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## **From Amusements<sup>1</sup> to Love: Forms of Women's Emancipation in the Early Works of Šatrijos Ragana**

### **No liksmības līdz mīlestībai: sievietes emancipācijas formas Šatrijas Raganas agrīnajos darbos**

#### **Keywords:**

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#### **Atslēgvārdi:**

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jaunā ģimene

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1 This paper analyses a sensual experience, a personal characteristic, collective activities, and a place, expressed in Lithuanian using words of the same root "linksmas", "linksmybės", "linksmumas". However, it is not possible to find a single English equivalent that fully captures all the Lithuanian variants of these words. Therefore, in this paper, the terms "amuse", "amusements", "cheerful", "cheerfulness", "merry", and "merriment" are used.

**Summary** This paper analyzes Marija Pečkauskaitė–Šatrijos Ragana's (1877–1930) early works, short stories, and letters, revealing the diverse forms of women's emancipation represented in her work. For this purpose, it outlines strategies for portraying women in relation to their evolving sense of self and emotional life. The different stages of a woman's journey towards self-discovery are marked by specific emotional experiences, such as amusement and love. The merriment expressed in the letters and the short story *Aukso valandėlė* (The Lovely Golden Hour) creates a sense of togetherness that empowers a woman to envision a future beyond traditional roles as wife and mother. Meanwhile, in the novella *Viktutė*, the experience of love leads the protagonist along the traditional female path to marriage. This paper also examines how in Šatrijos Ragana's work, portrayals of women both innovate and preserve tradition, reflecting different ideological visions of women's inclusion in society during "the long nineteenth century".

**Kopsavilkums** Rakstā analizētas Šatrijas Raganas (Marijas Pečkauskaites pseidonīms, 1877–1930) agrīnās noveles, stāsti un vēstules, atklājot daudzveidīgās sievietes emancipācijas formas viņas daiļradē. Tiek parādīts, kā autore teksti konstruē sievietes rīcībspēku attiecībās ar pašizziņu un emocionālo pieredzi, kur svarīgas robežzīmes ir izpriecās un mīlestība. Vēstulēs un stāstā *Aukso valandėlė* (Skaistā zelta stunda) attēlotā līksmība un kopības sajūta rada iespēju domāt par sievietes nākotni ārpus tradicionālajām sievas un mātes lomām, savukārt novelē *Viktutė* mīlestības pieredze virza varoni pa ierasto ceļu uz laulību. Raksts parāda, kā Šatrijas Raganas tekstos sievietes tēlojums vienlaikus nes jaunas emancipācijas iespējas un saglabā tradīciju, atspoguļojot dažādas ideoloģiskās vīzijas par sieviešu iekļaušanu sabiedrībā garā 19. gadsimta kontekstā.

## Introduction

Šatrijos Ragana (Marija Pečkauskaitė, 1877–1930) is one of the most prominent Lithuanian women writers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At the start of her creative career, she was perhaps the most thorough in depicting the transformation of a woman's self-concept and her becoming part of the modern Lithuanian movement. The early stories of Šatrijos Ragana were characterised by the presence of female protagonists, who were often young noblewomen searching for their purpose in life. These protagonists openly expressed their dreams, which were occasionally very radical, especially for their time. It should be noted that in several of her early works, including the novella *Viktutė*, the narrative culminates with the girls expressing their hopes and long-term plans, while their subsequent lives remain beyond the scope of the text. In this sense, Šatrijos Ragana's early work can be seen as visionary and future-oriented, resonating with the spirit of the journalistic texts published in the illegal Lithuanian press of the time. This paper focuses on Šatrijos Ragana's early work, much of which lies outside the established Lithuanian literary canon. It aims to examine the images of women, their self-perception and emotional experiences, while clarifying the traditional and innovative aspects of these depictions. This research aims to demonstrate that works excluded from the canon contain a reservoir of female representations, alternative life scenarios, and emotional experiences that have been overlooked by emerging modern societies<sup>1</sup>.

The causes of shifting traditions and emerging signs of rupture in Šatrijos Ragana's early works mirror the period in which they were produced: at the end of the 19th century, the Lithuanian national movement was gathering momentum, promoting a new modern worldview and redefining social structures. Various ways for women to participate in public affairs were also being actively proposed. As Solveiga Daugirdaitė (2004: 224) points out, "The period of the press ban was an important turning point in the history of Lithuanian women, as they became literary subjects rather than mere objects." In order to understand the traditional and innovative depictions of women, as well as the life choices and coming-of-age

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1 Before entering the public sphere, women's writing usually had to be approved by the male reading community, which set specific standards for these texts. The correspondence between Šatrijos Ragana and Povilas Višinskis (1875 –1906) – a publicist, critic, and public figure – shows that the manuscripts of her works were evaluated by Lithuanian students in Moscow, who also performed an approving function.

narratives in Šatrijos Ragana's early works, it is necessary to consider the political context and societal transformations of the time, and the evolving concept of women and their roles within the family and society. The socio-cultural approach is used to contextualise the narratives and to reconstruct the ideological dimension of the analyzed stories. Following the evolving representations of women, the description of their roles in a gradually modernizing society is grounded in the notion that:

1. the meanings attributed to femininity as a historically changing social construct are reflected in both publicist and fictional texts;
2. the models of femininity presented in these texts were influenced by, and had an impact on, the real-life situation of women.

Moving on to analyze the characters' experiences – particularly their emotional dimension – the socio-cultural descriptive method is supplemented by a phenomenological approach. This methodological tool enables a precise description of emotional experiences and their significance for the characters' self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and overall engagement with the world. Grounded in key theoretical propositions, this approach allows us to reconstruct the structure of emotional states.

This research on emotions is based on several foundational assumptions: emotions are understood as a culturally defined, transmitted, and learned phenomena, and identity is realized through relationships. From a phenomenological perspective, feelings acquire meaning only within the context of an individual's behavior and their lived world. Fuchs (2007: 424) argues that subjective experience is not located within the "psyche" or the brain, but rather emerges from the body's relationship with the world. The importance of the emotional bond between human beings and their environment is emphasized, with feelings seen as mediators that engage us in interaction with the surrounding world. But this is not merely a private inner space; feelings also connect individuals to the interpersonal sphere and foster the internalization of collective aspirations and commitments (Szanto, Landweer 2020: 9).

Recognising that our feelings arise in specific situations can deepen our understanding of our emotional relationship with the world and with others. As Fuchs (2020: 323) points out, we do not live solely in the physical world; rather, the experiential space surrounding us is always permeated by feelings. From a phenomenological perspective, the world around us is imbued with affective qualities (Fuchs 2013: 612), and research in this tradition has come to conceptualize feelings as a spatial phenomenon encompassing the body, the self, and the world. This means that the emotional experience links the experiencer to their environment so that the individual is not the sole participant in the experience; the surrounding world also

contributes to the generation of feelings. From this perspective, feelings are seen as co-created<sup>2</sup>.

Another important aspect is that feeling can be understood as a mode of action linked to the values that emotions bring to the fore. This means that our feelings arise in situations that are important and meaningful to us. In this view, values are understood as the meanings we attribute to and discover within the experienced world. The phenomenological position is, as Fuchs (2013: 620) argues, radical: "Without emotions, the world would be without meaning or significance; nothing would attract or repel us and motivate us to act." Emotions play a decisive role in making sense of experience, committing to values, and motivating action. It emphasizes not only conscious engagement and rational decision-making, but also situational judgment and context-appropriate action.

Thomas Szanto and Hilge Landweer use the term 'emotion' to refer to a broad spectrum of emotional experiences, including affects, emotions and feelings (Szanto, Landweer 2020: 1–37). In this paper, the terms 'emotion' and 'feeling' are used interchangeably, with no significant distinction between them. To gain a better understanding of the emotions expressed in the early works – particularly the short story *The Lovely Golden Hour* – I draw on Matthew Ratcliffe's definition of existential feelings as "existential backgrounds that shape all our experience" (Ratcliffe 2008: 40)<sup>3</sup>.

Considering the aims of this paper, the second part provides an overview of the political and social context of the 19th century, which shaped women's position in society. It reviews the representations of women that emerged during "the long nineteenth century" in journalistic texts – mostly written by men – focusing on the newly formulated expectations and goals for women. The third part analyzes one of Šatrijos Ragana's earliest texts, the short story *The Lovely Golden Hour*, by examining the images of women it constructs, with particular attention to their self-awareness, emotional experiences, relationships with others, and the plans they make for the future. The analysis demonstrates that Šatrijos Ragana's early short stories and letters to Povilas Višinskis also reveal a significant sensual dimension that correlates with the emergence of a new female self-perception in modern Lithuanian culture of the time. By describing the structure of this experience – its interpersonal nature, interconnectedness with space, and the woman's sense of self – this paper attempts

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2 A more detailed phenomenological approach to emotions can be found in my paper *Gailėstis: jausmo patyrimo fenomenologija* / *Compassion: a Phenomenology of the Affective Experience* (Bleizgienė 2024).

3 The chapter *Amusement: One Way for Women to Achieve Liberation* provides a more detailed description of this emotional experience.

to uncover alternative forms of women's self-perception that have remained not only on the margins of the Lithuanian literary canon, but also on the periphery of modern Lithuanian consciousness. The fourth part examines a woman's coming-of-age narrative as presented in the novella *Viktutė*. Its focus is on shifts in narrative perspective, the girl's self-understanding, her emotional experience, and its movement toward the dominant imagery of the time.

### **The Long Nineteenth Century: Representations of Women in Political and Social Context**

"The long nineteenth century" was a period of profound transformation, marked by political revolutions, the formation of new states, and the Industrial Revolution, which drew large populations from rural areas to rapidly growing cities. It was also an era of class realignments, the development of the mechanized press, increasing literacy, the introduction of compulsory primary education, and the so-called "invention" of leisure. According to Rachel G. Fuchs and Victoria E. Thompson, women across countries and social classes experienced some of the most dramatic and lasting changes in their family, work and political lives during this period (Fuchs, Thompson 2005: 1).

Lithuanian historians note, however, that the processes that shaped modernization in Western Europe unfolded more slowly and took on a distinct character in territories under Tsarist Russian rule. In 1795, following the Third Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Lithuania lost its sovereignty and entered a prolonged period of dependency on the Russia Empire. The autocratic imperial government dictated the economic, social and cultural development of Lithuania (Bairašauskaitė et al. 2011: 28).

From a Western European perspective, the 19th century heralded struggles for political freedoms and social rights, including the women's emancipation movement. In Lithuania, however, these processes were overshadowed by Tsarist oppression. The Lithuanian "long nineteenth century" is conventionally divided into three periods. The first period began at the end of the 18th century and ended in the 1860s. The beginning of the second period is debated: either 1861, when serfdom was abolished by imperial decree, or 1863–1864, marked by the January Uprising, and followed by a period of severe repression, including the ban on all Polish and Lithuanian publications in the Latin alphabet. The transition to the third period is dated to 1904–1905 when the press ban was lifted, societies were legalized, and the teaching of the Lithuanian language in primary schools was permitted. At the beginning of the 20th century, Lithuanian society mobilized to fight for political autonomy and,

eventually, independence, which was declared in 1918. The publication of the first illegal magazine *Aušra* (Dawn), in 1883 – printed in Lithuanian using the Latin alphabet – marked the beginning of the modern Lithuanian national movement. As the movement promoted the consolidation of Lithuanian national identity, the struggle for women's emancipation acquired new forms and directions.

When examining changes in women's situations during "the long nineteenth century", it is important to recognize that representations of women and the social roles assigned to them were shaped by the political context and the circulation of contemporary ideologies, including positivism, nationalism, and other intellectual movements. The collapse of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and radical political and socio-cultural transformations at the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th century increased the importance of the family as an important sphere for preserving national and cultural identity (Mastianica 2012: 52–53). According to social revisionists of the time, women's primary social roles were those of wife, mother, and housekeeper (Miknyte 2009: 35).

Public discourse reflected these expectations: women were encouraged to be active and express themselves only within the domestic sphere, that is, in private space<sup>4</sup> (Mastianica 2012: 36–37). They were considered promoters of moral norms within the family and, by extension, in society in general<sup>5</sup>. This aligned closely with trends seen across Europe: "The female, or private sphere, was the realm of home and family. It was characterized by nurturing, morality, and virtue. Europeans believed that women were designed to bear and raise children, to teach these children to be moral citizens, and to provide a comforting and regenerative atmosphere in the home." (Fuchs, Thompson 2005: 2). Although notions of women's autonomy, initiative and broader horizons occasionally surfaced in the mid-nineteenth century, it was not until after the January Uprising that attitudes toward women's social roles began to change. A significant re-evaluation of women's place in society first appeared in the St Petersburg press, and later spread to Warsaw, where it was argued that

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4 In a particularly revealing statement by one of the first women to be published in the press in the early 19th century, she argued against the notion that women from higher social classes should receive more education: "A woman's scientific work is to make her husband happy, educate her children properly." (Quoted by Mastianica 2012: 54.)

5 Richard Stites (1990: 15-17) describes a similar attitude toward women's role in Russian society that prevailed at the beginning of the 19th century: "The early nineteenth century witnessed a conscious attempt by Russia to reject 'French' values. With the rejection came a romantic idealisation of the Russian woman as the embodiment of Virtue and Maternity. [...] The woman as 'citizen-mother', the bearer and molder of patriotic sons-of-the-fatherland was another aspect of this image."

confining women to the private sphere had detrimental consequences for society as a whole. The Positivists, who published their writings in the St Petersburg newspaper *Kraj*<sup>6</sup>, shared with their Western European liberal contemporaries a belief in the transformative power of education and economic progress to change society. Their program included the emancipation of peasants, workers and women through education (Miknyté 2009: 44). It emphasized that socio-economic transformation should encourage women to enter new spheres of social life and to achieve economic independence (Mastianica 2012: 62–63). In the post-revolutionary period, Eliza Orzeszkowa, writing for the Warsaw-based newspaper *Kraj*, championed positivist ideals, portraying the modern woman as well-educated, who is independent-minded, with distinct interests, and responsible for the wellbeing of both her family and society<sup>7</sup>.

Focusing on the Lithuanian context at the end of the 19th century, it is important to emphasize that improvements in women's circumstances were closely linked to the growing momentum of the Lithuanian national movement. During the period, the movement's ideas – now enhanced with additional ideological content – were disseminated through the illegal Lithuanian Catholic, liberal and social-democratic press. When comparing the role envisaged for women in the national movement with that anticipated in a future modern Lithuanian society, Catholic discourse stood out for its pioneering character. This ideological press was the first to emphasize the principle of gender equality, affirming the importance of independent, politically active women for the new society. Notably, articles published in this press portrayed the status of unmarried women in a positive light and assigned them significant roles within the national movement. This suggests that women, at least in the realm of political imagination, had transcended the private sphere to emerge as equal political and social subjects of the public sphere.

The Lithuanian liberal press, which actively sought to reform the public sphere, did not limit its efforts to this: one of the principal means of national self-creation –

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6 According to Jurga Miknyté (2009: 42–44), the St Petersburg newspaper *Kraj* reflected the ideas of two ideological camps: the conservatives, who declared their loyalty to Tsarist Russia, and the positivist-liberals, whose ideal was an urban Western culture. At the time, this newspaper was the most accessible periodical to readers in historical Lithuania.

7 The influence of Eliza Orzeszkowa's positivist ideas on Šatrijos Ragana's development as a writer, and the intertextual connections between their works, has been consistently highlighted by two scholars: Inesa Szulska (2006) and Brigita Speičytė (2008). In the work analyzed in this paper, *The Lovely Golden Hour*, the protagonist Alenutė admits that she aspires to be a writer like Orzeszkowa. Speičytė (2008: 54) argues that Orzeszkowa was important to Šatrijos Ragana not only as a talented author but also as the first woman to earn a living through writing.

or national renewal – was grounded in the idea of constructing a new model of the national family. As Dalia Leinartė notes, “[t]he creation of a new national family model became part of the programme of revival” (Leinartė 1999: 74). The scholar argues that “the first generation of secular Lithuanian intellectuals, who graduated from Russian universities in the 1860s and 1870s, resembled the Russian intelligentsia in terms of their education, their social position, their rarity and their public criticism of gender relations in traditional society” (Balkelis 2012: 151). Irina Paperno, in her study of Russian intelligentsia thought in the mid-19th century, points out that marriage was perceived by these young people as a stimulus for active professional, social, and also spiritual engagement (Paperno 1988: 55, 90). Marriage was also understood as a means of reshaping the identity of wives through education and ideological influence. Within this social context, the “women question” emerged, linked both to critiques of traditional marriage and to calls for women’s personal emancipation<sup>8</sup>. Through this envisioned “new” marriage, women were to be liberated from domestic violence and guided by men to undergo a transformation of their self-awareness, enabling them to move toward social progress. In these projects for transforming the family, women and society, the man was positioned as both educator and savior.

The Russian-educated liberal Lithuanian intellectuals sought to transform the concept of the “new family” into that of a “national family”, envisioned as an ideal environment for nurturing a Lithuanian identity in children. *Varpas* (Bell, 1889–1905), one of the leading liberal newspapers, developed a polemic on women’s education, directly linking its necessity to the Lithuanian national family project. A significant challenge faced by the educated Lithuanian men involved in this endeavor was the scarcity of suitable wives or partners capable of implementing the national family program. It was argued that a woman who had matured solely within the private sphere, shaped exclusively by family relations, was an entirely unsuitable partner for an intellectually ambitious man. The ideal woman, as formulated in *Varpas*, was both an intellectual companion and a nurturing mother. The proposal suggested that young Lithuanian intellectual men should marry simple village girls and educate them. While some attempted to put these “theoretical” models into practice, such efforts often ended in failure.

It is worth noting that social reform at the time was increasingly pursued

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8 According to Stites (1990: 7): “But she [woman] had almost no separate civil identity; without her husband’s express permission, she could not work, study, trade, or travel. [...] Before marriage, the girl’s movements and activities were similarly guarded by her parents, particularly the father. In many ways, the wife-daughter’s status under the husband-father was analogous to that of the landlord’s serf”. The situation of unmarried women was even worse.

through feelings. According to Paperno, this heightened emphasis on feelings profoundly influenced literature, which began to explore human affect as a subject of analysis. Texts published in *Varpas* reveal that at the turn of the century, there emerged a need to justify the identity of a nationally conscious, purpose-driven individual. Rational arguments alone were no longer deemed sufficient; instead, emotion came to play a central role. Feelings, it was argued, bound individuals to the nation, and to one another through invisible inner ties. This emotional connectedness was believed to be first learned in the home, particularly from mothers. The ability to feel – to passionately love one’s homeland, to experience “familial” emotions toward compatriots, and to cultivate a deep affective bond with the wider Lithuanian community – became in male-authored texts, perhaps the most significant marker of personal self-awareness and commitment to the nation.

Finally, one more important point should be noted in concluding this review of “the long nineteenth century”. From the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, public debates on women’s educational opportunities and increased political participation were largely centred on women of the gentry. According to Richard Stites (1990: 3), “In Russia, as in the rest of Europe, the woman question did not emerge from among the ranks of working and peasant women. Except as the distant objects of revolutionary vision, the female masses at the bottom of the social order played almost no role in the women’s movement until the beginning of the twentieth century.”

The emergence of the Lithuanian national movement brought a radical shift: ideological groups began to prioritize the broader involvement of the peasantry in the national movement.<sup>9</sup> Peasant women came to be perceived as guardians and transmitters of Lithuanian cultural traditions. Although the liberal press sometimes harshly criticized the low level of national consciousness among peasant girls, it was with them that new “national family” projects were developed. In contrast, women like Šatrijos Ragana – raised in pro-Polish noble families – were often viewed with suspicion by young intellectuals, who perceived their cultural influence as a potential threat. Šatrijos Ragana belonged to a social group whose involvement in the Lithuanian national movement was regarded as problematic. This may help explain why the protagonists of her early works are often noble girls who undergo a transformation in their national self-perception, as she had proposed several arguments demonstrating how noble women could become part of the Lithuanian

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9 Olga Mastianica-Stankevič’s monograph *Bajorija lietuvių tautiniame projekte (XIX a. pabaiga – XX a. pradžia) / (Nobility in the Lithuanian National Project (the Late 19th – Early 20th Centuries))* demonstrates that the project of a new Lithuanian family was closely intertwined with efforts to involve the nobility in the creation of a new Lithuanian society at the turn of the twentieth century.

national movement and proving that such a transformation – from a pro-Polish to a Lithuanian identity – was indeed possible.

## **Amusement: One Way for Women to Achieve Liberation**

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, Šatrijos Ragana's early texts focus on young female characters of noble origin. The stories, written in a realistic mode, depict women's everyday lives, their individuality and specific emotional experiences. This section analyzes how women's images were constructed through narratives that convey an emotional experience largely overlooked in previous scholarship – an experience described in English as "merriment" or "amusement".

First of all, I would like to draw attention to the earliest letters written by Marija Pečkauskaitė to Povilas Višinskis. One of the most frequently mentioned emotional states in this correspondence is "amusement", typically experienced during various domestic gatherings and festive occasions. The same people are often present in these descriptions: Marija herself, her sister, her brother, and several close friends, among whom the priest Kazimieras Bukontas and his brother Dominykas are regularly mentioned.

A letter dated 16 February 1885 makes it clear that these amusements involved music, singing, games, and eating sweets. Often, these amusements were accompanied by a sense of liberation. Marija writes that the singing took place while sitting on the ground "in Turkish style". One can surmise that for a girl of noble birth, this way of sitting (especially since it is mentioned in the letter) was certainly not appropriate for her class and gender. The letter concludes with Marija's confession: "Oh, how amusing, how amusing it was!" (Šatrijos Ragana 1886: 24).

The letters reveal that amusement was most often experienced in natural environments, involving activities rather uncharacteristic for a young lady of the manor, such as catching crayfish. In describing this pastime, which included many young people, Marija records a clear departure from conventional norms: she notes that she removed her shoes, rolled up her skirt, and joined in catching crayfish. The mood of the whole day is summed up as follows: "We sang on our way, it was so cheerful and peaceful" (Šatrijos Ragana 1886: 41).

The next letter continues the theme of amusement, describing the celebration of Shrove Tuesday. The day itself has the potential to be cheerful: "The Tuesday has come. We considered to ourselves, let's entertain ourselves in some way and sense that cheerful day" (ibid.). This festive day also offers "cheerful" ways to celebrate, drawing on traditional forms. Marija recounts how she, her sister, her brothers, and

the young men who work on the estate, dressed up and went to visit their friend, the Catholic priest Kazimieras Bukontas. The masqueraders' intention was to trick the priest by pretending to be real wedding participants.

The carnivalesque nature of Shrove Tuesday unsettles the usual social order and opens opportunities to try out new and different roles, to transcend the boundaries of established social relations. These descriptions of amusement and cheerfulness include frequent mention of laughter and joking.

Marija mentions in her letters that she enjoys telling her friend about what "excites, amuses, or makes her laugh" (Šatrijos Ragana 1886: 33). It is likely that Povilas, as a member of this group, also participated in various youthful entertainments, or heard about these amusing gatherings through these accounts. Recalling cheerful shared experiences helped the friends sustain their bond even across distance. Letters functioned as a means of maintaining a sense of emotional connection: Marija admits that she feels cheerful whenever she receives a letter from Povilas.

A key element of this convivial letter exchange was the use of the Lithuanian language. In one letter, Marija asks him not to write to her in Russian, because "it is so joyous, 'przyjemnie' to read Lithuanian scripts" (Šatrijos Ragana 1886: 38). The use of Lithuanian thus creates a reading pleasure that contributes to the shared cheerful atmosphere. This heightened emphasis on language and its capacity to evoke cheerfulness suggests that such collective emotional experiences were closely intertwined with the spread of modern Lithuanian nationalist ideas.

Because of the impact of cheerfulness on those who experience it and its power to momentarily disrupt the established order, it also appears to have been experienced as a temporary loss of reality and the sense of self. This strange state of uncertainty strikes Marija in the forest while she is taking part in merry activities with friends. She describes the moment in one of her letters: "It was fun in the forest, but when I was getting back, my head turned around; I don't recall how I walked home, and yet I don't know much about what was there in the forest and then during the whole day. In a word, I began to wander in my mind..." (Šatrijos Ragana 1886: 36). This temporary blackout frightens Marija and she fears that she is slowly losing her mind. The letter captures not only the intensity of the experience, but also its liminal and potentially destabilizing character.

The Lithuanian word for "wandering in one's mind", *blūdyti*, also carries the meaning "to get lost" or "to lose one's way". This double meaning reveals a direct correlation between feeling and place: a person who is wandering in one's mind – *blūdjia* – not only loses the sense of certainty about their self, but also becomes spatially lost. The forest, as a place prone to disorientation, both evokes cheerfulness

and confuses the merry participants, causing them to feel as if they are out of their minds.

The semantic field of *linksmas*, the Lithuanian word for “cheerful”, further underscores this connection between emotion and place. According to the *Dictionary of the Lithuanian language*, the saying *Apie mumi yra linksmas vieta* (“It is cheerful at our place”) illustrates that *linksmas* can describe the beauty, charm, or attractiveness of a place. In another example, *linksmi laukai* (“cheerful fields”) conveys the prominence of a locality. This usage suggests that emotional qualities are not simply projected onto a place by the experiencer, but that certain places possess an inherent capacity to evoke cheerfulness. Marija’s letters mention several such sites: the area around St. Martin’s Cross and the little grove of Želviai. The latter was believed to be the location of an ancient Lithuanian sacred site, featuring a statue of Perkūnas – the Baltic god of thunder, lightning, storm, and rain.

In the context of amusement as a form of everyday collective entertainment, creative work assumes a different character. In her letters to Povilas, Marija mentions texts composed for various festive occasions: poems written to celebrate a name day, plays likely intended for home theatre performances, and “living pictures”, among others. Because the central figure of these entertainments is a community of people, the creative work produced in support of the amusement is not “authorial”, in the modern sense. Rather, the question of authorship as the result of an individual creative act is of little significance in this context.

In one letter, Marija tells Povilas – having just admitted that God has not given her the talent to write – that she has begun working on a novel (Polish: *powieść*). Its “source”, as can be inferred, is a true story that took place in 1891, likely related to a conflict Marija herself had experienced with a governess employed in their household. When describing the plot of the planned work, Marija refers to specific people known to Povilas and to actual events. She also notes that she begins to “laugh when writing, remembering her jollifications and sentiments”. Here the aim of writing is merely to portray amusing events, with Marija concerned only that the story be entertaining rather than boring.

The meanings and functions of cheerfulness revealed in Marija Pečkauskaitė’s letters are echoed in her early literary work. Due to the limited scope of this paper, I will focus on one of Šatrijos Ragana’s first short stories, *Aukso valandėlė* (The Lovely Golden Hour), written in 1895 – the same year as the letters to Višinskis, just discussed. The plot of the story essentially mirrors situations described in several of those letters: it recounts a picnic of young people at St. Martin’s Cross. The characters of the story – two sisters Alenutė and Onytė, the Catholic priest and his brother Dominykas, and Mr. Jonas – enjoy a joyful picnic together. They talk at length, admire

the scenery, sing, play games, joke, read aloud, catch butterflies, and treat themselves to sweets. At the very beginning of the story, an important idea is expressed: “everyone is more cheerful, better together”. Being in a group of peers – young people of similar self-concepts, engaged in shared enjoyable activities – produces a collective emotional experience: cheerfulness.

In this work, cheerfulness is created by the surrounding landscape; it is said that birds sing cheerfully. The girls’ clothing also contributes to this atmosphere, with a detailed description of the “ancient Lithuanian garments” they wear. Their appearance, like the landscape around them, is striking: they radiate “health, youth, and cheerfulness”. This triad aptly captures the essence of the collective agent of the story.

Notably, in Lithuanian, the word *linksmas* (“cheerful”) can also describe natural processes: for example *Visi augalai nepaprastai linksmi auga* (“All plants grow unusually cheerfully”). This usage reflects a sense of natural vitality, spontaneity. Similarly, the young people in the story – playing, joking, wearing clothing that harmonizes with their surroundings – blend seamlessly into the landscape, and seem to embody this innate spontaneity, naturalness. The story draws a parallel between the cheerful singing of the larks and the continuous talking of Alenutė: the “speech” of both the birds and the young girl expresses the same shared cheerfulness. The hypothesis is that through this analogy between nature and youth, the collective agent of the story – the cheerful, healthy, lively young people – comes to represent the ideals of modern Lithuanian national ideology.

It should be noted that this collective cheerfulness also includes some degree of gentle flirting between the girls and young men at the picnic. However, the erotic dimension of the story remains deeply hidden. Onytė and Dominykas go off to pick blueberries, while Alenutė and Mr Jonas look for a place to sit and read a book. Alenutė lightly teases her sister Onytė, saying that she is probably “joyously playing with Mr Dominykas”. The eroticism that emerges here is part of the same general atmosphere of cheerfulness: the young people pair off naturally and just as easily return to the larger group.

In this atmosphere of shared amusement, ideas central to the modern Lithuanian movement begin to emerge. First of all, the collective mood transforms the picnickers’ relationship with the world around them: everything they see takes on a “magical” quality – the rural farms, the site they visit (St. Martin’s Cross), and the surrounding forest. The landscape is not only admired but also experienced as one’s own, as the most suitable environment to live in.

More importantly, the environment is perceived as inherently poetic and capable of inspiring creativity among its observers: “Such a beautiful place! If I had a talent

towards poetry, I would describe it at once!” (Šatrijos Ragana 2008: 9). Within this context, the question of creativity in the Lithuanian language is also raised, together with reflections on the still modest state of Lithuanian literature, and its urgent need for new talents.

Another significant point is that, in the atmosphere of shared amusement, the protagonist of the story, Alenutė, begins to talk openly and share her plans for the future with her friends. She talks about her intention to go to Warsaw in the autumn to study beekeeping. In her imagination, these studies are a means of creating a self-sufficient and financially independent life. She dreams of keeping bees in the summer and treating poor people in the countryside during the winter<sup>10</sup>.

Another important theme that emerges in the text is Alenutė’s desire to write in Lithuanian. Notably, when the young girl begins to talk about her aspirations and life plans, her emotional state also shifts: she moves from collective amusement to an individual experience of happiness. Sharing plans for the future is imbued with the experience of happiness (“how happy I am that I will go to Warsaw this year” (Šatrijos Ragana 2028: 14)). Peer support plays an equally important role. The protagonist of the story, Mr. Jonas, who listens to Alenutė’s plans, approves of her “life program”. His support is significant, yet at this stage he is not seen as a life partner with whom the new life program could be realised.

The narrative expresses the idea that a life structured according to one’s own wishes and desires – and aligned with the ideology of modern nationalism – must be a happy one. Happiness arises when a person senses the prospect of a meaningful life, when that future beckons and attracts.

The collective state of cheerfulness described in Šatrijos Ragana’s letters and in her short story *The Lovely Golden Hour* can be understood as a form of existential feeling. Phenomenologist Matthew Ratcliffe (2020: 250) defines them in the following way: “They are ‘feelings’ (in some sense of the term) and they also amount to ways of relating to the world as a whole”. They are not said to be specifically localized in the body, but to unfold as an “all-enveloping sense of reality” or “of being rooted in the world” (ibid.). This emotional experience is emphasized to be essentially about a person’s relationship with the world. They are foundational experiences that define all other personal relations and the experience of situations: “I already find myself in a world, situated in a realm where it is possible to direct oneself towards entities, and situations in these and other ways” (Ratcliffe 2020: 251).

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10 “[...] a good many Russian women raised in a manorial environment experienced the first delicious and painful impulses of altruism through the mechanism ‘social daydreaming’ – fantasies in which the privileged gentry girl comes to the aid of the oppressed, and defends them against the common enemy; cold and loveless authority” (Stites 1990: 9).

Typically, these feelings are described as a sense of feeling 'at home' in the world, characterized by security, peace, and harmony with one's surroundings. In contrast, Thomas Fuchs identifies their negative pole as the feeling of being cut off from the world – a state accompanied by a loss of meaning. These feelings shape not only our relationship to our environment but also to other people: we can feel welcome, close, connected, or alienated, disconnected, rejected, or isolated. These experiences involve a fundamental trust in others or a cautious, suspicious stance (Fuchs 2013: 614–616).

Ratcliffe highlights another crucial feature of these feelings: they shape how we perceive and experience the possibilities the world presents. As our existential feelings shift, so too does the horizon of opportunities available to us. When the world feels like home, it is experienced as rich with possibilities for feeling, acting, and relating to others. If one feels alienated from the environment, these possibilities narrow, and relationships with others are weakened.

The experience of joy described here appears to have been felt as a sense of being in one's own place, of feeling at home in the world. In this state – which seems to have been sustained over time – the lived world was perceived as offering a variety of "cheerful" activities. The relationship with others, especially with fellow participants in the amusements, is close, allowing both the author of the letters and the characters in the story to engage in shared activities. Walking, catching butterflies, picking flowers, weaving wreaths, and similar pastimes all represent a realization of the possibilities offered by the world.

More importantly, this all-encompassing state of mind enabled both the letter-writer and the story's protagonist, Alenutė, to boldly outline the prospects for her future life: to dream of beekeeping studies and of living an independent life. One might say even more strongly that "cheerfulness" not only revealed these prospects but also created and sustained the confidence that such possibilities were attainable. Ultimately, cheerfulness created a sense of belonging – to both a place and a group of people.

## **From Amusements to Love in the Novella *Viktutė***

Published in 1903, the novella *Viktutė* is one of the most important examples of Šatrijos Ragana's early work. Written in the form of a diary, it tells the story of a young woman of noble origin, who experiences a profound self-image crisis after meeting and falling in love with a newly arrived doctor in a small town. *Viktutė* gradually embraces the ideas of modern Lithuanian national consciousness and resolves to speak Lithuanian. In the final part of the text,

she envisions family life with a man from a lower social class, working together in a hospital to implement a “social project” aimed at helping the poor. As noted at the beginning of this paper, in this work, marriage – understood as a partnership of equals, both capable of action – emerges as the only possible form of female emancipation.

Amusements also appear in the novella as collective activities that create shared experiences. The text depicts cheerful evening gatherings, filled with music and singing. Traditional celebrations – such as children’s christenings or Christmas – also provide occasions for amusement. Gradually, however, one of the essential conditions of this experience becomes the presence of the beloved man. In this way, an additional layer of meaning emerges. When describing the entertainment enjoyed by the servants of the household, amusement is portrayed as a form of rest after a day of hard work. The narrative tells of dances organized by the young servants of the manor, in which the female narrator participates for the first time. Here, it is work that legitimizes these amusements.

In this work, the entertainment of high society, which in the story *The Lovely Golden Hour* had created a collective experience of youthful amusement, gradually acquires a negative connotation. It comes to be seen as a waste of time – an empty, meaningless form of leisure. Here, at the beginning of the story, Viktutė recounts a cheerful letter from a school friend. In it, the friend describes attending a high society ball, enjoying oneself, and “having fun”. The diary narrator’s reaction to this friend’s letter is negative; she admits that even reading about such entertainments is boring, and wonders how it is possible to live without any meaningful work. (Šatrijos Ragana 1903: 8) Little by little, amusement thus becomes justified as a brief period of rest accompanying hard work.

The story’s narrator confesses that she is no longer attracted to the youthful amusements held in the houses of the landed nobility: they no longer meet her expectations, they bore her, etc. In this regard, Šatrijos Ragana echoes the critical stance of Eliza Orzeszkowa toward women in high society: “A passive creature, superficially taught to be admired; a lady in a salon and an affectionate little piece of furniture for a man [...]” (Miknyūtė 2009: 46). In the life of a young woman moving toward greater political and social awareness, these high-society amusements are replaced by reading and playing the piano.

Another significant shift evident in this work is that cheerfulness becomes an individual trait. The narrator repeatedly describes her beloved man as *cheerful* – a quality mentioned alongside intelligence, good education, and physical attractiveness. Gradually, communal and collective experience becomes embodied in her beloved man, who attracts and charms the young woman. As the novella approaches

its culmination, and the mutual nature of their feelings becomes clear, cheerfulness as an emotional state becomes increasingly tied to the participation of one particular person – the loved one – in various family gatherings and celebrations: “I’m so glad the doctor will be with us for Christmas. I seem to feel more cheerful and better with him... he’s so appealing, he’s so kind that it’s like he’s bringing warmth with him.” (Šatrijos Ragana 1903: 42) Viktutė mentions many times that conversations with him are engaging, that his opinions seem right; playing music with him feels special.

One of the doctor’s distinct talents is his ability to write poetry. However, unlike in *The Lovely Golden Hour* or Šatrijos Ragana’s letters, this poetry is not intended for public sharing. The poems are kept private; the doctor only gives the poems to Viktutė to read. It appears that the novella’s conception of creativity is gradually moving toward a more modern understanding.

It is obvious how, little by little, the “cheerful” relationship between the lovers takes on a unique, unprecedented quality. The doctor’s implicit declaration of love is also accompanied by laughter, and frolicking that includes other family members. Seeing the doctor’s infectious amusement, Viktutė admits for the first time that her feelings for him are love.

The narrative describes the cheerfulness experienced while decorating the Christmas tree together – the mood is already imbued with erotic undertones. The playful actions are both a display of mutual attention and a form of flirtation. Yet the erotic dimension of this relationship remains veiled beneath the playfulness, as Viktutė condemns overt attempts by women to “amuse” men in order to attract attention, or secure a partner, considering such behavior as degrading. Perhaps the “social” meaning attached to this amusement helps to legitimize the playful interaction between Viktutė and the doctor, since the tree is decorated for the servants’ children (those of lower social status).

Tellingly, this flirtatious play ends with the doctor articulating a life program for Viktutė: “As one can, so let one contribute to the common well-being. You’ve got education – give it to others; you love your country – inspire that love in your fellow countrymen; one can do it without money, too.” (Šatrijos Ragana, 1903: 45) The cheerfulness created by the beloved man thus carries a clear “ideological” dimension. Through him, the modern ideas of the national movement enter the young woman’s worldview. Gradually, the man, by cultivating a cheerful, playful bond with her, becomes a guide, showing her how she might shape her future life.

After the matchmaking, as the lovers make plans for their shared future, the husband reveals his dream of opening a hospital, where his wife will be able to fulfill her dream of being useful to others by working there. The fiancée joyfully declares, “And how happy I am, Antanas, our home will be purely Lithuanian, because

Lithuanian is the language the two of us are speaking and we will speak it forever". (Šatrijos Ragana, 1903: 86) In envisioning a married life based on shared professional activity, the couple senses that they are challenging the established order by embodying in their lives the ideas promoted by the national movement. These ideas are not only cultural but also carry a strong dimension of social reform. Viktutė dreams not only of working in a hospital but also of continuing to teach peasant children. Their marriage is imagined as a vehicle for spreading Lithuanian national consciousness and bridging class divisions.

At the end of *Viktutė*, the protagonist experiences a feeling of profound happiness, signaling her impending social integration into the emerging modern society, along with spiritual fulfillment and emotional maturity. As defined by Michela Summa, "'happiness' is alternatively used to designate an emotional state – feeling happy about something essentially means feeling satisfied – or a judgmental stance we take about our life" (2020: 416). However, the key to attaining this state of happiness for Viktutė is another person: a husband, a beloved man. She chooses a socially sanctioned path for women, in which marriage enables all other forms of public engagement. This ending reflects a traditional resolution for the question of a woman's place in society: marriage is presented as the only socially legitimate route for a woman to integrate into the new social order. Through partnership, women are able to participate in social work; it serves as the foundation empowering women to act and transform their environment.

**Conclusions** Focusing on Šatrijos Ragana's letters and early works – many of which remain outside the Lithuanian literary canon – this paper examines the portrayals of female characters, their distinctive modes of self-perception and their emotional experiences. Two different strategies of women's emancipation are identified, each shaped by distinct ways of portraying women and by the emotional experiences associated with them.

An analysis of Šatrijos Ragana's early letters to Povilas Višinskis and the short story *The Lovely Golden Hour* reveals that depictions of young women's leisure activities, accompanied by enjoyable experiences, serve as a catalyst for imagining forms of liberation plans not related to marriage. By creating a distinctive narrative atmosphere inextricably linked to amusement, the text portrays the emergence of a young woman's self-awareness and her future-oriented aspirations – to pursue education and achieve financial independence.

Significantly, the female protagonists host gatherings and formulate future plans within their own homes, thereby transcending traditional roles assigned to

women as wives and mothers. This transformation of women's spatial agency is crucial in this period. Eliza Orzeszkowa employed spatial metaphors to critique conventional perceptions of women and the limitations they faced, argued that a traditional woman's experience of the world was confined to what she could see through the window. By contrast, the heroine of the analyzed short story overcomes these spatial restrictions: she does not plan for marriage or motherhood.

This shift reflects the positivist ideology of the late nineteenth century – which challenged conservative views on women and promoted economic independence – as well as the impact of modern Catholic thought, which allowed women to imagine meaningful lives outside marriage. At the same time, however, traces of traditional views remain: economic independence is not presented as an end in itself, and the figure of the financially independent woman continues to be framed as a caregiver of the “weak” members of society, and an educator of young people.

As the analysis has shown, this image of the emancipated woman is closely tied to specific emotions and to the experience of merriment. Šatrijos Ragana's letters, as well as one of her earliest short stories, *The Lovely Golden Hour*, reveal that cheerfulness functioned as a sustained emotional state. According to the phenomenological classification of emotional experiences, this feeling can be understood as an existential feeling. Cheerfulness allowed those who lived through it to experience the world as safe, welcoming, and accepting. It also created a strong emotional attachment to particular places, often marked by historical or sacred significance. Certain locations – such as St. Martin's Cross or the grove of Želviai – and religious celebrations like Easter seemed to have the power to arouse and awaken a feeling of cheerfulness.

Cheerfulness also permeated social relations, especially among those who shared it. Participants in collective amusements were experienced as emotionally close, as members of one's own circle. This state of being opened up the world as a space of possibilities. In these moments of amusement, both the letter-writer and the fictional character Alenutė speak freely about their future plans – such as studying beekeeping in Warsaw, later establishing a beekeeping business, and building an economically independent life from its income. Within this emotional framework, female emancipation appears autonomous, not reliant on partnership with a man; the woman's life trajectory appears as separate and self-sufficient.

The novella *Vikutė* reveals how this image of women in Šatrijos Ragana's work gradually shifts. The coming-of-age narrative, presented in diary form, enables readers to witness the turning point in the girl's self-perception from her own perspective – stylistically innovative for Lithuanian literature of the time. Yet the story also contains clear signs of social convention. The girl's transition to adulthood

unfolds within a traditional domestic setting and culminates in her decision to marry the doctor. This narrative, in which the heroine marries and becomes her husband's assistant reflects the broader transformation of part of the small nobility into the intelligentsia – a newly emerging social class<sup>11</sup>.

The analysis of this work, particularly the feeling of love experienced by the young woman and man that leads them to dream of an equal partnership within the family, shows that it aligns with the partnership models prevalent in late nineteenth-century culture. In the novella a woman's life fulfillment is depicted as inseparable from partnership – specifically, from a family relationship with a man. The content of this "life program" reflects the ideology of the modern Lithuanian family, while the form of its realization corresponds to the models of the "new" Lithuanian family promoted by the liberal participants of the national movement. These partnership ideals, which were dominant in the liberal press of the time, also shaped real-life decisions: in the early 20th century, a number of intelligentsia families were formed under the influence of this ideal. These models were reflected in the plots of literary works, and their influence is evident in the shaping of women's biographical narratives as well as in the discourse surrounding their emancipation. Moreover, the stories that have survived in cultural history, as well as those being reinvented today, reinforce the idea that without such partnerships, women's emancipation at the turn of the century would not have been possible. This notion is supported by Vytautas Kavolis (1992: 84), one of the first scholars to introduce feminist ideas in Lithuania after 1990, who interprets the image of a husband and wife working together, sharing creative ideas, and supporting each other. The love between a man and a woman, culminating in a harmonious family life, emerges as one of the most recognizable emotional experiences characteristic of the late 19th- and early 20th-century Lithuanian national movement. This emotional experience is embedded in the new family projects envisioned by the participants of the national movement.

In the novella *Viktutė*, earlier amusements gradually turn into an empty form of passing the time. This is particularly evident in how feasts held by the high society are evaluated. Amusements increasingly become a type of leisure justified by hard work or assigned a social function – for example, decorating a Christmas tree for children from a lower social class. Moreover, amusements lose their broader meaning of connection to the surrounding world and become tied to one significant person: the beloved man. Without the presence of this "cheerful" man, previously meaningful leisure activities lose much of their joy and significance. In this way, the beloved man

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11 As Miknytė (2009: 190) points out, the minor nobility, in an attempt to preserve their social position, began to pursue education and gradually became part of the intelligentsia.

gradually becomes a prerequisite for a meaningful, happy life. In this work, instead of the girl imagining and shaping her own future, the man directs how her aspirations for a meaningful life can be fulfilled.

In the short story *The Lovely Golden Hour*, by contrast, – the idea of women’s emancipation – achieving financial independence and freeing oneself from traditional roles such as wife and mother – is presented in a more visionary and forward-looking way. The joyfulness that corresponds to the self-image of a “new” woman is linked to the experience of women from a higher social class, a space seemingly more receptive to women’s emancipation projects. In *Viktutė*, however, the protagonist’s family is depicted as losing its social position, which enables a noblewoman to marry a peasant intellectual from the younger generation. *Viktutė*’s story thus reflects the realities faced by women of the declining upper class at the time, which may explain why the narrative aligns more closely with traditional paradigms of women’s lives.

This paper has sought to reveal a broader spectrum of emotions in the literature of this period, with particular attention to shared experiences of amusement. Looking ahead, one promising direction for further research concerns the relationship between modern nationalism and emotions. To understand how national identity becomes an internal conviction for individuals, emotions can serve as a key concept for explaining how the ideas of national movements are internalized. Recent studies on nationalism raise a central question: “How do people become national?” (Styene et al. 2020: 1). These scholars emphasize that emotions play a crucial role in understanding how nationalism shapes the lives of ordinary people. Feminist scholarship has further contributed to the study of emotions and nationalism, challenging the notion of nationalism as a homogenous phenomenon. Further analysis of literary works by women from the period of the Lithuanian national movement could shed light on how men and women were assigned different roles in nationalist projects, and how these roles informed the formation of distinct models of identity.

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