brud till brudgum din, At ta din skatt emot, Räds ej at gå til honom in, Och låfwa wid hans fot; Ligg nögd och glad intil hans sköt, Njut i hans fann en hwilo söt, Altid hwar dag och stund.)

2. You have been cleansed, decorated and done holy in the blood of your bridegroom, because [of that] you will always be in good spirits at his table of grace. Pour red wine that refreshes both soul and mouth to you from his open well, in ever lasting childhood faith. (Ren, prydd och helig är du gjord Uti din brudgums blod; Ty får du wid hans nådes bord Städs wara wid godt mod. Rödt win som läskar själ och mun, Òs til dig ur hans öpna brun, Med ständig barna tro.)

([Maria Boberg], (Song nr 398 in A578b, Kungliga biblioteket. Printed as nr 78 in Sions Nya Sånger, Köpenhamn 1778. All the translations of Moravian songs are my own. Observe also that the translations are in prose.)

The authors name is Maria Boberg and she was one of many Swedish women who were active in the so-called Moravian movement (herrnhutiska rörelsen), a religious revival that had reached Sweden from Germany during the 1730s. One significant characteristic of the Moravian movement was that it gave individuals the right to express personal confessions of faith in his or her own words. As a consequence of this, women in Moravian circles had unique opportunities to act and speak in public. They did so in writing or even by preaching, which was impossible for women in most other religious contexts. This was the case in orthodox Lutheranism, which was the dominating doctrine at the time in Sweden and imposed by the authorities.

In this paper, which is based on my ongoing research project in comparative literature (“Gender, power and religious rhetoric in the Swedish eighteenth-century Moravian movement”), I will discuss how gender is constructed in texts written by some of these Moravian women writers. I do this by analysing their use of rhetoric, i.e. rhetorical devices, such as metaphorical language and ways of argumentation. My discussions also involves comparisons of texts written by female authors with texts written by male authors.

Gender and rhetoric in eighteenth century Sweden

This paper, as well as my project, is based on rhetorical analysis. I define rhetoric in the Aristotelian way, that is to say as persuasive language in its widest sense. When I study rhetoric I consequently include a
discussion of for example argumentation and the rhetorical situation (who delivers the message, how it is delivered and so forth). (See for example Aristotle, The “Art of Rhetoric”, Book I) There are two main reasons to apply a rhetorical perspective in the analyses: first I’m interested in these texts as propaganda, secondly it’s natural since many of the Moravian authors were trained in classical rhetoric. During the Swedish eighteenth-century classical rhetoric was necessary for all literary and public activities and rhetorical skills were crucial to gain positions within the State, the Church or the University. In other words, rhetoric during this period was directly connected with informal and formal power, and therefore with the production of gender.

From a gender perspective it is noteworthy that it was a clear ambition within the Moravian movement to create an alternative religious emotional language that didn’t use the methods and ways of the classical rhetoric – a sort of ‘anti-rhetoric’. This of course favoured writers without advanced rhetorical education, for example women. Women were also seen as more emotional then men, and for that reason it was thought that their religious experience could be expressed candidly. (To obtain a direct and sincere expression of faith was an important goal within the Moravian movement.)

How then is one to understand the poem by Maria Boberg, with its use of the highly mystically loaded metaphors of Christ’s blood and side wound? And how is one to interpret the erotic and emotional image of the Bridgroom (Jesus) and his Bride (the soul), an image that was extremely common in the Moravian songs. Are we simply to understand these kinds of texts only as literature written in a long tradition of devotional literature? (See for example Stina Hansson 1991, pp 294 ff.) Or should we see them as sublimated erotic emotions, which sometimes has been the case in earlier studies? (See for example Arne Jarrick 1985) However, these kind of studies doesn’t help us to fully explain the gender specific implications of these songs. For example, as you can see the metaphors of the bride and bridgroom are loaded with gender significance. How do women writers use and understand it in comparison with their male colleagues? What happens when men metaphorically crosses the gender lines and takes the subordinated role of the bride? Do women, through their texts, confirm the notion of the emotional woman? And last but not least, how did women claim religious and rhetorical authority? Against this background I’m going to propose a new line of interpretation, which takes its departure in the notion of power.

These Moravian women writers made big claims on authority and power, as they wrote about subjects that lay in the core of the early modern society: the religious discourse. But it wasn’t unusual for women to be religiously active during elderly times. However, it was in periods of ecclesiastical instability and change that women had the opportunity to raise there voices; as prophets, missionaries, and writers or even as preaches. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries we find such periods. The Moravian movement was only one of many signs of an orthodox Lutheranism in crisis.

Nevertheless the gender ideals set forth by orthodox Lutheranism still in many ways dominated the Swedish eighteenth century. When talking about the Early Modern period in Sweden, scholars often use the concept of ”the world of the Hustavla” (“Hustavlans värld”) to synthesise the ideals and practices (such as religious ideals and laws) that regulated women’s position during this period. The Hustavla was an appendix to the Bible and the Catechism that prescribed the ideal organisation of society, and it was based on Luther’s analogous description about the three orders in society: the clerical, the political and the domestic. As God rules over man, the King rules in the political order, which is reflected in the domestic order, where the husband rules over women, children and servants. This ideal among other things emphasises women’s subordination under men. (See for example Hilding Pleijel 1970, p 23 f.; pp 30 ff. For a discussion of the Hustavla from a gender perspective, see for example Kekke Stadin 1997, pp 193–225; Gudrun Andersson 1998, pp 37 f.; pp 58 f.; Inger Lövkröna 1999, p 142)

The Swedish Moravian movement
On the one hand, ideals are, as we know, one thing and how they are interpreted in practice another. It is obvious that the Moravian women, especially in the formative phase in the beginning of the movement, gained unique opportunities. This was mainly due to Luther’s thoughts of the priesthood of all believers, which was emphasized by count Zinzendorf, the German founder of the Moravian movement, and its
leading theorist. But this equality between men and women within the Moravian movement had its limitations. On one hand women were sent out to be missionaries, they were allowed to preach and their texts were in a high degree printed in different songbooks. Women were central for the movement, especially in its first formative years. In Sweden you find women such as the Strömfelt sisters, who were important Moravian activists with international connections. But on the other hand the idea of female participation and equality wasn’t driven too far. The notion of the priesthood of all believers shouldn’t be taken too literary. In the Moravian movement women’s subordination to man weren’t actually challenged; the tradition of St Paul and Luther (and the Hustavla) still in many ways remained unchanged. Women were only, for example, allowed to preach for other women, and in the end, when the movement consolidated and was institutionalized, women lost most of their influence. (See for example Karin Westman Berg 1956)

Nevertheless the Moravian movement offered several opportunities for women to appear in public, in particular as writers. (For an overview of women writers who were published in print during the period 1720–1772, also see Ann Öhrberg 2001, pp 48–54 and passim) In the Moravian movement there were from the beginning a vast production of different texts that partly served as important instruments of propaganda, partly as one of the main sources for creating and holding up faith within the Moravian circles. The Moravians wrote religious songs, occasional poetry (poetry that was written for special occasions, such as weddings and funerals), sermons, autobiographies, theological pamphlets, letters and so on. Some of these texts were printed, and in amazingly large editions in comparison with other print editions of literature in the Swedish eighteenth century. For example the Moravian songbook, Sions sånger(The Songs of Zion), had at the end of the 1740s reached the noteworthy edition of 20.000 copies, which indicates its enormous popularity, also among those who weren’t actually active in the Moravian movement. (Regarding the history of the different editions, see Karin Dovring 1951, pp 39–151) But a large part of the texts only existed in scribal publication, mainly because of the government’s censorship. Due to this censorship a massive amount of this literature was published anonymously. Subsequently there is a wide-ranging spectrum of texts to choose from when discussing Moravian rhetoric, but in this paper I would like to concentrate on the Moravian songs. (The examples discussed here are only taken from two songbooks, one scribal publication, A578b at Kungliga biblioteket in Stockholm, the other a print publication, Sions Nya Sånger(The New Songs of Zion), Köpenhamn 1778. Most of the songs in these collections are from the 1750s and the songs quoted were primarily written within the same Moravian network from Uppsala and Stockholm.) The Moravians accurately have been described as a singing people – the importance of these songs can hardly be exaggerated.

I mentioned earlier how highly the Moravians valued emotional expressions as a way to raise and obtain salvation and grace, something that also benefited female participation. Within Moravian circles you find an explicit anti-intellectualism and anti-rationalism, and because of this a particular stress on emotion. Faith isn’t produced by logical arguments, but created when the believers share their personal experience of the conversion. Therefore persuasion through “insight and identification” (“inlevelse och identifikation”) was one important point of departure for the Moravian rhetoric. (Eva Hættner Aurelius 1996, p. 243) As a result focus in the Moravian rhetoric often lies on the concrete, and in addition it contains a high degree of elements that can elevate or direct emotions (music not the least) and texts that can bring about these reactions become especially important, such as the religious songs or the autobiographies, where the Moravians give evidence of their conversions. This also is the reason why a highly elaborated figurative language was central to the Moravians. It can be said that this emotional, gender instable and sometimes erotic rhetoric often rouses strong reactions at the time and actually still does, even among scholars.

The lyrics in the Moravian songs often are unsophisticated and idiomatic – and for a modern reader the songs can seem formulaic. But this was essential if you were an untrained author. Elements of texts could easily be combined and sung to already known popular tunes. The literary process in this way was made uncomplicated, something that was crucial for those Moravians who weren’t trained through higher education. This direct and sincere appeal is no unique phenomena when you compare it with other forms of religious poetry, such as hymns and religious poems, but it’s remarkably frequent in
the Moravian songs. In addition this literature often was collectively shared, for example as you sang the songs together. And this gave all participants opportunity to learn ‘by heart’, and to imitate. *Imitatio* (imitation) was one of the ground stones in rhetorical education at this time, as were oral practice. (See for example Stina Hansson 1993, p 191) It is also of interest from a gender perspective that experienced authors, trained in classical rhetoric – most of them male, obtained this – almost naive – form of the songs. But it should be noted that although the Moravian writers used ‘prefabricated material’ to build their songs this doesn’t mean that the songs became identical or stereotypical. The important thing of course is how the elements were chosen and combined, and as we are going to see the songs differ a great deal not the least when it comes to the construction of gender.

In the following analysis I would like to discuss other and subtler mechanisms regarding the functionality of this rhetoric and its production of gender: the effects created by the use of some metaphors. I would like to concentrate the discussion on two central metaphor complexes: one that involves the Bridegroom and Bride, secondly the blood and wound of Christ. But as you understand I can only briefly discuss these multifaceted images.

"*See, I am the Bride*. The image of the Bride and the Bridegroom

I would like to begin with the image of the Bridegroom and Bride. First of all, one could point out that there are no obvious, or easily perceived, differences regarding the use of this image in texts written by men compared to those written by women. We could as an example re-examine the text quoted in the beginning of this paper, written by Maria Boberg, and compare it with a song from the same Moravian Uppsala circle written by a male author, Magnus Brynolph Malmstedt, professor of eloquence from Uppsala.

1. Oh! Beloved saviour, teach me [a] sinner, to respect your high love. The love that gladly and willingly has made you suffer for me. For me, your poor bride, you died in bloodsoked [wedding] robe. [teach me so] that I shall thrive by you both spiritually and bodily. Oh! My friend teach me, to love you in return, and to gladly obey your will. (1. Ach! frälsare kär, Mig syndare lär, At wörda din kärlighets högd. Som drifwit har dig At lida för mig All smälek helt willig och nögd, För mig din arma brud Du dog i blodig skrud. At jag til kropp och själ Hos dig må trifwas wäl. Ach! lär mig min wän, Dig älska igen, Och lyda din wilja med frögd.)

2. Rightly blessed I feel, when I for ever can lie hidden in your wounds, when you liven up my spirit with your blood, all troubles will soon be forgotten. When I see you suffer, the snake cannot harm anymore, it is bliss enough for me Jesus that you died out of love, you [are] my brother, I put myself in your command, because [of that] I cannot be condemned. (2. Rätt saligt jag mår, När i dina sår Jag ständigt får ligga förgömd, När du med dit blod Uplifwar mit mod, Blir snarlig all oro förglömd. När jag dig uphånad ser, Ej ormen skadar mer, At du af kärlek dog. År mig til sällhet nog, Dig Jesu, min bror, Min sak jag förror, Ty kan jag ej biflwå fördömd.”)([Magnus Brynolph Malmstedt], song nr 122 in *Sions Nya Sånger*, Köpenhamn 1778)

In addition we can look at another song, written jointly in 1755 by a male and a female author: Baltzar Lund and Maria Christina Rydling. The first verse is written by Lund, the two following by his female colleague Rydling. Lund writes about how Jesus loves him and has made him his property, and he concludes his verse with the following words: “*See, I am the Bride of the God of Love* Oh sings happy Hallelujah […].” (“Si jag är Bruden åt Kärleks Guden Ack sjunger gladelig Halleluja […].”) (Verse 1, B.L. [Baltzar Lund] and M.C.R. [Maria Christina Rydling], song nr 422 in A478b, Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm) No change of position is noted in the verses written by Rydling. She simply continues to unfold the image: “Blessed me I’m a happy soul my Bridegroom is Immanuel [and] I’m happy in his arms.” (“Wäl mig jag är en lycklig själ min Brudgum är Immanuel uti hans famn jag trifs så wäl.”) (Verse
The bridal metaphor is central in all of these songs; you have a description of the longing bride (the soul) that seeks her bridegroom (Jesus). Interestingly enough this erotic image in one way makes this union between God and soul surprisingly realistic – or one could say worldly. Another important aspect of this gendered image is that when it highlights the unequal conditions between man and God the inequality between the women and men of the real world is reproduced.

However, it also must be emphasized that this image of the bride and her groom is a metaphor with a long literary history. Its roots are found in the allegorical interpretations of the Song of Songs and this image is frequently used within the tradition of intimate religious literature. Stina Hansson, professor of comparative literature, has examined how this image is used in Swedish devotional literature in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century. She stresses that this image enables the writers to combine the highest with the lowest, i.e. man with God, something that otherwise had been unthinkable. As a result you have a close encounter at the textual level between two almost equivalent parts, but due to the fact that man takes the role of the (subordinated) bride, the rhetorically central principle of decorum never is broken. (See Stina Hansson 1991, pp 274 f.)

In one way this image brings forth for example the words of Paul, when he points out that Christ is to be the head of man, as the man is the head of woman. But in another way this image actually also produces different connotations, and here I would like to point out some of these, which have more radical consequences regarding gender.

One important thing, which has to do with the opportunity for women to communicate with God, was that this image gave equal importance to the male and female soul to meet God and to gain salvation: the soul becomes a yearning bride regardless the sex of the flesh. There is no coincidence that one of the most popular and central slogans of the pre-feminists in Early Modern Europe was l’âme n’a point de sexe (the spirit has no sex). Another thing to be noted is that the image of the bride also made it (metaphorically) possible for women to become active subjects in a love relation, something that mostly was denied them in reality. In the role of the Bride they could express a wide-ranging spectra of feelings, not least erotic, and seek and court their lover. It is, by the way, no surprise that this image was among others, transported and used as new literary models regarding romantic ideals and the relations between man and woman was formed during the end of the eighteenth century, when marriages were supposed to be based on love instead of economic and practical deals. (Regarding this ideal, also see Stina Hansson 1991, p 275)

In another poem written by the earlier mentioned Maria Boberg we find an extra interesting version of the image, in her song its connected to maternal imagery: “A woman becomes the Mother of God, who gives birth to her own Bridegroom, and nurture him in his infant years. Oh deep floods of love.” (“En qvinna blir Guds Moder som Brudgum sjelf föda får, och sköta I deß späda år, Ack djupa kärleksfloder.”) (Maria Boberg, song nr 529 in A578b, Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm) This image of Mary as the bride to her own son may perhaps for a modern reader seem somewhat repulsive. But it is of course perfectly logical in its context.

The image of the Mother who marries her own child wasn’t new. For example another female religious activist used a similar image 400 years earlier: Julian of Norwich. But in her advanced theological discussion this has far wider implications, as she takes it as a departure for, among other things, arguing that the deeper wisdom in the holy trinity lies within the Mother. (Caroline Walker Bynum 1982, pp 140 f.)

What can be noted is that the maternal imagery in Bobergs song underlines the importance of female participation vis-à-vis the process of salvation. Furthermore it emphasizes the positive role that a woman, in this case Mary, has played for Christianity; here in the double role of both mother and wife. In this respect the song of Boberg is rather unique in the material that I have gone through so far. When women, other than the Bride, are mentioned it’s not seldom in a negative way. The writers can for example point out Eve in her capacity of being the one who brought sin into the world. When the Mother of Christ on rare occasions is praised the writers underlines that her deed only can be seen as a (female)
compensation for Eves (female) fragility. We see an example of the latter in a song written by the famous and influential dynamic preacher Anders Rutström. (However, one should not jump to the conclusion that these kinds of negative descriptions of women are something that in an uncomplicated way can be connected to male authors.)

Welcome to us you the seed of woman [Jesus], a woman is allowed to give birth to you, she touched the forbidden tree [the forbidden apple tree of Paradise], for the sake of the woman you will bleed. All is made good again if you take the blood of woman, and [by that you] comfort her distress.

(Wälkommen hit du qwinno säd [Jesus], En qwinna får dig föda, Hon rörde det förbudna träd, För qwinnan will du blöda [på grund av kvinnan vill du blöda]. Ty tar du blod af qwinnans blod, hwarmed du gюрde saken god, Och lindrat qwinnans möda.) ([Anders Rutström], verse 10, song nr 13 in Sions Nya Sånger, Köpenhamn 1778)

“take my heart and hide it in your wounds”. The blood and side wound of Christ

Finally I shall explore some aspects concerning the image of the side wound of Christ and the blood that pours from this wound. Usually the image of the wound is brought in towards the end of a song, and often the wound is said to be a hiding place for the converted soul. The blood normally is described as nourishment for the soul, even as a universal remedy. The believers are sometimes urged to drink blood from the side wound (this of course should be associated with the Sacrament). Moreover one often sees images where the blood is an important attribute when Jesus is portrayed. Much of this is notable in the songs quoted earlier by me.

Different realistic images of the suffering of Christ and his wounds and blood are common in religious literature at the time. And the side wound, with similar mystical implication as in the Moravian songs, is depicted since the medieval period. Once again we could turn to the Song of Songs to find its origin. The wounds of Christ as a hiding place for the soul could be seen as the five clefts, the clefts in the Song of Songs were the bridegroom wants to see the face of his beloved bride, in the poetic language of the Song of Songs represented in the image of a dove. “My dove, hiding in the clefts of the rock, in the coverts of the cliff, show me your face, […]”(The quotation is fetched from The Jerusalem Bible, London 1966) (“Min dufwa uti stenklyftor, uti bergskrefwor, låt mig see titt ansichte”, Salomos Höga Wisa 2:14, BIBLIA ... Helga Skrifft På Swensko ... Also see Valborg Lindgärde 1996, p. 300)

But in the medieval tradition of piety you find that this metaphoric sometimes was interpreted in more drastic ways, to exemplify the motherly aspects of Jesus. The motherly aspect isn’t far fetched. Christ had given birth to the church through his side wound and he fed the souls with his milk, the blood. (This analogy had a solid physiological explanation. Breast milk was at that time, and still in the eighteenth century, seen as converted blood and furthermore, men were under certain circumstances thought to produce breast milk. See Thomas Laqueur 1990) Also many of the medieval thinkers, mostly the male ones, used it to underline care taking and nurturing qualities within the deity – qualities that they thought of as feminine – and to do that they had to ‘borrow’ aspects of femininity. (See Carol Walker Bynum 1982, pp 110–169) What I would like to show here is that similar images, of caretaking and nurturing as a quality and aspect of God, are found in the Moravian songs. And the question is how this effects the construction of gender in the songs, and also how male versus female authors uses them.

In a song from April 7, 1754, Brita Hedvig Wijnblad uses the bridal metaphor in this way. In the beginning of the song “the poor Bride” declares that she wants to appear before here groom – Gods wretched and slaughtered lamb – and take him in her arms. (Verse 1) The song then changes from future to present time and the Bride kisses the blood and tastes the flesh of Christ. The opening of the side wound has enabled her to be saved. (Verse 2) In the third verse the Bride changes her position, she goes from being active to being passive, and addresses the groom in a more pleading way:
Bridegroom, take my heart and hide it in your wounds, protect the bride for whom you have bled and died :/: let the red blood always be my nourishment, the heart that broke and bled my shelter.

(Brudgum tag hjertat göm det I såren, skydda sjelf bruden för hwilken du dödt :/: lät blodet röda jemt bli min föda, hjertat min fristad, som brustet och blött.) (B.H.W. [Brita Hedvig Wijnblad], song nr 377 in A578b, Kungliga biblioteket, Stockholm)

I propose that we in this song can see an example of the above mentioned, were the erotic approach towards, and qualities of, the Bridegroom (Jesus) gradually transforms as the groom is urged to nurture and shield the bride. You could drastically formulate this as a change from lover to mother. (There is a tendency in the material that I have gone trough so far that these kind of transformations is more common in songs written by women. But this remains to be examined more cautiously.)

And this is not the only example were the motherly virtues of Jesus are described. I would like to finish these analyses by showing you two examples of songs were the maternal qualities of Jesus is mentioned and thus becomes an aspect of deity. In an anonymous song published 1778 it’s explicitly put: Run boldly in his arms, he knows your name. […] His [Jesus] tender and motherly heart, cannot forget his children. (Löp dristigt I hans famn, Han känner dig vid namn, […] Hans [Jesus] mods hjerta öma, kan ej barnen aldrig glöma.) (Verse 10, song nr 139 in Sions Nya Sånger, Köpenhamn 1778. My italics)

One of the more touching descriptions regarding the maternal qualities of Jesus you find in a song written by a male author, Erland Fredrik Hjärne:

[…] I am awake, sleeps safely, rests at his [Jesus] back, that is powerful enough to keep me safe if there is alarm around me and if the world changes. Jesus is the same as he always have been, more caring then a wet-nurse, more tender then father and mother, thus I can feel free and safe.

([…] Wakar, såfwer trygg, hwilar wid hans [Jesus] rygg, Som är mägtig nog at mig förwara. Wil det om mig bullra [är det oroligt omkring mig], Werldens klot omkullra [dvs. världen förändras]. Jesus är den samma, Som han warit har, Mer öm än en amma, Mer än mor och far, såleds kan jag fri och säker wara.) ([Erland Fredrik Hjärne] verse 3, song nr 133 in Sions Nya Sånger, Köpenhamn 1778)

Conclusions and final discussion
Religion sometimes is described as the main source for oppression of women in elderly times, as well at it sometimes is seen as a source of empowerment. The latter normally is linked to the fact that women could seek authorization from God, and in this way appear in public – they became the spokespersons of God. But as we have seen, this wasn’t quite the case with the authors discussed here. Instead we can notice other mechanisms of empowerment. Eva Hættner Aurelius, who has studied autobiographies written by Moravian women, proposes that the Moravian women spoke on the one hand for themselves, “in their own name” (“i eget namn”). But on the other they didn’t receive messages from God, as for example the medieval mystics or female prophets during the eighteenth century. (Eva Hættner Aurelius 1996, pp 246 and 253) Also she notices a particular expression of female experience, where imagery of the suffering Christ is used as a means of identification as regards the woman writer’s personal hardship. (Ibid., pp 259 and 270)

You could compare this with the Moravian women’s use of rhetoric in the songs. And again there are great differences. First one obviously can’t distinguish the same individual perspective in these, in many ways, highly collective and genre bound products. Consequently we don’t find formulations of (individual) female experience in the songs. Secondly, and most important, the gender bound elements that are used in these songs can’t in any simple and uncomplicated way be related to the sex of the author. And although the feminine in Moravian theological discourse, in the tradition of for example Aristotle or Luther, was associated with the emotional, this didn’t mean that women writers only used emotional language or argumentation.
If you go further into the rhetoric some important aspects regarding the shaping of gender can be noticed, in the songs as well as in the Moravian movement. I suggest that we can distinguish at least two lines of empowerment regarding the literary activity among these women writer’s. The first is found when we consider the functionality and production of the songs. Thanks to the interest with regard to the experience of all enlightened souls, and the ideal of ‘anti-rhetoric’, women’s texts in a high degree were incorporated into the Moravian canon of songs, and often spread in print publication. These songs, with their often-uncomplicated form, were easy to write for a person with little rhetorical education and training. In this way the songs became a highway to public life for women. Secondly you find means of empowerments in the contents of the songs. Here I have exemplified by discussing how certain images could destabilize the thought of women as passive and subordinated objects. Instead women (metaphorically) through the bridal metaphoric could become capable subjects who actively seek their love objects. Furthermore I have shown how qualities associated with the feminine, such as nurturing and caretaking, is positively described and taken in as a part of deity. Even to a point were Jesus explicitly was portrayed as a mother.

Joan Wallach Scott has emphasized how gender is created and expressed on a symbolic level through different, often contradictory and ambiguous, cultural symbols. When these are interpreted on a normative level, for example through political or religious doctrines, it could seem that the dominating position is a result of consensus, instead it is a result of contradictions and conflicts. These kinds of symbols offer alternative possibilities for the understanding of gender. (Joan Wallach Scott 1988, p 43) It’s important to consider the ambiguous nature and negotiations of religious symbols and ideas in the Moravian songs. In this paper I have tried to exemplify how the songwriters often exceeded the normative and social gender formed boundaries set for women and men during this period – as well as they sometimes stayed within these boundaries. In its formative phase this movement offered opportunities for the rethinking of gender, and thus it had the potential to destabilise the World of the Hustavla. Women didn’t become the spokesmen of God in this movement, but they were able to speak relatively freely to him, and to express their own perception of deity. And further more, their apprehension of these encounters became part of a public discourse.

The starting point in this paper was the thought of power as a fundamental aspect in the formation of gender, and initially I stressed the fact that power and rhetoric was intertwined during this period. To emphasize this I would like to introduce the term “rhetorical tactic” in the final discussion. As Michel de Certeau has pointed out: ”The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it an organized by the law of a foreign power.” (Michel de Certeau 1984, p 37) This means that some factors become especially important, such as flexibility or vigilance, and the use of linguistic contradictions and cracks. In addition, by using the term rhetorical tactic the dynamics in different rhetorical situations are emphasized – i.e. various socially, historically and gender bound factors. (The term rhetorical tactic is based on the notion of “rhetorical strategy”, for this concept see Brigitte Mral 1999, pp 11 ff. and Ann Öhrberg 2001, p 280. For a discussion of de Certeaus notions tactic vs. strategy from a gender perspective, see Åsa Arping 2002, pp 17 ff.) One obvious advantage of this is that the dynamic in the rhetorical situation can be stressed. Another is that one can emphasise particular actors' choices. And last, but not least, it puts power in focus.

The Moravian women writers both were constrained and had possibilities, and this is reflected in their rhetorical tactics. Religion limited women’s participation in public, but at the same time religious language and ideas could be used to exceed gender bound limits.

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