

Bridal Mysticism, Virtual Marriage, and Masculinity in the Moravian Hymnbook *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch*

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the connections between virtual interaction, masculinity, and bridal mysticism in the Moravian hymnbook *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* (1754). The motifs inherent in the hymnbook are examined in light of its anthropological presentations and perception of the divine, i.e. Jesus Christ, using mainly the ideas of virtual interaction (S. Knauss) and hegemonic masculinity (R. Connell).

KEYWORDS

Kleines Brüdergesangbuch, Moravian Hymnbook, Masculinity, Bridal Mysticism

BIOGRAPHY

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Nowadays the Moravian church is commonly and primarily known for its daily watchwords, which continue to be used by a multitude of Christians around the globe. That this concept of an accompanying daily text originated in 1728 is less well known. Likewise, the origins, emergence, and evolution of the Moravian church in 18th century Germany and its specific religiosity as guided by Count Zinzendorf are not common knowledge beyond academic discourse, despite the presence of Moravian songs in contemporary hymnbooks like the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch*, used by German-language congregations. Interestingly, several song texts still in use in the *Evangelisches Gesangbuch* have been only slightly changed since their original inclusion in Moravian hymnbooks like the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch*. They therefore still contain a version, now slightly diffused, of the mystical motifs found in hymnbooks of the 18th century and in particular of the poetically highly productive period of the 1740s and 1750s.

In this article I focus on specific motifs of the mystical piety from the period of the Moravian community called the “*Sichtungszeit*” – the time of sifting, in reference to Luke 22:31 – which are directly connected to a theology of marriage.¹ While exploring these motifs from the Moravian hymnbook, which provides vital evidence for the piety of the community, I will discuss the implicit constructions of masculinity within the lyrical expressions of bridal mysticism by linking them to Stephanie Knauss’s ideas of virtual interaction.

SETTING THE SCENE: MORAVIAN PIETY IN THE TIME OF SIFTING AND THE IMPORTANCE OF HYMNBOOKS

The origins of the Moravian community lie within the emigration of the *Unitas fratrum* for religious reasons from Bohemia and Moravia to the estate of Count Zinzendorf on the Hutberg, in Upper Lusatia. The statutes of 1727 indicate that the founding of the Moravian community stemmed from the need for a place where the brothers could dedicate their lives entirely to God – i.e. where they could live as a theocratic community – but without separatist intentions or a wish to start a new denomination, significant in particular in light of the troubles that arose with Lutheran orthodoxy.² The Moravians can be assigned to the broader movement known as pietism, in particular as Zinzendorf – whose importance in molding the community cannot be underestimated – had been educated at the Pädagogium Regium in Halle. Although Zinzendorf himself was critical of Pietism, from which he attempted to dissociate both himself and the Moravians, German church historians can correctly speak of *Herrnhuter Pietismus* (Moravian pietism) as a category in its own right. Interestingly, Zinzendorf developed an ecumenical line of thought which admitted every religion its own truth – although Moravian missionary activities clearly show that ultimate truth seemed to be found in the Christian message of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ through his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection.

Hymnbooks played a prominent part within the community of the Moravians. In establishing the *Singstunden* – a time dedicated to singing – Zinzendorf and the Moravians inserted singing as an essential *praxis pietatis* into their communal piety. Singing could act like a sermon and serve as a pedagogical tool.³ Its function was to produce the indispensable connection between the transcendent and the immanent. According to musicologist Anja Wehrend, who has studied the conception of music and harmony in the Moravian community in the baroque context, singing was considered evidence of the *analogia entis*, the analogy between God and creation:

1 For the conception of marriage see for example Seibert 2003, 103–104; Beyreuther/Meyer 2000.

2 See Hahn/Reichel 1977, 70–80.

3 See Rössler 2000, 181; Meyer 1979, 102.

Zinzendorf feels therefore a deep chasm between the polarities of earth – heaven on the one hand. But on the other hand he believes that it is vital to encourage the community to overcome this chasm. The theological premise for this line of thought is formed by the redemptive act of Christ, on which the restoration of harmony between humans and God is initially based.⁴

In the time of sifting, dated here to the years 1738 to 1753,⁵ during which the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* was developed and published, Moravian piety was undergoing a significant change. The *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* consists of two parts. The first part, entitled “Shepherd songs from Bethlehem. For use by all who are poor, small and lowly”, was first published in 1742 by C. Saur in Germantown in the United States and comprised 360 songs on 128 pages, with an additional nine pages containing a register of melodies.⁶ As this version was out of stock after only one year, in 1751 the Moravians began work on a new edition.⁷ In the edition from 1754, published by Johann Jacob Würz, the first part, consisting of 368 songs on 122 pages, is joined by a second part, with the title “The song of the dance at Sharon, as the hymnbook of the small brothers, part two”. The songs contained in the hymnbook were not written and composed solely by Count Zinzendorf for they were reviewed by the community, making the composition of the hymnbook a communal project.⁸

Judgement on that period, from 1738 to 1753, oscillates between vehement condemnation and approval of the literary-poetic and communal achievements. The historian Paul Peucker has drawn our attention to the emergence between 1745 and 1748 of the concept of the *Creutzluftvögelein* (little bird in the air of the cross) and the adoration of the piercing in Christ’s side, which became increasingly eroticized.⁹ Both images followed the idea that the human soul could find shelter in the wounds of Jesus Christ – especially the wound in his side – with the bird reference alluding to motifs like the dove in the cleft of the rock in Song of Songs 2:14. These two topics were closely linked to, or rather form a distinctive element of, the worship of the stigmata and the bridal mysticism of the Moravian community. Absent Moravian diaries, the lyrical expression of this piety within the hymnbooks brings us closest to the actual piety of that age. The principle of the *Singstunden*, which took the form of spontaneous singing of a mix of various verses, is mirrored in the structure of hymnbooks such as the *Kleines*

4 Wehrend 2009, 99. In the partial absence of English versions of the literature referred to, all direct translations from German are mine.

5 For the discussion of the dating of the *Sichtungszeit* see Peucker 2002, 77.

6 *Hirten-Lieder von Bethlehem, Zum Gebrauch für alles was arm ist, was klein und gering ist*; see Meyer 1987, 206.

7 See Görnandt, 1926, 41; Meyer 1979, 59.

8 See Meyer 1979, 59.

9 See Peucker 2002, 78.

Brüdergesangbuch: there is no stringent numbering of the individual songs, no clear structure or rubrication.¹⁰ When this evidence is combined with Zinzendorf's remark that fundamentally there was no need for a hymnbook as songs that originated in the heart were preferable, we can recognize that the songs of the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* were an expression of a vivid piety solidified into guidance for the community and by incorporation of its themes they result into exactly the same vivid piety. The songs were generated by the community out of its piety, reflected that piety and also, through their use, reproduced that piety.

VIRTUAL MARRIAGE? REFLECTING ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY WITHIN MYSTICAL TEXTS

Interaction [is] per se a corporeal issue – even within the virtual interaction in chatrooms, the bodies of the users sitting in front of the screen and receiving information are involved, even though they don't meet directly – and in a large part my identity is formed by the imitation of others, by my access to them, by my being perceived by them.¹¹

At first sight, talking about virtual interaction and “virtual marriage” in an 18th century context seems odd, even misplaced. But if we think this conception through and broaden our definition of virtuality, applying Stephanie Knauss's explanations to bridal mysticism can be productive.

Bridal mysticism in the Christian tradition is to be defined as personal spirituality inspired by the Song of Songs and finding its affective expressions in symbolic sexual love and an ardent desire for the divine loved one, Jesus Christ.¹² The mysticism of Zinzendorf and the Moravians has direct connotations in the Passion, with the adoration of the piercing in Christ's side, and inherits Passion mystical motifs¹³ but is basically constituted from classical elements of mysticism, for example paradoxical use of language.¹⁴ Mysticism can be defined as one of the most intensive phenomena of piety:

The core element of this phenomenon is the religious “Spitzenerfahrung” [peak experience] of the *unio mystica* that results in “radical interior transformation (transformatio mystica) and deepened perception and cognition”. With Annette Wilke the definition of the *unio* as “concentration of transcendence into the personal” (Luhmann/Fuchs) shall be preferred.¹⁵

10 See Meyer 1979, 59–60.

11 Knauss 2008, 61.

12 See Wilke 2006a, 81.

13 For passion mysticism see Wilke 2006b, 396.

14 The bridal mysticism of Zinzendorf and the Moravians was an adaptation of medieval bridal mysticism, especially as inspired by Bernard of Clairvaux and also William of St. Thierry and St. John of the Cross (see Peucker 2011, 43, 50), transformed for a Protestant context.

15 Bauer 2017, 179.

This transformational process inevitably affects the construction of the collective and subjective identities, as well as the construction of masculinity, if gender, and therefore masculinity, is understood as an essential identity marker. This identity is formed in the mystical process of virtual interaction within the lyrical texts of the hymnbooks. The motifs are used to evoke the mystical encounter with the significant other, Jesus Christ; they are a communal and poetic expression of a personal interaction between the “you” of Jesus Christ and the “me” of the individual soul of the singing congregation. This expression is both highly individual in its encounter with the divine in the *unio mystica* and highly formalized in the ritual and – in its printed form in the hymnbook – lyrical standardization of the possibility for the individual divine encounter. The idea of a “virtual interaction” therefore seems applicable to the piety of the Moravians and its bridal mysticism insofar as the interaction with Jesus Christ is primarily virtual, i.e. textual and lyrical. Additionally, it appears to me that within the bridal version of the *unio mystica* lies an opportunity to expand this conception to a kind of “virtual marriage” because on both planes of virtuality – the textual and the transcendental – an interaction occurs between bride and bridegroom, i.e. between the individual and Jesus. From the textual evocation of the bridal interaction in the *unio mystica* to the actual encounter in the mystical peak experience, the soul is determined as the significant other to the courting Jesus Christ and becomes female – in spite of the actual sex of the human it belongs to – by its positioning as bride of the divine bridegroom.¹⁶ The construction of the individual’s gender within the Moravian community was affected by the virtual interaction and “virtual marriage” and by the bridal *transformatio mystica*. Whereas the gender construction of female Moravians within the frame of bridal mysticism is congruent with their immanent female gender roles within the community and society, a discrepancy occurs between heteronormative requirements of being a “man”¹⁷ – the hegemonic masculinity within the surrounding society, the “white heterosexual males”¹⁸ – and the masculinity induced by bridal mysticism, i.e. the hegemonic masculinity inside the Moravian community.¹⁹

SINGING TO THE BRIDEGROOM – BRIDAL MYSTICISM, VIRTUAL MARRIAGE, AND MASCULINITY IN THE KLEINES BRÜDERGESANGBUCH

To characterize the motifs of bridal mysticism and to apply to these motifs the preceding thoughts on virtuality and masculinity, I will now analyze in three

¹⁶ On the female soul see e.g. Peucker 2011, 46.

¹⁷ On heteronormativity see Degele 2008, 89.

¹⁸ Di Blasi 2013, 17.

¹⁹ For hegemonic masculinity see Connell 2000, 98.

steps exemplary passages from the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch*, focusing on (1) the characterization of Jesus Christ, (2) anthropological statements, and (3) the connection between the conceptual pair bride/bridegroom, the semantics around the worship of the stigmata, and the recurring use of the term “dress”.

JESUS CHRIST THE BRIDEGROOM

Following the inherent logic of Christocentrism, a manifold articulation of the name of Jesus Christ is to be expected. The hymnbook *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* is no exception: epithets with the name Jesus Christ enjoy such great popularity that we can only note a brief sample here. The naming of Jesus Christ as “bridegroom” is of particular importance for bridal mysticism. Although the specific term “bridegroom” is not so common, comparison of passages from the hymnbook makes evident that the status of Jesus as bridegroom is omnipresent as a subtext. We see in the following two passages, for example, that the term “man” – in German the term for man, “Mann”, is often a synonym for the term for husband, “(Ehe)Mann” – runs in parallel with the term “bridegroom”:

Have You already loved me, as I was highly grieved? Didn't You send your courting, bridegroom! to me?²⁰

Which one amongst all... that long for their beloved, which one equals my man? ... Which one will immolate his life willingly for the life of his bride? Where will such a couple be married?²¹

The German word for husband, *Ehemann*, which is semantically equivalent to “bridegroom”, is used only once in the first part of the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* but is directly connected to the term “savior” (*Heiland*), with the implication that the primary function of Jesus Christ in his status as bridegroom is redemptive:

My Savior! If I a poor child that winds itself around your feet and can't do even an hour without You, You soul husband [*Seelen=Bräutigam*], and that loves you above all and more than itself were more experienced in that language.²²

20 All quotations from the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* are translated from the German version of the text in Beyreuther 1978 by me and are quoted according to the names of the hymnbook's syllabus. Due to the fact that a continuous pagination is missing in the edition I will use the page numbers of each chapter of the hymnbook's syllabus in addition to the regular citation. Because of the loss of literary quality in the translation, the original version of the lyrics is provided in the footnotes. “Hast Du mich doch schon geliebt, da ich Doch gleich hoch betrübt? hast Du deine werbung nicht, Bräutigam! auf mich gericht?” Beyreuther 1978, Hirten-Lieder, 84.

21 “Welcher unter allen denen... die sich nach geliebten sehnen, welcher gleicht meinem Mann? ... Welcher wird sein eigen leben für das leben seiner braut williglich zum opfer geben? wo wird solch ein paar getraut?”, Beyreuther 1978, Hirten-Lieder, 108.

22 “Mein Heiland! wär ich armes kind, das sich um deine füsse windt, und Dich, du Seelen=Ehemann, nicht eine stunde missen kan, und das Dich über sich und alles liebt, in dieser sprache etwas mehr ge-übt”, Beyreuther 1978, 41.

Three aspects of this passage are to be highlighted: (1) the subjectively felt inadequacy of the own use of language for the described objective – a typical mystical topos, (2) the urgent need to express and even more urgent need to have intimacy with Jesus, and, finally (3) the connection between redemption and the stigmata (“that winds itself around your feet”). The feet thereby stand as *pars pro toto* for all stigmata (feet, hands, side), which themselves are likewise *pars pro toto* for Jesus Christ – and as we will see, for even more. The primary function as redeemer is expressed mainly in formulations that worship the stigmata, so that Jesus is addressed through his wounds, scores, welts, blood, sweat, tears, and, preferably, the hole in his side, but not without perpetual evocation with terms of love and devotion to the decidedly masculine bridegroom.²³ He is the lamb and man of torture (*Marter=Mann*²⁴) as well as the loving shepherd of his congregation. Through his being simultaneously immanent and transcendent, loving and grieving, God and man, he is the ultimate mediator between the polarities of heaven and earth. Both the transcendence and the immanence of Jesus emphasize his masculinity:²⁵ as transcendent savior, he is the loving and redeeming bridegroom; as immanent human being, he bears the suffering at the cross in manly fashion: “The figure of God [*Gottes=Gestalt*] came in the figure of man [*Mannsgestalt*], relinquished all his Godly might, was like one of us in every detail, carried our misery on his back.”²⁶ Yet he is depicted as “poor, unsightly, and much despised” in his human form,²⁷ as a result of the inherent dualism of transcendence/immanence: even the immanence of Jesus is connoted with decay, evanescence, and sin, all of which are characteristic of the praying and singing human and will be changed ultimately by Jesus Christ as the loving and redeeming savior.

THE HUMAN AND THE BRIDAL SOUL

Mankind is corrupted and captured in sin – this is not just a pan-Christian position on the result of the Fall, an insight of the Reformation in the *simul iustus et peccator*, but also the baseline of the Moravian anthropology. Individuals and

23 He is also addressed as hero, king, prince, ruler, and master; mostly masculine expressions, even if the idea of the birth of the church out of the hole in his side – “the core of Zinzendorf’s theology of the sidehole” (Peucker 2002, 56) – allows him occasionally be depicted as mother and mother-heart: see Beyreuther 1978, *Vom Wandel im Licht*, 24; Beyreuther 1978, *Von der Ablegung unsrer Hütte*, 3. Vogt speaks of a performative femininity, which seems fitting, see Vogt 2015, 80.

24 Beyreuther 1978, Anhang, 20.

25 Vogt confirms the emphasis on the masculinity of Jesus Christ, see Vogt 2015, 69, 77. Even if Atwood’s thoughts on Christ as an androgynous figure are striking (see Atwood 2011, 12), the masculinity of Jesus Christ as found in the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch* as well the necessity for masculinity in a binary gendered bridal mysticism seem much more plausible to me. Atwood himself points out that “Christ is the only true male” in the context of bridal mysticism; see Atwood 2011, 25.

26 “Die GÖttes=gestalt kam in Mannsgestalt, äussert’ sich aller der Gottes=gewalt, ward wie unsers gleichen, in allen stücken, trug unser elend auf seinem rücken”, Beyreuther 1978, *Hirten-Lieder*, 7.

27 Beyreuther 1978, *Hirten-Lieder*, 7.

therefore the community as well are fundamentally depicted as sinners – the most common naming for the individual's soul in the *Kleines Brüdergesangbuch*. The insight into the corruption of the immanent sphere by sin and the realization that God's tender loving care in the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of his son Jesus Christ is the only solution to this desolate state of existence relegate the individual to Jesus. This realization has a processual character that once initiated irrevocably binds to Christ: "Who once recognizes the wound in his side as the cause of his beatitude; who once lays eyes on the stigmata [Nägel=maal] at the hands and feet: he will have to say, my Lord, my God!"²⁸

This first encounter with the divine leads ultimately to complete devotion to Jesus Christ, even to the extent of self-abandonment: "Body and strength I will retain, if it may serve Christ, body and life I will abandon for the true husband of souls [Seelen=Mann]."²⁹

The self-presentation of the singing individual can be described as semantic self-humiliation: the individual is small, a worm, poor, (like) dust, "a bad maggot, a rotten wood, worth nothing but to burn".³⁰ But, in fact, this self-humiliation does not seem to be a product of any outward pressure but rather a desired status, an inner longing, that allows intimacy with Jesus Christ – the self-humiliation of the individual takes places only in contrast to Christ's glory and redemptive act and thus the individual can constitute himself or herself – and therefore be assured of salvation:

You lacerated wounds! how sweet are thou to me, in thou I have found a little spot [plätzgen, diminutive of place] for me: how gladly am I only dust, if nevertheless I am the spoils of the lamb! ... My heart seethes out of love to you, my dearest lamb, and all my urges are to live [for] the bridegroom, the one who conciliated me and was given to the cross out of love.³¹

The wounds are the desired place to be, everything inside the singer prompts the singer to be in intimate and "daily interaction with the savior".³² But the individual isn't depicted just by self-humiliation. Through the *transformatio mystica* that cumulates in the motif of the wounds, the individual is released from

28 "Wer einmal die Wunde in seiner Seit kennt, als die ursach der seligkeit; wer die Nä-gel=maale, an Händ und Füßen, einmal erblickt: der wird sagen müssen, Mein HErr, mein GOtt!"; Beyreuther 1978, 7–8.

29 "Leib und kraft will ich bewahren, wenn es Christo dienen kan, leib und leben lass ich fahren für den treuen Seelen=mann", Beyreuther 1978, Hirten-Lieder, 92.

30 "[E]ine schlechte mad', ein faules holz, nichts werth, als zu verbrennen", Beyreuther 1978, Vom Wandel im Licht, 23.

31 "Ihr aufgerissnen Wunden! wie lieblich seydt ihr mir, ich hab in euch gefunden ein plätzgen für und für: wie gerne bin ich nur ein staub, wenn ich nichts desto wenger auch bin des Lammes raub! ... Mein herze wallt vor liebe nach dir, mein liebstes Lamm, und alle meine triebe sind, um dem Bräutigam zu leben, Dem, der mich versöhnt und ward für mich aus liebe ans creutz hinan gedehnt", Beyreuther 1978, Hirten-Lieder, 89.

32 See Beyreuther 1978, Gebetlein, 12; Vom Wandel im Licht, 6.24; Hirten-Lieder, 32; Anhang, 8.10. For Meyer this is the leitmotiv of mysticism; see Meyer 1983, 93.

his or her old existence – classically this is called the mystical death, which means the dying of willfulness and total surrender to the divine that can be traced in Moravian songs as well³³ – and introduced into the status of divine bride. The depiction of the soul as bride evokes much more positive allusions, the choice of language becomes creative and playful. The soul becomes – these semantics were used in the time of sifting – a little dove (diminutive *Täublein*) and a little bee (diminutive *Bienlein*³⁴) but most prominently the idea of the *Creutzluftvöglein*³⁵ and *creutz=luft=täubelein* (little dove in the air of the cross) emerges:

What does a *creutz=luft=täubelein* do if it wants to get out of its little hut? the limbs are a little sick: sooner or later the soul wants to see the bridegroom; thus she soon sees him stand there, she sees the side, hand, and foot, the little lamb plants a kiss on the faint heart. The kiss of peace pulls out the soul and takes it home in his mouth: the kiss is seen right in the hut... and if it's finished, the soul gets it to join it in the cave of the wound.³⁶

Thus playful motifs show the cordiality of the interaction between Christ and the soul, which will be exemplified through the correlation of the motifs of bride/bridegroom, stigma, and dress and their religious and gender implications.

BRIDE/BRIDEGROOM, STIGMA, DRESS – THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE BRIDE

The stigmata are central to worship in the Moravian community, in which after recognizing his or her own sinfulness the individual searches for his or her divine bridegroom and the path to righteousness within the virtual marriage. The singing congregation wants to be washed in the blood of Christ and “anointed with your wound”,³⁷ so that “the body as it was can go to heaven, still undecayed, completely [mit *haut und haar*, with skin and hair] into the beautiful wounds [*wunden=schön*, a wordplay]”.³⁸ The essential impulse of worship focused on the stigmata is justification: the sinful individual “finds forgiveness for all sins in the wounds”³⁹ and

33 Beyreuther 1978, Von der Fröhlichkeit in der Hoffnung, 8.

34 See Beyreuther 1978, Von der Ablegung unsrer Hütte, 13.

35 For this motif and its temporal emergence in 1745/46 see Peucker 2002, 78.

36 “Wie machts ein creutz=luft=täubelein, wenns ’raus will aus dem hüttelein? die glieder sind ein wenig krank: der seele wirds kurz oder lang, den Bräutigam zu sehn; so sieht sie ihn bald stehn, sie sieht die Seite, Hand und Fuss, das Lämmlein gibt ihr einen kuss, aufs matte herze. Der friedens=kuss zieht die seele ’raus, und in dem munde mit nach hause: der hütte sieht man den kuss an... wenns gar ist, hohlt die seele sie nach zur Wun-den=höhle!”, Beyreuther 1978, Von der Ablegung unsrer Hütte, 8.

37 “[D]er Leib, so wie er war, kan in den himmel gehen, noch unverwest, mit *haut und haar*, und in der Wunden=schön”, Beyreuther 1978, Von der Ablegung unsrer Hütte, 9.

38 Beyreuther 1978, Anhang, 22.

39 Beyreuther 1978, Worte unsers Zeugnisses, 5.

gains “blood-righteousness”⁴⁰ “because the blood of Christ steadily cries mercy, mercy”.⁴¹ This justification is granted out of the divine bridegroom’s love for his bride-to-be, described quietly and graphically in the following verses:

Therefore, Lord Christ! my refuge is the cave of your wounds: when sin and death straitened me, I turned to them. ... Therein I stay, whether body and soul are divided here: so I will be there with You, my shelter, in eternal joys, ... You wanted to dress me up into yourself, clothe me in your innocence! That I, sanctified from sins, may last before God. ... When will I get my dress that’s ready for me, my Lord and my God! My dress so white besprinkled with red. ... Do you keep it for my eternal adornment? I need it right now, without the dress you don’t come into the blessed kingdom. ... Now it is done, I get dressed: this is wanted by he who is called the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.⁴²

This passage again shows the forgiveness of sins within the wounds, and also in the use of the term “dress”. The motif of the wounds is extended through combination with the bridal status, for not only are the wounds imagined for contemplation but the bride is actually dressed into the wounds – with the apocalyptic white wedding dress washed in the blood of Christ: “Because I am now dressed with You, Lord Jesus Christ, so also the wedding dress is ready and prepared for me.”⁴³ At this point the bridal mysticism imagines the breaking of all barriers, even the corporeal determination of the self and the bodily and tactile barrier of the skin, by virtual interaction and virtual marriage. The individual perpetually imagines the virtual piercing through the corporeal barrier of Jesus Christ, to fulfill the wish for boundless intimacy. Therefore, the soul gets dressed up in its wedding dress, which is actually Jesus Christ himself, who breaks the imagined tactile barrier against the sinners by enclosing them with himself and permeates every strata of human immanence to unify with the bridal soul. The *unio mystica* evokes an internal transformation of soul and self and therefore transcends biological sex and transforms gender by converting brothers and sisters of the Moravian community alike into brides.

The male participants in the Moravian community are constituted by their female soul even up to the point where Christian Rhenatus, the son of Zinzen-

40 Beyreuther 1978, Anhang, 6.

41 “[W]eil Christi Blut beständig schreyt, Barmherzigkeit, barmherzigkeit!”, Beyreuther 1978, Hirten-Lieder, 107.

42 “Also, HErr Christ! mein zuflucht ist die höhle deiner Wunden : wenn sünd und tod mich bracht in noth, hab ich mich drein gefunden. ... Darinn ich bleib, ob hier der leib und seel von einander scheiden: so werd ich dort bey Dir, mein hort, seyn in ewigen freuden, ... In dich wolst Du mich kleiden ein, dein unschuld ziehen an! dass ich, von allen sünden rein, vor GOtt bestehen kan. ... Wenn krig ich mein kleid, das mir ist bereit, mein HErr und mein GOtt! das kleid, das so weiss ist, besprenget mit roth. ... Verwahrst du es mir zur ewigen zier? ich brauch es izt gleich, man kömt ohne kleid nicht ins selige reich. ... Nun ist es gethan, ich ziehe mich an: das walt der es heisst, der Vater der Sohn und der Heilige Geist”, Beyreuther 1978, Hirten-Lieder, 36–37.

43 “Weil Du nun, HErr Jesu Christ! mir selbst angezogen bist, so ist auch das hochzeitkleid für mich fertig und bereit”, Beyreuther 1978, 85.

dorf, exclaimed at the Mannesfest in Herrnhaag that all brothers would now be sisters because all souls are female, therefore men would only temporarily be male.⁴⁴ The body-reflexive⁴⁵ reproductions of the lyrical expressions of bridal mysticism – singing is an outermost bodily activity⁴⁶ – combined with the exclamation by Christian Renatus identify and incorporate the depicted masculinity.

Hence, the hegemonic masculinity within the Moravian community can be defined twice, which is in line with Connell's plurality of masculinities.⁴⁷ The primary hegemonic masculinity is virtual and transcendental – it is the masculinity of Jesus Christ as savior and bridegroom, “ultimately, Christ is the only true male”.⁴⁸ He becomes the indicator and center for all constructions of gender within the Moravian community, for which reason, Peter Vogt suggests, we should talk of a “gendered theology”.⁴⁹ The construction of the actual hegemonic masculinity – not virtual and transcendent like the masculinity of Christ, but human and immanent – is in direct relation to the transcendental masculinity. It becomes somewhat passive and effeminate by being the bride of the transcendent masculinity⁵⁰ but is still hegemonic in relation to femininity within the community. It is also marginalized – there were recurring accusations of homosexuality by “white heterosexual males” outside the community⁵¹ – by society's hegemonic masculinity. The hegemonic masculinity of the Moravians presented within the lyrical expressions of bridal mysticism is thus an ambivalent and multi-relational masculinity that is and is not hegemonic as well as being marginalized and effeminate.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have discussed connections between lyrical expressions of piety, i.e. bridal mysticism, heteronormative constructions like the rite of passage that is marriage, virtuality, body, and masculinity. Even if heteronormative structures

44 See Peucker 2002, 71.

45 See Connell 2000, 79–85.

46 For the connection between religion, music, and body see Laack 2015.

47 See Connell 2000, 98–102.

48 Atwood 1997, 31.

49 Vogt 2015, 66.

50 Peucker explains: “By remaining passive the individual was playing the role appropriate for a bride”, Peucker 2006, 58.

51 On heteronormative reactions and attempted regulation by white heterosexual males, see Peucker's remarks on Volck, Peucker 2002, 51. Aaron Spencer Fogleman still insists on a “metaphorical, spiritual homosexuality”, Foglemann 2003, 309. Faull suggests the connection between male Moravians and Jesus Christ be described as a “mode of performative bi-sexuality” (Faull 2011, 56) and sees masculinity – apparently the Moravians' as well as Christ's – as “vulnerable masculinity” (55–56.74.). Even if this line of thought seems compelling – especially because all human existence might be described as somehow vulnerable – a binary conception of gender, on which all fluidity in the constructions of gender in the Moravian community seems to be based, can hardly contain two vulnerable masculinities functioning as bride and bridegroom.

were the foundation of thinking about marriage in the 18th century and even if the Moravian community cohered around these structures and reproduced them, heteronormativity did not necessarily exclude alternative constructions of masculinity. As we have seen in light of the bodily cognition of the self in the virtual interaction, lyrical text, and therefore also other medial representations, can be accessed such that perceptions of the correlation of sex and gender are reconstructed – in this case especially masculinity. A specific form of piety like bridal mysticism can allow for heteronormative structures of marriage to be partially fractured without the heteronormative structures themselves being broken down; rather, perceptions of sex and gender are changed and heteronormativity bent in a way that makes it possible to think of the male individual and the whole male congregation as bride and, consequently, as female to some extent. In conclusion, the Moravian community in the time of sifting could be characterized as constituted by marriage, both real and virtual, that was oriented completely toward Jesus Christ as a bridegroom and his wounds and was determined by a multiplicity of masculinities as well as the transgressional ambiguity and fluidity of gender.⁵² In this material we have found virtual and/or transcendental masculinity functioning as an indicator of immanent masculinities, an idea that is surely worth exploring in other sources, and not necessarily in western Christian material alone.

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52 Vogt describes the masculinity of the Moravian brothers as transitory; see Vogt 2015, 87.

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