

A Number, a Noose, a Nipple

Three Interventions in the Construction of Performative Nationhood During the Finnish Independence Day Reception



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Top left: Kaisa Rautaheimo, Helsingin Sanomat.¹

Top right: Inka Soveri, Iltalehti.²

Bottom: Yleisradio, screen capture of the Reception afterparty broadcast.³

¹ Aino Frilander, "Saamelaiskertoo, miksi toteutti 169-mielenilmauksensa: Linnassa juhlivat ne, joilla on valta päättää saamelaisten asioista." *Helsingin Sanomat*, 7 Dec 2015. <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000002871250.html>

² Julia Aalto-Setälä, "Huomasitko? Päätoimittaja Maria Petterssonilta pysäyttävä kannanotto - edustaa kaulassaan hirttoköysi." *Iltalehti*, 6 Dec 2019, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/linnan-juhlat-2019/a/f146894a-42da-4404-9a12-ecdd09d9eab9>

³ Linnan juhlat 2019. *Yle Areena*, 6 Dec, 2019. <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50288600>

ABSTRACT

As an interdisciplinary exploration in the study of national days through the lens of performance, this Master's thesis contextualizes the Finnish Independence Day Reception and its afterparty as performances of nationhood during which narratives of Finnishness are constructed through reiterative, ritualized practices. Seeking to investigate how these narratives have been challenged and subverted in the contemporary Finnish context, this thesis offers an analysis of three acts of protest which happened during the Reception at the presidential palace and its afterparty at Hotel Kämp in Helsinki in 2015 and 2019. The interventions executed by Sámi activist and theatre maker Pauliina Feodoroff and her partner director-author Milja Sarkola, journalist Maria Pettersson and topfreedom activists Sandra Marins and Säde Vallarén are analyzed through a theoretical framework which draws from performance, media, affect and gender studies.

In an approach previously not taken in the study of Finnish Independence Day celebrations, the thesis situates the Reception and its afterparty within the realm of playing culture and explores the tactics used in the interventions through Willmar Sauter's levels of theatrical communication. Diana Taylor's conceptual political animatives guide further analysis of how the interventions resisted the events' official performatives. Taking into consideration how the live television broadcast of the Reception is followed by circa half of Finland's entire population each year, the thesis establishes the home spectators as the primary audience of the events and the interventions through sociologist Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz' concept of media events. I argue that with efficient utilization of theatrical communication and at the mediatized events, the interveners managed to introduce alternative perspectives to the construction of Finnish nationhood. Their subversive force stemmed from three simple but powerful political animatives: a number, a noose and a nipple.

Keywords: Finland; Independence Day; National Days; Pauliina Feodoroff; Milja Sarkola; Maria Pettersson; Sandra Marins; Säde Vallarén; ILO Convention 169; Press freedom; Topfreedom; Hate speech; Political animatives; Playing culture; Intervention; Protest; Itsenäisyyspäivä.

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INTRODUCTION

A running joke in my native Finland is that our idea of celebration is to look at people standing in a queue to shake hands. The joke refers to the tradition of gathering around the television each year on the 6th of December to watch the live broadcast from the Independence Day Reception at the presidential palace in Helsinki. Growing up, I thought that being invited to the event was the highest achievement one could obtain in their lifetime. I would sit on the couch and watch the stream of guests enter the palace, fantasizing about being among them, preferably in a burgundy velvet dress. Just like in most Finnish households, my family engaged in casual, sometimes heated debates over the guests' fashion choices and who deserved to be present at the palace. When the guests who had received a personal invitation due to their merits and significance in the Finnish society lined up in the arrival hall to shake hands with the presidential couple, it felt like the entire nation was watching.

In Finland, Independence Day is a serious matter. Due to the country's past with armed conflict and past struggles for a national identity, everything from television programming to public events is oriented towards war-centered commemoration rather than celebration. The Independence Day Reception held at the presidential palace stands out as a glamorous, gala-like event, which however still follows its own strict choreography and patriotic consensus. Finland's national public broadcasting company Yleisradio's ("The Finnish Broadcasting Company") broadcast from the Reception is the most watched program on Finnish television. In the 21st century, it has attracted more than two million viewers every year. This is a significant number, considering that Finland's current population is around 5,5 million people.⁴ Almost the entire nation, indeed, is watching. This thesis establishes the Reception⁵ as a performance of nationhood during which specific narratives of Finnishness are constructed through reiterated, ritualized acts. Through the methodological framework of performance, it seeks to illuminate

⁴ In 2019, around 2,443,000 people followed the celebration. In 2020 and 2021, the Independence Day Reception was not organized due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Katsotuimpien Ohjelmien TOP-listat, *Finnpanel*, Accessed 13th Oct 2020. <https://www.finnpanel.fi/tulokset/tv/vuosi/topv/viimeisin/topv.html>; Official Statistics of Finland (OSF): Preliminary population statistics. Helsinki: Statistics Finland. Accessed: Oct 13th 2020. http://www.stat.fi/til/vamuu/index_en.html)

⁵ Throughout the thesis, I will be referring to the Independence Day Reception simply as a "Reception" for convenience. This also resonates with how in Finland the Reception is usually casually referred to as the "palace party" instead of its official title.

how an invitation to the event has become a symbol of national merit and significance, and how the presidential palace becomes a locus for specific politics of presence. The Reception's afterparty, also broadcast live on television, has not previously been included in any study of Finnish Independence Day celebrations. In my analysis, it is contextualized as a continuation of the Reception, where the same conventions and narratives dictate the attendees' behavior, regardless of being coded as more casual and carnivalesque.

Throughout the Reception's history, collective efforts to challenge the narratives and values for which it stands have manifested through alternative celebrations and protests. This thesis looks into three interventions which were executed by individuals rather than assemblies, and operated from *within* the Reception rather than against it. The first intervention is from the 2015 Reception, where Skolt Sámi theater maker and activist Pauliina Feodoroff and her partner Milja Sarkola used their skin as a platform to advocate for the ratification of the Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention. The second case focuses on journalist Maria Pettersson, who in 2019 attended the Reception in a garment which drew attention to the topics of freedom of speech and press. The third intervention takes us to Reception's afterparty in Hotel Kämp, where topfreedom activists Sandra Marins and Säde Vallarén exposed their breasts and caused a scandal which not only provoked discussion about bodily autonomy, but also revealed the concerning status of growing hate speech in Finland.

The thesis deploys an interdisciplinary methodology that draws from performance, media, gender and affect studies. With performativity as a theoretical point of departure, I use Diana Taylor's conceptual political animatives to illuminate how the interventions operated against the official performatives that dictate the events. I plot the levels of theatrical communication used by the interveners drawing from Willmar Sauter, and also explore the action at the palace and afterparty through the frame of playing culture. Drawing from Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz' conceptual media events, I establish the home spectators of the broadcast as the primary audience of the action. The role of affect in the interventions' operations is investigated in a dialogue with Sara Ahmed. I argue that through the tactical utilization of theatrical communication during the mediatized events, the interveners' political animatives efficiently revealed bias in the hegemonic narratives of Finnish nationhood.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES, QUESTIONS AND DISPOSITION

The main objective of this thesis is to investigate how Feodoroff, Sarkola, Pettersson, Marins and Vallarén utilized their presence to subvert and challenge hegemonic notions of Finnishness that are constructed during the Finnish Independence Day Reception and its afterparty. The research was conducted in the framework of the following research questions:

- 1) What kind of narratives about Finland's past, present and future can be plotted in the notion of 'Finnishness' that is constructed and performed during the Independence Day Reception and the afterparty?
- 2) Operating as animatives, how did Feodoroff, Sarkola, Pettersson, Marins and Vallarén utilize theatrical communication to disrupt, challenge and subvert the official performatives that dictate the Reception and its afterparty?
- 3) How did the mediatized⁶ form of the events amplify the interventions and contribute to the discourse that followed the acts of protest?

My research is driven by the idea that an interdisciplinary performance studies approach to the study of national days can offer fresh perspectives and insights on how collective identities and memory cultures take shape through embodied acts. Through the notion that there exists a multiplicity of the ways of knowing, remembering and protesting, this thesis is my methodologically experimental contribution to the discourse on contemporary Finnishness.

With the concept of performativity as my point of departure, the theoretical framework through which the contesting narratives of the Reception, afterparty and interventions are analyzed draws primarily from the work of theatre scholars Willmar Sauter and Diana Taylor. In an approach previously not taken in a study of Finnish Independence Day celebrations, I situate the Reception and its afterparty within the realm of playing culture and explore the tactics used in the interventions through Sauter's levels of theatrical communication. In analyzing the interventions as subversive forces that challenge the hegemonic notions of the nation performed

⁶ With mediatization, I do not only refer to television, but also to print and online press as well as social media, which all contribute to the discourse about the Reception and afterparty.

during the events, I am drawing from Diana Taylor's conceptual animatives. Sauter and Taylor are also put in dialogue with feminist scholar Sara Ahmed to explore the role of affect in the interpretive and communicative processes at play. Contextualizing the Reception and afterparty as events where the home spectators constitute a live audience, the notions of liveness and mediatization are explored through sociologist Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz' concept of media events.

Dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster has noted that classic theories of political protest disregard the body, focusing either on the outcome of the protest or theorizing protest as stemming from uncontrollable, bodily anger. Reintroducing physicality in the study of protest, she envisions the body as a signifying agent and a "as a vast reservoir of signs and symbols."⁷ The term 'intervention' which I use to describe the acts of protest as my objects of analysis draws from this understanding of the protesting body as simultaneously physically interfering and symbolically rich. In the case of Feodoroff, Sarkola, Petterson, Marins and Vallarén, physical interference did not manifest through resisting authorities or limiting the movement of other bodies, but rather through politicizing their own physical presence in the patriotic space. Taylor's conceptual animatives function as the key to understanding how the interveners amplified their individual agency and complied with the events' choreographies in a subversive manner.

The first sections of the thesis establish the theoretical and methodological framework of the research and provide a walk-through of Finland's historical background to provide the reader with the necessary cultural context. Following the historical background is a section which elaborates on the choreography, dramaturgy and symbolic significance of the Reception and the afterparty and plots the official performatives and narratives which the interventions targeted. The following three chapters further analyze the tactics which the interveners utilized in their acts of protest, each chapter focusing on one intervention and the reactions they provoked. Chapter I focuses on Pauliina Feodoroff and Milja Sarkola's intervention at the 2015 Reception, Chapter II on Maria Pettersson's intervention at the 2019 Reception, and Chapter III on Marins and Vallarén's intervention during the 2019 afterparty. The thesis ends in a concluding chapter.

⁷ Susan Leigh Foster. "Choreographies of Protest." *Theatre Journal* 55, no. 3 (2003), 396.

METHODS & MATERIALS

One of my biggest challenges in the beginning of the research process was to outline methods and materials which would connect my work to performance studies, rather than exclusively to media and communication studies. Having only experienced the mediated version of the Reception and afterparty in the role of the home spectator, I found it important to incorporate the element of lived experiences in the descriptions of the events. At the same time, I did not want to downplay the role of media and television, as it would have distorted the analysis. I decided to approach the available material and methods as an interdisciplinary opportunity rather than a limitation.

My main material and objects of analysis are, of course, the interventions. I chose the three moments primarily because they were memorable to me, but also because they all represent different ways of non-verbal communication and intervening. Online archival video material of all three acts of protest allowed for a detailed analysis of the interveners' facial expressions and other visual aspects of their presence. This possibility of revision is recognized by theatre scholars Willmar Sauter and Jacqueline Martin as one of the advantages of using video material from a live performance. They place video sources in the same category with other archival material such as photographs, manuscripts and reviews, noting that instead of the scholar's "own experience of the performance," an analysis based on a video of a production "reflects our experience in front of a television screen" as opposed to an experience of a live event.⁸ Sauter and Martin conclude that analyzing video is methodologically closer to the study of historical productions rather than performance analysis. While my approach might not be a performance analysis in the traditional sense, I consider it an interdisciplinary exploration of a mediatized performance which is deeply rooted in narratives of Finnish history. Utilizing video material is also fitting to the Reception and afterparty's form, as their main audiences in fact witness the action through a screen.

I conducted two personal interviews during the research process. I first interviewed Sandra Marins and Såde Vallarén together via a video call in July 2020, and then Maria

⁸ Jacqueline Martin and Willmar Sauter, ed. *Understanding Theatre: Performance Analysis in Theory and Practice* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1995), 110-111.

Pettersson via a video call in December 2020.⁹ I prepared a set of questions about the practical execution of the interventions as well as the motives behind their actions. However, I wished to let the interviewees talk about their agendas and experiences freely, rather than attempting to follow a strict question-answer format. This allowed the interviewees to share anecdotal information about their experiences during the Reception and the afterparty, which contributed to my understanding of how the events unfolded in the present-tense.

In the discussion about historical background, I am drawing from a selection of scholarly articles and book chapters about Finnish history, patriotism and symbolism, written by Finnish authors and researchers. I have selected texts from Finnish authors for two reasons; firstly, most material about Finnish culture and history simply is written by Finnish authors; secondly, I find it fruitful to compare the ways in which these authors explain Finnish phenomena and culture in English, hence presumably to non-Finnish audiences. Plotting patterns and recognizing different emphases in the historiographies has given me the opportunity to challenge my own identity as a Finnish person and my knowledge about Finland's history. This process has been difficult at parts, but also extremely educational and rewarding.

Printed and online press has a central role in the formation of the discourse and reiterative practices around the Reception. I have used a vast number of these non-academic articles in my analysis, ranging from features in broadsheet newspapers to online so-called clickbait articles. Critical analysis of this source material illuminates how the interventions are scandalized and how appropriate forms of behavior during the Independence Day are constructed in the Finnish media. Also images and texts shared on social media platforms Instagram and Twitter have been an important source of subjective reflections and observations about the Reception and the afterparty. A major part of my sources, including both of the interviews, are in Finnish. Transcription of interview recordings and text translation from Finnish to English have constituted a significant part of the writing process. Having done all the translations myself, I have aimed to always capture the original tone and style of the written and spoken text I am working with. All of the original texts can be found in Finnish in the footnotes.

⁹ Regardless of several attempts, I did not succeed in reaching Pauliina Feodoroff in order to arrange an interview. Despite my concerns for not having the chance to ask questions directly from Feodoroff, I came to the conclusion that not writing about her intervention would go against the agenda of the intervention, which was to spread awareness about the ILO-169 ratification issue.

METHODOLOGY

In her 2016 *Performance*, performance scholar Diana Taylor describes performance studies as a postdisciplinary field “in the sense that it resists becoming a discipline with definable limits; it is (forever) an “emergent” field.”¹⁰ In breaking disciplinary boundaries, the field challenges hegemonic canons and textocentrism as it shifts the focus on embodied knowledge. This idea of a flexible and experimental methodology which does not aim to contain itself within existing disciplines, but rather combines them to produce something new, has inspired my approach to this thesis. I am not analyzing performance in the traditional sense, but rather discussing the interventions and their framework as being performative and utilizing theatrical communication. Therefore, my methodology deviates from any puritan ontologies of performance which exclude certain sources and ways of knowing as not “official” enough.

My aim to develop an inclusive rather than exclusive methodology is also inspired by what literature scholar Jack Halberstam coined as queer or “scavenger” methodology in his 1998 *Female Masculinity*. Halberstam combines different methods “that are often cast as being at odds with each other” to create a methodological approach which produces knowledge on subjects previously excluded from narratives of human behavior.¹¹ This resonates with the idea of Feodoroff, Sarkola, Pettersson, Marins and Vallarén introducing marginalized and alternative narratives into the Reception. In “refusing the academic compulsion towards disciplinary coherence,” queer methodologies allow experimentation, which has particularly informed the spectrum of source materials and overlaps between performance, media, gender and affect studies in this thesis.¹²

Taylor describes performance as “radically unstable,” both in the ways in which it intervenes in the world and challenges systems of power, but also as an object of analysis.¹³ The interventions, as the objects of analysis in this thesis, are also radically unpredictable and uncontainable in the ways they operate. Intervening in the seemingly controlled dramaturgies of the Reception and the afterparty, these acts of protest function as examples of how bodies and live events cannot be contained quite like text or film. Incorporating a variety of material and

¹⁰ Taylor, *Performance*, 200.

¹¹ Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 14.

¹² Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 14.

¹³ Taylor, *Performance*, 204.

discourses, from tweets to interviews and academic texts, hence represents the multiplicity of interpretations, effects and affects that the interventions produced. Furthermore, Taylor's approach to performance aims not only to define what performance *is*, but also what it *does*.¹⁴ My objects of study fluctuate between the embodied tactics used by the interveners to the perspective of the spectators, as well as the ways in which these events were portrayed in the media and discussion afterwards. I am hence less interested in defining the Reception and the interventions in strict ontological terms, but want to focus on questions about what these embodied practices *do*, how they interact with their surroundings, and whether they strengthen or challenge specific narratives and dynamics of power.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One of the foundational ideas and arguments in this thesis is that Finnish nationhood, or Finnishness, is being performed during the Reception and the afterparty. There is a need to clarify that the ideas 'Finnish nationhood' 'Finnishness' are used in a rather interchangeable manner, as with both I refer to the socially constructed notions of a shared past, values and identities which materialize during the Reception and the afterparty. When speaking of the state, again, I point towards the governmental authorities exercising power over Finland as a territorial entity. My understanding of nationhood and nations is informed by the work of Nira Yuval-Davis, who, in her specific context of nations as a gendered constructs, writes:

“The notion of ‘the nation’ has to be analyzed and related to nationalist ideologies and movements on the one hand and the institutions of the state on the other. Nations are situated in specific historical moments and are constructed by shifting nationalist discourses promoted by different groupings competing for hegemony.”¹⁵

With her quote, Yuval-Davis observes that hegemony is a wanted status because it equals power. In this thesis, I am focusing on the hegemony of specific narratives within and about the Finnish nation. The grand narratives that dominate the performances of Finnishness during the Reception

¹⁴ Taylor, *Performance*, 6.

¹⁵ Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997), 4.

and the afterparty are also a form of power, as they effectively (and affectively) shape the audience's understanding of the nation's past, present and future. Yuval-Davis' contextualization resonates with my approach, as it recognizes that 'the nation' is being supervised by the state, yet remains in motion - and, maybe most importantly, is always prone to friction.

From Authoritative Performatives to Disruptive Animatives

In saying that Finnish nationhood or Finnishness is performed during the events analyzed in this thesis, I do not only refer to the presence of an audience, but also to the performative nature of these actions. The concept of performativity can be traced to philosopher J.L. Austin speech act theory. With his concept of performative utterances, he challenged the idea that saying things is equivalent to describing a situation or reporting things. For Austin, a performative utterance "indicates that the issuing of the utterance is the performing of an action—it is not normally thought of as just saying something."¹⁶ In one of his examples, he notes how uttering "I do" during a marriage ceremony does not *describe* the doing, but *is* the doing.¹⁷ A central aspect of Austin's speech act theory is that performative utterances are "happy" only if the circumstances are right. As elaborated on by Taylor, in case of the wedding ceremony the specific conventions which verify the performative "I do" are a legitimate priest, the people getting married being in "good faith," and the ceremony-attendees serving as witnesses.¹⁸ In Sauter's words, again: "The context of an utterance not only verifies the speech act, but is a necessary condition."¹⁹

Philosopher Judith Butler applies performativity to the construction of gender. Butler does not see gender as separate acts, but rather as "the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names."²⁰ Performativity is rendered invisible through naturalization, as the reiterative and citational acts constitute a discursive practice which simultaneously shapes and is shaped by social norms and conventions. As explored in this thesis, this process of producing identities and social categories through repetition is not only applicable

¹⁶ J.L. Austin. *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955*. (Oxford Scholarship Online: 2011) 6-7.

¹⁷ Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 6.

¹⁸ Diana Taylor, *Performance*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016): 26.

¹⁹ Sauter, *Eventness*, 37.

²⁰ Judith Butler in Diana Taylor's *Performance*, 123.

to gender, but also to other social constructs such as nationality. Sociologist Kirsti Lempiäinen has observed that similarly to how speech acts need a specific context to be happy, “also the reiteration of gender and nationality lives through social confirmation, from again and again conveying and accepting (receiving) the same messages (meanings).”²¹ Social confirmation functions like a feedback loop which favors conventional behavior and punishes unconventional performances of specific identities. I will discuss the behavior-policing and scandals around the Reception as examples of such social confirmation and rejection.

In her theory of performance, Diana Taylor shifts away from the discursive and towards the embodied, acknowledging how the notion of ‘performativity’ is deeply rooted in discourse. Whereas Austin talks about language as having agency, for Butler subjectivity and cultural agency become a discursive practice shaped by norms and conventions. Hence, in Taylor’s words, “the performative becomes less a quality (or adjective) of performance than discourse.”²² She does not fully reject the concept of performativity in her theory, but uses it to develop the embodied category of “political animatives” which resist authoritative performatives. Building on Austin’s idea that performatives only function under specific circumstances, Taylor describes animatives as the inappropriate response to these appropriate authoritative frameworks. In her 2016 *Performance*, where she coins the category of animatives, Taylor writes:

Performatives and animatives only ever work together. Performatives, as Austin made clear, function only within the realm of “appropriate” circumstances and behaviors. Therefore those conventions need to be secured and guarded—the forces of the inappropriate and disruptive endlessly put pressure on the frame. Animatives, as I conceive of them, are the “inappropriate” response to a performative utterance. They challenge or exceed discursive formulation.²³

Animatives hence recognize the circumstances and conventions which enable specific performatives to be “happy” and take advantage of their dependence on these frameworks. This way the “inappropriate” responses to the “appropriate” circumstances do not only perform

²¹ “Myös sukupuolen ja kansallisuuden toisto elää sosiaalisen vahvistuksen kautta, siitä, että yhä uudelleen ja uudelleen välitetään ja hyväksytään (vastaanotetaan) samoja viestejä (merkityksiä).” Kirsti Lempiäinen: “Kansallisuuden tekeminen ja toisto” in *Suomineitonen hei!*, 22.

²² Advocating for a “nondiscursive realm of performance” Taylor has suggested the word “performatic” to be used as an adjective for performance (Diana Taylor, “Translating performance.” *Performance Studies Reader*, 371).

²³ Taylor, *Performance*, 127.

resistance, but can disrupt and even dismantle conventional structures and frameworks. In her 2020 *¡Presente! The Politics of Presence*, Taylor further defines animatives as “the unspoken resistance that exists as and through enacted refusal.”²⁴ In describing gestures that do not outright reject a given status quo, but rather communicate refusal in innovative and embodied ways, Taylor has provided me with a concept that efficiently captures the interventions this thesis discusses.

When going beyond the discursive and entering the realm of embodied knowledge, questions of affect become increasingly significant. Taylor recognizes that animatives, like any political action, are driven by affect. They contain within themselves the notion of being “affectively ‘moved,’” appealing to emotions.²⁵ She writes: “If we deride affect, we neglect vital aspects of civil disobedience—the visionary, the communicative, the emotional, and the contestational.”²⁶ Narratives of Finnish nationhood are strongly affective, and the interventions challenging these narratives cannot be discussed without considering the affects they utilized and produced. The element of affect studies is incorporated in my analysis especially through Sara Ahmed’s 2004 *Cultural Politics of Emotion*. Ahmed discusses emotions as cultural practices rather than psychological states, elaborating on how affective rhetoric of the nation is utilized in aligning some bodies inside the community while marginalizing others.²⁷ Ahmed has provided me with the language to discuss how emotions are utilized in the construction of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ in the Finnish context. The politics of inclusion and exclusion which are central to the Reception become a reflection of the Finnish society at large.

Playing Culture and Theatrical Playing: Theatricality as Communication

As “embodied, communicative acts that refuse the performative utterance that tries to interpellate and frame them,” animatives require interpretation.²⁸ Whereas the interventions of Feodoroff, Sarkola, Pettersson, Marins and Vallarén were all executed in distinct ways, they all have in common the element of theatricality. Their animatives operated through specific uses of gesture,

²⁴ Diana Taylor, *¡Presente! The Politics of Presence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020) 47.

²⁵ Diana Taylor, *¡Presente!*, 47; Taylor, *Performance*, 129.

²⁶ Taylor, *Performance*, 129.

²⁷ Sara Ahmed. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014)

²⁸ Taylor, *¡Presente!*, 48.

costume and awareness of stylistic conventions, which enabled modes of nonverbal communication between the interveners and their audiences. Theatre scholar Willmar Sauter's theorization of theatricality which takes communication as its point of departure has allowed a detailed analysis of how each intervention was made interpretable, both on on-site and for the home spectators.

For Sauter, whose background is in reception studies, theatrical communication emerges from live interaction between a performer and a spectator. His conceptual model of the theatrical event stems from the exchange of actions and reactions which happens in the framework of mutual understanding and cultural context. Rather than an argument for a specific ontology of theatre, Sauter's theatrical event "allows for a more holistic analysis of the complexity of relations and values included in theatrical and other cultural encounters," and can hence be applied to phenomena outside the traditional auditorium.²⁹ The four interconnected and overlapping components of the theatrical event are playing culture, theatrical playing, cultural context and contextual theatricality. In my analysis, I am mostly drawing from the segments of playing culture and theatrical playing. Of course, the sections of cultural context and contextual theatricality are not fully excluded, as all the segments overlap. The interventions are discussed in their specific cultural context throughout the thesis. Contextual theatricality, referring to the organizational and financial part of theatrical events, is echoed in the contextualization of the Reception and the afterparty as carefully planned and produced happenings.³⁰

Sauter's contextualization of theatrical activities as a form of playing is strongly influenced by philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer.³¹ Gadamer emphasizes that playing

²⁹ Sauter, *Eventness*, 15.

³⁰ Theatre scholar Dirk Gindt notes that in the context of contextual theatricality, Sauter is more concerned with the organizational aspects of artistic theatre rather than cultural performance. However, happenings such as demonstrations also require planning, cooperation, and specific facilities (Dirk Gindt, *Playing Activists and Dancing Anarchists: Men and Masculinities in Cultural Performances in Contemporary Sweden*. PhD Dissertation. (Stockholm University, 2007), 43).

³¹ The aspect of play in interpersonal communication and behavior has previously been explored in the fields of anthropology and sociology. To name a few examples, with his principle of 'framing,' sociologist Erving Goffman describes the performative notions of everyday life and self-presentation, as well as the processes of interpreting the purpose and symbolic level of behavior. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, again, used philosopher Jeremy Bentham's concept of "deep play" in exploring the symbolic importance of engaging in seemingly "pointless" acts of playing ("Erving Goffman, from *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*" in *Performance Analysis - an introductory coursebook*, ed. Colin Counsell and Laurie Wolf (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 24-25; "Clifford Geertz, from 'Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight,' in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*" in *Performance Analysis - an introductory coursebook*, ed. Colin Counsell and Laurie Wolf, 222-228).

“pre-exists” the participants and does not serve a specific purpose.³² In other words, playing exists independently from the players in the form of rules and regulations. Not having a purpose does not equal lacking a function, as playing can have significant symbolic, ritual or entertainment value.³³ The Reception is an example of such playing. While the ceremonial celebration with all its etiquette rules and proceedings is not done due to a productive, necessary purpose in the society, it holds symbolic value and functions as a form of national identity-building. Thinking of the Reception and the afterparty as playing has helped me to discover the sometimes implicit rules and regulations dictating this interaction in its specific cultural context.

According to Gadamer, playing and performing are interconnected, as there is always a chance of being observed while engaging in play.³⁴ At the Reception, from the guests’ perspective, the awareness of how “the whole nation” is witnessing their presence through television screens turns their attendance from ceremonial playing into a ceremonial performance. By being familiar with the rules of the play, the observer can also turn into an active participant in the situation. During the Reception, the home spectators assume a ceremonial role to perform: their task is to pay respect to the veterans, commemorate the nation’s history, and hence collectively validate the action taking place in the palace. Sauter draws from the idea that it is through this kind of participation, following the same rules, that one can produce meaning out of their experience.³⁵ For Gadamer, the spectator has the advantage of having an overview of the playing situation, which means that it is the participant-spectator rather than the player-performer who decides the significance and symbolism of the action.³⁶ The spectators hence have an important role in producing meanings out of play and performance. Sauter’s levels of theatrical communication provide a framework for analyzing these presentational and interpretative processes in detail.

Sauter has divided theatrical communication into three distinctive but interconnected levels: the sensory, the artistic, and the symbolic. Sensory level of communication refers to the spectators’ immediate reactions to the performers’ exhibitory actions. Exhibitory actions refer to

³² Sauter, *Eventness*, 22.

³³ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁵ Sauter, “Playing is Not Pretending,” 69.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

the first encounter between the performer and the spectators. From the performer's side the "action" in question is simply to be watched and acknowledged.³⁷ Sauter emphasizes that if the initial connection is not made and the performer does not capture the spectators' attention, no further communication between the two parties is established.³⁸ While establishing the initial connection is important, no performer simply makes an appearance or exists in the space. Instead, they perform a series of actions - at the Reception, this includes everything from handshaking to walking across the red carpet. These gestures and overall execution of the ritualized protocol can be counted as expressive means which Sauter categorizes as encoded actions. Encoded actions no longer consist of the performer's mere presence, but also cover the culturally conditioned aesthetic norms, which include the element of competence that is required for acting in a certain way. The third, symbolic level of communication operates through embodied actions, which the performer commits "to produce some kind of symbolic or fictional meaning," and can be either pretended or real.³⁹ For Sauter, interpretation is "always historic in the sense that it is related to a specific time, a specific place, and a specific mode of understanding."⁴⁰ This approach has then also been ideal for my study as it resists universality and emphasizes localized, embodied knowledge as a point of departure for interpretive processes. From the pre-cognitive sensory to the culturally embedded symbolic, Sauter's theory allows an analysis which considers how the interventions operated in the present-tense and all the way to their aftermath.

It has been especially fruitful to plot similarities in Sauter and Taylor's theories and engage them in a dialogue. What Sauter conceptualizes as the rules and regulations that give structure to playing, Taylor categorizes as the performatives which maintain normative behaviors and authoritative orders. Both theories recognize that these frames, rules and regulations are contestable, if not prone to being challenged. Sauter states that "As long as playing includes physical presence, tacit knowing and oral instructions, playing culture has been and will be difficult to control and thus owns a certain degree of subversive potential."⁴¹ This subversive

³⁷ Willmar Sauter, *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of performance and perception* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), 54.

³⁸ Willmar Sauter, "Playing is Not Pretending" in *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames*, ed. Vicky Ann Cremona, et. al., Rodopi: 2004), 10.

³⁹ Sauter, *The Theatrical Event*, 56.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁴¹ Sauter, *Eventness*, 29.

potential which Sauter talks about stems from playing culture's roots in embodied knowledge and acts. As observed by Taylor, embodied action is "less containable" and hence more unpredictable than discursive practice.⁴² Sauter describing playing culture as being "difficult to control" then resembles Taylor's notion of animatives; how the "forces of the inappropriate and disruptive endlessly put pressure on the frame."⁴³ What binds the two theorists together is their mutual recognition of performance's political potential and the importance of cultural context in interpretative and communicative processes. Their approaches are hence useful for an analysis of patriotically coded events.

Liveness and Mediatization: Audience Behind the Screen

In the early stages of my research process, I came to the realization that the events and interventions cannot be discussed in depth without addressing mediatization, especially the role of television. The event is centered around the media, and Finnish media in turn is centered around the event for almost the entire month of December each year. Furthermore, Yleisradio is 99,9 percent state-owned, which means that the broadcast can be seen as an mediatized extension of the state's apparatus.⁴⁴ During the Reception, the action is directed towards the home audiences rather than the people on-site. Witness statements describe how most attendees vanish from the presidential palace right after the television cameras are shut down.⁴⁵ End of the live broadcast is therefore read as the audience having exited the event: the curtain closes; the performance is over. How to contextualize the Reception and afterparty, where the audiences are behind the screen, rather than physically present? The discussion is also relevant to performance studies in general, as mediatization of culture has raised questions and debates about the ontology of performance in relation to liveness, presence and production.

In her 1993 *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance*, theatre scholar Peggy Phelan famously states that "Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes

⁴² Taylor, *Performance*, 129.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "This is Yle." *Yleisradio*, 24 May 2018. <https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/about-yle/this-is-yle>

⁴⁵ Maria Petterson, video interview. 14th Dec 2020; Paasi, "Dancing on the Graves," 2015: 29.

something other than performance.”⁴⁶ She hence suggests that performance can only exist as presentation without reproduction, as its ontological status resists documentation. Performance scholar Philip Auslander, again, has taken the opposite route by challenging the idea that live events are “real,” whereas mediated events are “secondary and somehow artificial reproductions of the real.”⁴⁷ In his 1999 *Liveness*, Auslander discusses how the development of technology used in performance has blurred the lines between traditional live arts and other forms of media. Like Auslander, sociologist Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz recognize technological devices as more than tools of reproduction in arguing that media, such as television, create their very own discourses, narratives and performances.

Media events, as coined by Dayan and Katz, are television broadcasts of significant historical events which interrupt the flow of routine broadcasting and provide “exceptional things to think about, to witness, and to do.”⁴⁸ Even though Dayan and Katz mainly talk about historically “one-of-a-kind” events, such as the moon landing and royal weddings, their theorization of television’s role in these ceremonial spectacles can efficiently be applied in the analysis of the Reception. In their 1992 *Media Events* Dayan and Katz argue that television’s role in these mediated events is performative in the Austinian sense. Whether the television’s performance is truthful or false becomes irrelevant, as it is the television’s loyalty and “commitment to the event, not merely its reproduction” which constitutes a media event.⁴⁹ Austin’s speech acts are not truth or false, but “happy” or “unhappy” in their delivery and desired outcome. Similarly, the television’s role in media events is not to convey a truth, but to perform specific functions. Dayan and Katz note that one of the major functions of media events is to “integrate societies in a collective heartbeat and evoke a *renewal of loyalty* to the society and its legitimate authority.”⁵⁰ Collectively witnessing these events hence reminds the audiences of the state’s importance and influence. Much like the witnesses in Austin’s wedding example legitimizing the ‘I do,’ people loyally following the Reception broadcast year after year legitimize its patriotic performatives.

⁴⁶ Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: the politics of performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), 146.

⁴⁷ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 3.

⁴⁸ Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz, *Media Events* (Cambridge-London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 5.

⁴⁹ Dayan and Katz, *Media Events*, 78.

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

For Dayan and Katz, television is hence a primary performer and acts as a qualitative transformation in the nature of public events, rather than an adds or alters their “original” forms.⁵¹ They recognize a shift towards new modes of publicness where “the rhetoric of narrative rather than virtue of contact” dominates.⁵² This is fitting to the Reception and afterparty broadcasts, where the narratives, rather than physical presence, draw the audiences to these events. Of course, technologies have developed since the 1990’s, and the mediatization of public events and performances has reached new levels due to social media. Still, the theories developed around the relationship between television and live performance are relevant to the Reception in its contemporary form, as it still quite uniquely persists as a major live television event in the age of social media. The performatives of the television can now be challenged through new media and social platforms, where individuals have the chance to share material and publish their subjective views of the events. The television’s authority over deciding what is shown and left out, and hence constructing specific narratives, is increasingly prone to the disruptive animatives.

Disregarding the home audiences on the basis of their absence in the physical playing space would not result in a realistic analysis of the Reception and the afterparty. Furthermore, the interventions were likely to go unnoticed by a majority of the other guests due to the site being crowded, hectic and busy. As acts of protest, they needed the television to be efficient. By combining Dayan and Katz’theory of mediatized public events in dialogue with Sauter and Taylor, who in turn emphasize presence, I take an approach where the playing space expands to the domestic space and technology enables, rather than trivializes, the communication between the performer and the audience.

⁵¹ Ibid, 9.

⁵² Ibid, 118.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Regardless of its status as the most important annual national event, the Reception has not been subject to many extensive studies, even to a lesser extent through an intersectional or interdisciplinary lens. Previous academic research on the Reception and Finnish Independence Day has mainly been conducted in the fields of history and politics. The calendar day is commonly, and quite understandably, discussed with a strong emphasis on Finland's political history. Due to the limited amount of research exclusively focusing on the Reception itself, in this section I have also considered works discussing the Independence Day more generally, as well as notions of Finnish memory culture of war which plays a central role in the national day.

A comprehensive overview of the Reception and its history is offered by journalist Helinä Hirvikorpi in her 2006 book *Linnan juhlat kautta aikojen* ("The Castle Gala Throughout the Times"). Hirvikorpi provides a walkthrough of how the different presidents of Finland have contributed to the traditions around the Reception and discusses different aspects of the celebration, ranging from fashion to the role of the media. While Hirvikorpi's book does not include a critical discussion of the event and its deeper symbolic meanings, it has been a useful handbook considering the practicalities and historical details of the Reception.⁵³

A recent study of the Reception was conducted at Stockholm University by a fellow Finnish student. Viivi Laakkonen's 2018 fashion studies Master's thesis "Finland's Biggest Dress Party - A Study of the Role of Women's Appearances at the Independence Day Reception" focuses on the role of fashion and self-representation at the Reception. Drawing from sociologist Ervin Goffman, fashion and media scholar Malcolm Barnard and philosopher Roland Barthes, her thesis focuses on three main topics: media's influence on the way the dresses are documented and discussed, the dresses as a tool of communication, and Finnish national identity through the dresses. In Laakkonen's text, the notion of Finnishness communicated through the dresses refers to Nordic nature, Finnish folk traditions and heritage, sustainable local materials, and ideas such as equality.⁵⁴ The dresses are approached as signifiers of more general ideas of Finnish identity, as Finnishness is seen as a set of qualities rather than a constructed concept. Even though

⁵³ Helinä Hirvikorpi, *Linnan juhlat kautta aikojen*. Teos, 2006.

⁵⁴ Laakkonen, Viivi. "Finland's Biggest Dress Party: A Study of the Role of Women's Appearances at the Independence Day Reception" (Master's thesis. Stockholm University: 2018).

Laakkonen does not discuss the dresses as acts of protest, the thesis recognizes the Reception as a central platform unique in Finland to communicate one's values and views to a large audience.

My initial inspiration for analyzing Finnishness as a performative process is the 2002 book *Suomineitonen hei! Kansallisuuden sukupuoli* ("Hey Maiden of Finland! The gender of nationality") edited by Finnish gender scholars Tuula Gordon, Katri Komulainen and Kirsti Lempiäinen. The editors draw from philosopher Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity in discussing nationhood and citizenship as constructed concepts strongly linked to questions of power.⁵⁵ The volume's fifteen articles explore how constructions of Finnishness are gendered through a number of practices and discourses, varying from questions about the military service to ideas of heroism and Finnish womanhood. In the book, nationality is produced through "symbols, rituals, myths and tales, which materialize through practices," and this thesis recognizes the Reception as a significant source of such symbols, rituals, myths and tales.⁵⁶

The categorization of women and minority groups as 'others' is addressed by sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis in her 1997 *Gender & Nation*. With her book, Yuval-Davis initiated discussion about the relationship between gender and nation, arguing that constructions of nationhood involve specific notions of 'manhood' and 'womanhood.' Yuval-Davis examines how gender relations contribute to several aspects of nation-building, including national reproduction, national culture, citizenship, as well as war and conflict.⁵⁷ Especially Yuval-Davis' discussion of women as the symbolic bearers of a collective's boundaries and honor has been a valuable source in analyzing the Reception's etiquette and dress code as a gendered practice which works to contain and regulate female representation and bodies according to specific notions of 'properness.' In the Finnish context, gendered representations of the nation have been explored by Johanna Valenius in her doctoral thesis "Undressing the Maid: Gender Sexuality and the Body in the Construction of the Finnish Nation." Valenius analyzes how the many versions of the Finnish Maid, from a virgin to an hag, were used in the construction of Finnish nation in political caricatures at the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Tuula Gordon, Katri Komulainen & Kirsti Lempiäinen, eds. *Suomineitonen hei! Kansallisuuden sukupuoli*. (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 2002), 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid. My translation. Original: "*Kansallisuutta tuotetaan symboleihin, rituaaleihin, myytteihin ja kertomuksiin, jotka materialisoituvat käytännöissä.*"

⁵⁷ Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 3.

⁵⁸ Johanna Valenius, *Undressing the Maid: Gender, Sexuality and the Body in the Construction of the Finnish Nation*. (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2004).

In combining cultural geography, history and performance theory, geographer Anssi Paasi's 2016 article "Dancing on the Graves: Independence, hot/banal nationalism and the mobilization of memory" is a more recent example of interdisciplinary research on Finnish nationhood. Drawing from social scientist Michael Billig's notions of hot and banal nationalism, Paasi discusses how practices and discourses routinely reproduce everyday nationalism.⁵⁹ Paasi is one of the rare authors that explicitly uses performativity as a key theoretical concept to analyze the ways in which Finnish independence day celebrations both contribute to the construction of collective identity. Drawing from Butler's notion of gender performativity, he argues that in Finland, the idea of independence is maintained through political memories reproduced during the official flag days. Independence day being one of them, Paasi mainly focuses on how television and tabloid media contribute to the discourse formulation about independence and Finnishness.

In his 2005 book chapter "Independence Day - national day and its official myth," historian Tero Halonen discusses the Finnish Independence Day celebrations as a part of the state's ceremony culture which consists of symbols and ceremonies that manifest power, hierarchies and communal identity. These symbols and ceremonies turn the abstract state into a concrete one, teach patriotism, and aids authorities to legitimize their power.⁶⁰ Halonen emphasizes that independence day is a state-constructed ritual, and its meanings and messages have been negotiated and shaped through decision-making and repetition since its origins.⁶¹ Even though not directly stated, his contextualization of the Independence Day hence resonates with the notion of performativity which stems from repeated acts.⁶² In a 2009 book chapter "Independence Day in Finland," political scientist Heino Nyysönen looks into how the day has been celebrated in Finland over the years. Similarly to Halonen, his analysis takes the point of view of conceptual history, which recognizes concepts like nation and independence as being fluid, changing and gaining new meanings over time.⁶³

⁵⁹ Anssi Paasi, "Dancing on the Graves: Independence, hot/banal nationalism and the mobilization of memory." *Political Geography* 54 (2016), 21-31.

⁶⁰ Tero Halonen, "Itsenäisyyspäivä - kansallispäivä ja sen virallinen myytti." *Suomalaisten Symbolit*, eds. Tero Halonen and Laura Aro. Atena, 2005. 196. My translation.

⁶¹ Halonen, "Itsenäisyyspäivä - kansallispäivä ja sen virallinen myytti," 196-199.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 195.

⁶³ Heino Nyysönen, "The Politics of Calendar: Independence Day in the Republic of Finland." *National Days*, eds. D. McCrone et al. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

The wars between 1939 and 1945 were, and still are, significant to Finnish memory culture and collective identity. An in-depth study of the Finnish memory culture relating to this period of time is provided by historian Ville Kivimäki in his 2012 article “Between Defeat and Victory: Finnish memory culture of the Second World War.” As one of the leading Finnish researchers in new military history, Kivimäki is interested in the cultural history of nationalism, war and masculinity, but also mentalities and emotions.⁶⁴ In the article, he outlines the main features of the war-related memory culture in order to explain how being defeated by the Soviet Union has become a cornerstone of Finnish national identity-building. Kivimäki addresses how the patriotic heritage of the wars is not only a source of commemoration, but central to contemporary Finnish collective self-understanding, national identity and pride.⁶⁵

The interventions discussed in this thesis are of course not the first acts to offer alternative approaches to the hegemonic narratives of war, nationhood and independence. Historiography and interpretations of the past are more nuanced than ever, as notions of the war which remained taboo for a long time are addressed to a growing extent. Theatre researchers Julia Pajunen and Hanna Korsberg, for example, have analyzed new interpretations of Väinö Linna’s classic book *The Unknown Soldier*, which has had an enormous influence in the collective understanding of Finland’s role in the Second World War. They analyze two productions, Kristian Smed’s 2007-2009 theatre production *The Unknown Soldier* at the National Theatre in Helsinki, and Juhana von Bagh and Jussi Moila’s radio 2014 play for Yleisradio titled *The Unknown Soldier: A Dialogue with Linna’s Novel*. Pajunen and Korsberg argue that the productions deconstructed Finnish soldiers’ heroism, questioned the nationalism of the classic and also challenged Finnish historians’ interpretations of the conflict and political realities in Finland.⁶⁶ Also academic volumes such as the 2008 *Ruma Sota* (“Ugly War”), edited by sociologist Sari Näre and historian Jenni Kirves, have focused on previously taboo aspects of Finnish war-related history. Among these topics are sexual violence, trauma and children’s experiences of the war.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Kivimäki, Ville. “Between Defeat and Victory: Finnish memory culture of the Second World War.” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 37, no. 4 (2012), 504.

⁶⁵ Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory,” 497.

⁶⁶ Julia Pajunen and Hanna Korsberg, “Performing Memory, Challenging History: Two Adaptations of The Unknown Soldier,” *Contemporary Theatre Review* 28 vol 5, (2018) 224-234.

⁶⁷ Sari Näre and Jenni Kirves, ed. *Ruma Sota* (Helsinki: Johnny Kniga Publishing, 2008).

FINLAND: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The purpose of the following walk-through is to provide context for Finnish Independence Day-related memory culture. Historian Ville Kivimäki describes memory culture manifesting as “social remembering in the public sphere,” hence being different from, but yet connected to individual people’s memories.⁶⁸ The concept of memory culture is useful when analyzing national identities, as it emphasizes how collective remembering is not always synonymous with historical accuracy. Finnish history, being filled with political conflict, has resulted in a variety of interpretations and conclusions which sometimes juxtapose each other. Approaching nationhood and Finnishness as performative constructs, I also consider historiography as a practice which contributes to the reiteration and naturalization of patriotic narratives which emphasize some events and people while leaving others out.⁶⁹

Surrounded by great powers, Finland’s past is laden with geopolitical turns and dramatic events, and its journey as an independent republic is relatively young. For a long time, Finland was an unowned area and hence a political object of interest for both Sweden and Novgorod. After being a part of Sweden for six centuries, Finland became a Grand Duchy of Russia, a non-sovereign state within the empire in 1809 as a result of The War of Finland.⁷⁰ Finland had its nationalistic awakening when the romantic nationalist movement which had started to emerge in Europe started to make its way to the Grand Duchy. Thinkers such as theologian J.G von Herder and G.W.F Hegel emphasized the importance of shared cultural heritage, history, and language in a nation’s “soul.”⁷¹ The Fennoman movement advocated for Finnish language to take over

⁶⁸ Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory,” 485.

⁶⁹ The war-centered grand narrative also tends to exclude and push to the margins the stories of women and minorities. Hence, the following section should be read as a reflection of the so-called “conventional” history of Finland, whereas marginalized narratives and controversies about these conventions of commemoration and historiography are further discussed through the interventions.

⁷⁰ Under Swedish rule, Finland did not hold a special position within the kingdom. As a poor and somewhat neglected area of the Swedish empire, it lacked its own cultural identity. The Finnish language was spoken by the native aristocracy until the 17th century, when Sweden became a great power and Swedish the official language of both administration and education. (Max Jakobson, *Finland in the New Europe* (Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1998: 12; Jussila, Hentilä, Nevakivi, *From Grand Duchy to a Modern State*: 5; Matti Klinge, *The Finnish Tradition*. Jyväskylä: Gummerus (1993), 100.).

⁷¹ Osmo Jussila, *Suomen historian suuret myytit*. (Juva: WS Bookwell, 2007), 13.

Swedish, which was still dominantly used in education and administration.⁷² The epic *Kalevala*, compiled by Elias Lönnrot from oral history and folk songs he collected from rural areas around the Karelia region, was published in 1835, strengthening Finland's national confidence and providing a national folklore.⁷³ The cultural and industrial development of the 19th century was overshadowed by Russia's assimilation attempts which resulted in strict censorship, but also provoked resistance which manifested through art.⁷⁵ Under the threat of assimilation, the Golden Era in the arts aimed for a national romantic style and extended over the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁷⁶

On the 5th of November in 1917, after the October revolution in Russia, the Finnish Parliament declared itself as the supreme sovereign in Finland. On the 6th of December, 1917, the Parliament officially accepted a proposal from the government which would later be known as the declaration of independence.⁷⁷ The potential of gaining independence as a uniting factor for the divided Finnish folk was soon forgotten. In January 1918, a war emerged between “the Reds,” a socialist insurgent army joined by Bolsheviks, and “the Whites,” consisting of government troops and German invasion army.⁷⁸ The war ended in May, resulting in the victory of the Whites. Regardless of its shortness, the losses were drastic: around 37 000 people died out of a population of three million. The conflict involved executions and political terror from both sides. Due to what is known as the “White terror,” about 20 000 members of the Reds were either executed or died in prison camps due to starvation, disease or poor treatment.⁷⁹

⁷² Eino Jutikkala and Kauko Pirinen, *A History of Finland*. (Juva: 1996), 312.

⁷³ Klinge, *The Finnish Tradition*, 154-5.

⁷⁴ Recently there has been discussion on social media about Kalevala's roots in cultural appropriation. On the national day of Kalevala, 28th of Feb 2021, Karelian illustrator Raine Rysä published an infographic comic in which they explain how Lönnrot's process of writing Kalevala appropriated Karelian culture by translating originally Karelian poems to Finnish, editing the poems to better serve the purpose of constructing a Finnish identity, and “filling in the gaps” of the stories. Rysä points out that while Finns celebrate Kalevala's legacy, the Karelian minority group still fights for their right to use the Karelian language and is subjected to discrimination and cultural appropriation. (Raine Rysä. “Hyvää kalevalanpäivää.” *Instagram*. 28 Feb, 2021).

⁷⁵ Zetterberg, *Portraying Finland*, 20-21.

⁷⁶ Composers such as Jean Sibelius with his world-famous *Finlandia*, artist Akseli Gallén-Kallela with his *Kalevala*-paintings and poet Eino Leino with his folklore themes contributed to Finnish self-esteem and are milestones of Finnish identity to these days (Valenius, *Undressing the Maid*, 2004: 11; Jutikkala & Pirinen, *A History of Finland*, 351.)

⁷⁷ Halonen, “Itsenäisyyspäivä - kansallispäivä ja sen virallinen myytti.” *Suomalaisten Symbolit*, eds. Tero Halonen and Laura Aro (Atena, 2005) 199; Nyssönen, “The Politics of Calendar,” 139-40.

⁷⁸ Matti Klinge, *Lyhyt Suomen Historia*. (Helsinki: Otava, 2011) 97-8.

⁷⁹ Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory,” 483.

The civil war polarized the nation and poisoned the political atmosphere of Finland for a long time, and it can be argued that the wounds are still healing.⁸⁰ The White Parliament's post-civil war plans to turn Finland into a monarchy and elect the king from Germany were swiped away along with the collapse of Imperial Germany. Carl Gustav Mannerheim became the provisional Regent of Finland.⁸¹ In July 1919, a republican constitution was confirmed and the first presidential election of Finland was won by Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg. This put an official end to monarchy-plans and White military general's leadership.⁸² In November 1919, the Council of State declared 6th of December as the anniversary of Finland gaining independence.⁸³

Regardless of the past laden with polarization, the Finnish society integrated during the 1930s.⁸⁴ Soon after, the nation's unity underwent a baptism of fire, and not only metaphorically: three wars were fought in Finland between the years 1939 and 1945. Finland refused to give the Hanko peninsula and islands in the Gulf of Finland for Stalin's use, which led to a Soviet invasion in November 1939.⁸⁵ The war which followed, known as the Winter War, was to become maybe the most significant cornerstone of Finnish national identity and memory culture. During the three-and-a-half-month war fought mainly on the Karelian Isthmus, the Finnish army rather unexpectedly managed to continuously repel against the Soviet attacks. Regardless of the Finnish army's persistence, the war ended on 13th of March 1940 in a peace treaty which ceded a large part of south-eastern Finland to the Soviet Union.⁸⁶ A strong national unity resulted from the Soviet invasions of 1939-1940. Coined as the "Spirit of Winter War," the unification across class and political boundaries is often interpreted as a sign of healing from the polarization and terrors of the Civil War of 1918. The fact that Finland made peace on terms that were worse than

⁸⁰ As noted by Kolbe et.al: "Issues arising from the Civil War and interpretations of them have also been bound up, inextricably and controversially, with class distinctions in society and with relations with Russia or the Soviet Union." (*Portraying Finland*, 44).

⁸¹ Klinge, *Lyhyt Suomen Historia*, 102-3.

⁸² Halonen, "Itsenäisyyspäivä," 197.

⁸³ Choosing the 6th of December as the date was a political move, as there were other options available. The 4th of December, on which the proposal for independence was completed in 1917, would have been too strongly associated with Pehr Evind Svinhufvud, Chairman of the Senate at the time. The 15th of November, when Finland became independent from Russia in 1917, was not a good option either, as the Parliament had not agreed on how exactly independence would be implemented and monarchy was still on the table. The main principle in the decision was that on 6th of December 1917, all parties involved agreed on the common goal - even though the word "republic" was actually never mentioned in the declaration of independence. (Heino Nyyssönen, "The Politics of Calendar" in *National Days*, eds. D. McCrone et al. Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) 140-141).

⁸⁴ Nyyssönen, "The Politics of Calendar," 141.

⁸⁵ Anton Eskola, *Suomen sodat ja rauhat* (Helsinki: Gummerus, 2003) 200-201.

⁸⁶ Zetterberg, *Portraying Finland*, 25.

originally agreed on is overshadowed by the image of victorious Finns who persisted against all odds and skillfully navigated the harsh winter conditions.⁸⁷ One of the most significant results of the elevated collective spirit was the re-introduction of the working class and social democrats to the national collective.⁸⁸

The threat of Soviet invasion persisted. Meanwhile, Hitler was planning the invasion of the Soviet Union and wished to get Finland involved.⁸⁹ The war which resulted from Finland joining Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, known as the Continuation War, lasted from summer 1941 until summer 1944. The war ended in a major offensive in June 1944 which ended in Finland's defense victory. The defense, however, was not unconditional. Finnish border was established exactly where it was in the 1940s, the Petsamo area in the Arctic Ocean was ceded and huge war reparations paid to the Soviet Union. As a result, 420 000 evacuees left their homes and were re-housed elsewhere in Finland.⁹⁰ The general consensus is that, even though Finland failed to regain the territories lost in the wars, it remained independent due to the soldier's bravery.⁹² The Lapland War of 1944-1945, again, resulted from Finland's mission to drive out the German troops from Northern Finland, where they had remained after the Continuation War.⁹³

In 1948, with the lead of president J.K.Paasikivi, Finland signed The Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance with the Soviet Union.⁹⁴ Friendly relations with

⁸⁷ Max Jakobson, *Finland in the New Europe*, 29; Kolbe, et.al: *Portraying Finland*, 24.

⁸⁸ Furthermore, the communists were further marginalized and "social democrats were eager to demonstrate their patriotic loyalty" (Kivimäki, Ville: "Between Defeat and Victory: Finnish memory culture of the Second World War." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 37, no. 4 (2012), 486.

⁸⁹ Jakobson, *Finland in the New Europe*, 35.

⁹⁰ Zetterberg, *Portraying Finland*, 26.

⁹¹ The Continuation War is a controversial topic within Finnish political history. There exists a debate over whether Finland was closely allied Nazi Germany, or whether Finland fought their own separate war as mere brothers-in-arms with Germany. (Kivimäki: "Between Defeat and Victory", 491).

⁹² One significant contributor to the memory culture of the Continuation War is Väinö Linna's 1954 novel *Tuntematon Sotilas* (The Unknown Soldier). The anti-war novel follows the story of a machine gun company and depicts ordinary soldiers, some of the main characters being leftist and working class. *The Unknown Soldier* offered a significant paradigm shift in the right-wing patriotism that dominated the post-Civil War atmosphere by re-integrated the working class and the Reds back into the narrative of war. (Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory:" 488).

⁹³ As reflected on by Ville Kivimäki, some of the reasons for Lapland's war's exclusion from the Finnish memory culture of war is its low casualties compared to the other wars, its short duration, and the notion of Germans as brothers-in-arms rather than enemies. Kivimäki writes that "the war is understood as an unnecessary, regrettable conflict between old friends" ("Between Defeat and Victory," 492).

⁹⁴ Zetterberg, *Portraying Finland*, 27.

the Soviet Union were enhanced even more during the presidency of Urho Kekkonen between 1956-1982. Kekkonen's appeasement policy aimed at active neutrality towards the Soviet Union. This dynamic known as "Finlandization" led into political self-censorship under which topics such as the Finnish civilian victims of the Soviet bombings and invasion were not publicly recognized.⁹⁵ Finlandization was at its strongest in the 1970's, and slowly eased by the mid-1980's. With less political censorship, more and more patriotic interpretations of the wars and independence started to emerge. War veterans were granted symbolic recognition by establishing the National Veteran Day in 1987. Since the 50th anniversary of the Winter War in 1989, the notion of national unity, "Spirit of Winter War," started to gain more emphasis.⁹⁶ Collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 further enabled Finns to start considering the wars as being victorious for Finland. As described by Ville Kivimäki, the nation was re-imagined through the neo-patriotic trends which were enhanced by the memories of the generation who had directly experienced war. The Civil War of 1918 became a less important, "practically irrelevant" historical event, and a rhetoric of survival functioned as a basis for a fixed national identity, offering feelings of continuity, security and community.⁹⁷

Laden with history and patriotic meanings, Independence Day is an important platform for protest and collective action. An early example of such action is from 1967. After 44 homeless men had frozen to death in the streets of Helsinki, the *Marraskuun liike* movement ("November movement") was founded to advocate for the rights of the socially marginalized. On the 50th anniversary of Finland's independence, they organized an Independence Day celebration where sausages and beer was served along with live music, speeches, and interviews.⁹⁸ The *Kuokkavierasjuhlat* movement ("Gatecrasher's party"), again, organized anti-Independence Day

⁹⁵ Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory," 489.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 493.

⁹⁷ Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory," 493-4. According to a study by Jukka Rantala, who researches history education of Young Finns, the First World War is considered insignificant to Finnish history by young people in Finland. Gaining independence and the 1918 Civil War are rather considered as separate, exclusively Finnish events (Jukka Rantala, "Young Finns see the First World War as insignificant for Finnish history." *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 28, no. 1 (2015) 80-90).

⁹⁸ Media was present, and the footage aired on television caused a scandal due to the guests' harsh opinions about the Finnish state and police forces (Seppo Heikkinen, "50 vuotta sitten Helsingissä kuoli kymmeniä ihmisiä kadulle pakkaseen – vasta se herätti päättäjät." *Yleisradio*, 16 May, 2020.

<https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2020/05/16/50-vuotta-sitten-helsingissa-kuoli-kymmenia-ihmisia-kadulle-pakkaseen-vasta-se>).

Reception demonstrations between 1996-2003 and 2006-2007.⁹⁹ The protests were organized by a coalition of anarchist and activist groups and individuals who wished to protest the Reception's elitism and inequality in general.¹⁰⁰ The program consisted of musical performances, speeches and other activities, as well as protests around the presidential palace.¹⁰¹

Modern-day Finland has a reputation of a democratic country pioneering in matters such as gender equality and freedom of speech. At the same time, since the 2010's, economic recession has provoked the strengthening of exclusive nationalist and anti-immigration attitudes.¹⁰² Along with the rise of neo-nationalist and right wing movements across Europe in the past decade, the memory culture of war has been utilized to channel patriotic and nationalist values by certain populist groups.¹⁰³ Since the 2010s, also the protests have shifted away from criticizing the elitism of the Reception and became increasingly reflective of polarized takes on politics. Organizations and groups with strong anti-immigration and even Nazi-leaning ideologies such as 612, Soldiers of Odin and *Rajat Kiinni!* ("Close the Borders!") have organized torch marches and protests during Independence Day in order to utilize the patriotic coding of the day for their own purposes.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Samu Lindström, "Demokratian Kuokkavieraat: Kuokkavierasjuhlat yhteiskunnallisen keskustelun aiheena 1997-2007." Master's thesis (Helsingin Yliopisto, 2009) 1.

¹⁰⁰ According to researcher Jukka Peltokoski, the main function of the protest was to provide imagery alternative to the glamor of the Independence Day Reception. The protests were therefore aimed at the media rather than the president or the guests themselves. (Peltokoski, Jukka. "Kuokkavieraat Reloaded." *Megafoni*, Aug 24, 2005. <http://megafoni.kulma.net/index.php?art=288&am=1>)

¹⁰¹ In 2002, the police intervened in the protests as some protesters were blocking the taxis by the presidential palace. The incident was widely discussed in the media (Sirpa Jegorow. "Ovatko itsenäisyyspäivän mielenosoitukset rettelöintiä vai yhteiskunnan herättelyä?." *Yle Areena*. Feb 21, 2014. <https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2014/02/21/kuokkavieraat-ja-kiakkovieraat-retteloitsijoita-vai-yhteiskunnan-herattelijoita>

)

¹⁰² Paasi, "Dancing on the Graves," 27.

¹⁰³ Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory," 495.

¹⁰⁴ Jerogow, "Ovatko itsenäisyyspäivän mielenosoitukset rettelöintiä."

THE INDEPENDENCE DAY RECEPTION

The festivities at the presidential palace have taken place annually since 1946, before which they were organized less regularly.¹⁰⁵ The origins of the Reception can be traced back to imperial balls organized during the pre-independence autonomous times. The first Reception in the Presidential Palace was organized in 1919 by President K. J. Ståhlberg, when the 6th of December was officially celebrated as Independence Day for the first time.¹⁰⁶ Due to the prohibition at the time, the reception was an afternoon event limited to 150 guests.¹⁰⁷ In 1922, on the 5th anniversary of independent Finland, President Ståhlberg and his wife Ester Ståhlberg organized a big soiré with over 1000 guests.¹⁰⁸ By 1925, the Reception had extended to an evening party with 1600 guests invited by President Lauri Relander and his wife Signe Relander. These alterations to the festivities established the current format of the gala-like celebration.¹⁰⁹ The Relanders also introduced the traditions of shaking hands with every invitee upon their arrival and dancing initiated by the Presidential couple.¹¹⁰ While the official name of the event is Independence Day Reception (Finn. *Itsenäisyyspäivän juhlavastaanotto*), it is widely known and referred to as *Linnan juhlat* (“The Castle celebration.”) The building referred to as “the castle” is the presidential palace located in Mariankatu 2, Helsinki. As described by political scientist Heino Nyysönen, the building is an “old colonialist structure with new meanings in the republic.”¹¹¹ The site has been transformed from a former residence of the Russian emperor to a locus for commemorative practices and performances of Finnish nationhood.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ There have been few exceptions caused by a president’s illness or First Lady’s death, for example. In 2013 the reception, hosted by President Sauli Niinistö, took place in Tampere due to the Presidential Palace being under renovation (*Tasavallan Presidentti*. Presidentinlinnan itsenäisyyspäivän vastaanottojen historiaa

<https://www.presidentti.fi/uutinen/presidentinlinnan-itsenaisyyspaivan-vastaanottojen-historiaa-2017/>

¹⁰⁶ Laura Kolbe, “Linnan juhlia vuodesta 1919.” *Tiede*, 30 Nov, 2011.

https://www.tiede.fi/artikkeli/jutut/artikkelit/linnan_juhlia_vuodesta_1919

¹⁰⁷ *Tasavallan Presidentti*. Presidentinlinnan itsenäisyyspäivän vastaanottojen historiaa

<https://www.presidentti.fi/uutinen/presidentinlinnan-itsenaisyyspaivan-vastaanottojen-historiaa-2017/>

¹⁰⁸ This was the first time when representatives of the cultural field as well as officials from a variety of the country’s regions were among the attendees (Kolbe, “Linnan juhlia vuodesta 1919”).

¹⁰⁹ Kolbe, “Linnan juhlia vuodesta 1919.”

¹¹⁰ Public speculation and discussion about what is and is not appropriate for the event have also been a tradition since the beginning of the Independence Day celebrations. In 1925 one of the subjects of criticism was the dancing, which some people deemed inappropriate for the occasion (Hirvikorpi, *Linnan juhlat kautta aikojen*, 27).

¹¹¹ Nyysönen, “The Politics of Calendar,” 143.

¹¹² The yellow neoclassical palace was originally commissioned and finished in 1820 as the residence of merchant J. H. Heidenstrach and was later sold to be transformed into a residence for the Governor-General of Finland.

The Invitation as an Award for Significant Finnishness

The Reception's guest list and the annually changing theme reflects what the presidential couple wishes to highlight each year. The guest list is partially fixed, as specific individuals and groups of people are included by default due to their status. As listed on the President of the Republic of Finland's official website, an invitation is without exceptions extended to the "members of the Government, Members of Parliament, Finnish Members of the European Parliament, bishops, academics, senior civil servants and the members of diplomatic corps accredited to Finland."¹¹³ Every year, invitations are extended to war veterans and members of the Lotta Svärd women's auxiliary corps. Rest of the invitees are individuals that the presidential couple have met over the past year during their visits to different regions around Finland, and "Finns who have distinguished themselves in some way or another."¹¹⁴ These "distinguishable Finns" include people from the cultural and economic field, nationally and internationally achieved athletes, as well as popular artists and individuals from the entertainment industry. Sometimes a guest is invited to represent a specific group of people, such as Finnish women entrepreneurs.¹¹⁵

In the eyes of Finnish people, the invitation is laden with symbolic meanings. It is considered to be the presidential couple's way of recognizing the invitee's significance and exceptionality within the nation. In the words of Heino Nyysönen: "From a political point of view an invitation is an award, which acknowledges somebody and opens the gate to the chambers of power."¹¹⁶ Indeed, the invitation can be seen as a double award. Firstly, it grants its receiver a chance to access a platform for meeting and socializing with high officials and

However, the site ended up becoming the Imperial Palace, a residence for the Emperor of Russia. Throughout the years, the building was used for many purposes, including a military hospital to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Constitution was passed in 1919 and the building was renovated into a presidential palace, since when it has been referred to as *Linna*, "the Castle." The fact that the word *linna*, "castle," is commonly capitalized in Finnish media, reflects how the palace has become more than a building or a site of the Independence day reception. Rather, it is a concept of its own (Hirvikorpi, *Linnan juhlat kautta aikojen*, 12).

¹¹³ News, *Tasavallan Presidentti*. 29th Sep, 2019. Accessed 13th Oct, 2020.

<https://www.presidentti.fi/en/news/frequently-asked-questions-about-the-independence-day-reception/>

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Every year, an estimated one third of the guests are first-time invitees (Hirvikorpi, *Linnan juhlat kautta aikojen*, 77).

¹¹⁶ Nyysönen, "The Politics of Calendar: Independence Day in the Republic of Finland" in *National Days*, ed. D. McCrone et al. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 144.

political players. Secondly, it gives the invitee enormous country-wide exposure through the event's media coverage, therefore making them publicly introduced to the nation as a person with enough merit to be considered a "significant Finn." Towards the end of each year, the guest list is subject to public speculation, discussion and criticism. Encouraged by the numerous tabloid press articles about who received an invitation, people actively engage in debates over who deserves to be present at the palace. This way, the public is negotiating the standards of being considered a distinguishable Finn.

Choreography and Dramaturgy of the Reception

The Reception is strictly choreographed and repetitive, and hence highly predictable for the home spectators.¹¹⁷ The patriotic coding is clear from the beginning. The broadcast starts at 19:50 with the presidential couple's interview. At exactly 19:00 Kaartin Soittokunta, the official military band of the Finnish Defense Forces, starts playing national composer Jean Sibelius' military Jäger march. The doors to the main reception hall are opened, and the first guests to arrive at the reception hall from the Maariankatu entrance are, without exception, holders of the Mannerheim Cross of Liberty and war veterans.¹¹⁸ After them, the flow of guests depends on their individual arrival times and is not planned in advance. The other guests arriving through the Maariankatu entrance are representatives of arts, sciences and the cultural field, athletes, congressmen, and other public figures. Around 20:30, another batch of guests arrive from the Northern Esplanade entrance. The second wave of guests has a strict order, starting with bishops

¹¹⁷ The choreography is so recognizable that it can even be performed outside of the presidential palace. Since 2001, the City of Turku has organized an Independence Day Reception in the medieval Turku Castle for the 6th graders of the city. The 6th graders and their teachers dress up, patiently line up in the castle lobby, and shake hands not with the president, but with the chair of the city council and their spouse. The chair of the city council delivers a speech and glasses of soda are raised for Finland's independence. Representatives of local media cover the event and interview a few lucky chosen ones. The children are familiar with the choreography, having watched the Reception from the television. They perform the correct actions with ease, which shows how certain tacit knowledge and learned cultural behaviors manifest in 'playing' the Reception ("Turun kuudesluokkalaiset juhlivat itsenäisyyspäivää perinteisesti Turun linnassa" *Turun kaupunki*, 2 Dec 2019. https://www.turku.fi/uutinen/2019-12-02_turun-kuudesluokkalaiset-juhlivat-itsenaisyyspaivaa-juhlavasti-jo-ennakko-on-412)

¹¹⁸ Hirvikorpi, *Linnan juhlat kautta aikojen*, 128.

and ending with the arrival of previous presidents and their spouses.¹¹⁹

The Handshake as Initiation

The most anticipated and speculated section of the Reception is not the ballroom dancing or the interviews, but the part in which the guests line up to shake hands with the presidential couple. For several hours, the cameras follow the flow of invitees and their avocs, who one by one walk the red carpet across the main reception hall, stop to shake the presidential couple's hand, and then walk out of the picture. As the invitation is considered an award and a symbol of one's significance within the Finnish society, the handshake becomes a ratification of the invitee's elevated status. By shaking the president's hand, the invitee accepts the honor being offered and turns into a Reception attendee. The handshake is hence simultaneously a gesture of initiation and the attendee's introduction to the playing situation.

The exclusivity, repetitive rhythm and the initiating handshake turn the Reception into a ritual-like event. Taylor notes that ritual performances often stem from practices of restriction, categorization and initiation, writing:

Participating in the ritual might help cement membership in the group, or further reinforce social subcategorizations, exclusions, and stereotypes—women belong over here, men there, some groups nowhere, and so on. DOING becomes a form of BELONGING in a very specific way. A public act, on the other hand, can be seen by all those who happen to be present.¹²⁰

Approaching the Reception from this perspective, elements of both ritual and public act can be detected. By participating in the event as a guest, the invitees cement their membership to the group and category of “significant Finns.” Social subcategorizations and the idea of ‘doing as a form of belonging’ applies to how the attendees are seen as a representation of the ‘official’ Finnish identity and nationhood which deserves acknowledgement. Very few and selected individuals have the opportunity to experience the Reception, which can lead to feelings of inclusion and belonging to the Finnish nation and even its elite. ‘Doing’ the attending -

¹¹⁹ Miia Saarinen, “Näin Linnan juhlat etenevät - IS seuraa.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 6th Dec 2011.

¹²⁰ Taylor, *Performance*, 19.

performing the entire protocol from lining up to handshaking, eating from the buffet and giving interviews - is all executed under the idea that one *belongs* to the palace and in the narrative of Finnishness. Inclusion and exclusion, (being invited versus not being invited); the handshake as an initiation rite (to become an officially recognized, merited Finn); and an element of secrecy (carefully surveilling what is shown to the television cameras, not revealing the recipe to the drink, etc) all contribute to the Reception's ritual-like status. However, it is simultaneously a public act witnessed by circa half of Finland's entire population, which implies that witnesses for the action are required to amplify the significance of the guests.

The theme of commemoration of the wars in 1930's and 1940's is strongly present at the Reception. The struggle and sacrifices made for independence are embodied by the aging veterans and Lottas, who are often escorted upon their arrival to shake the presidential couple's hands. The veterans, many of them already in wheelchairs, wear wartime honorary badges, and the Lottas usually attend in their Lotta Svärd uniforms. Their presence in the palace reminds the spectators that even though Finland's wars might feel distant, especially to the younger generations, they did not happen such a long time ago. The veterans and Lottas arriving at the Reception before other guests shows honor, but also functions as a dramaturgical choice. According to the protocol, the veterans go first, and all the other "significant Finns" follow after: the order symbolizes how the contributions of the veterans made it possible for the younger generations to thrive and succeed.

Typically for a media event, the Reception hence does not emphasize conflict but celebrates reconciliation. Dayan and Katz write: "These events applaud the *voluntary* actions of great personalities. They celebrate what, on the whole, are establishment initiatives that are therefore unquestionably *hegemonic*. They are proclaimed *historic*."¹²¹ The Reception performs a kind of united Finnishness and functions as a platform for the "great personalities" behind the nation. The Reception's dramaturgy represents an 'appropriate' kind of patriotism built upon the grand narrative of Finland as a small nation that, against all odds, gained independence due to its victorious and persistent citizens. Any mention of conflict within the nation or between Finns is minimized, which is ironic considering the high polarization of the Finnish society at the time of

¹²¹ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 8.

the declaration of independence, in the aftermath of a bloody civil war.¹²² The patriotic coding of the Reception and the invitation becoming a token of promotion into a significant member of the Finnish society perform historicity. By witnessing the event from television, the viewers are hence simultaneously part-takes in the reproduction of patriotic meanings and are trained to conform to specific, ‘appropriate’ norms of Finnishness or Finnish greatness.

The way in which the event’s consensus is, for the duration of the evening, more significant than individual agency, resonates with the status of players engaged in play. Sauter describes how in playing, the players are “subordinating their own subjectivity to the rules of the *game*,” implying that playing promotes a certain equality between the participants.¹²³ One could think that the dramaturgy of the Reception does the opposite by emphasizing the subjectivity of the guests, as the attendees by no means remain anonymous, but are interviewed, approached, and introduced to the television spectators in accordance to their name and position. The invitation itself can be read as a celebration of the attendees’ personal accomplishments, as it communicates that the individual is, on some level, special. However, the participants do all play by the same rules within the Reception’s “playing space.” Regardless of their societal status and the merits that granted them an invitation, each guest waits in the line, greets the presidential couple, eats the same food, and dances to the same music.¹²⁴ Borrowing Austin’s terminology, the patriotic consensus of the event is only “happy” if the attendees follow the proceedings according to the pre-set standards. The guests are expected to behave in the space according to what is considered ‘appropriate,’ hence validating the conventional notions of honor, prestige, and good taste.

Socializing, Dancing, Causing a Scandal: Etiquette and Media

After the handshaking is complete and all guests have arrived, socializing and dancing follows. The guests are interviewed about their accomplishments, general atmosphere of the Reception,

¹²² Even though the presence of war veterans play a key role in the reception and the notion of independence is structured around the idea of Finland’s victory over the Soviets, conflicts within Finland and its citizens are overlooked: the veterans at the reception represent the wars between 1939-1944, which are considered as events which reunited Finns after the polarization before and after the civil war of 1918.

¹²³ Sauter, *Eventness*, 21.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

themes of Independence and Finishness, and their dress choices. The journalists' presence dictates the spatial politics, as guests who wish for media coverage hang around the spots where people are being interviewed.¹²⁵ Tabloid magazines publish "witness statements" from attendees who offer their personal accounts of the event. People's subjective experiences are presented as valuable insider information about the exclusive celebration which most Finns will never experience first-hand.¹²⁶ With press reports about how it is *really* like at the Reception, press media produces and maintains an impression of a glamorous, exclusive and even mythical event. In reference to philosopher Judith Butler, cultural geographer Anssi Paasi notes that by giving the event such elevated attention year after year, Finnish media engages in a reiterative practice and hence the "discourse on independence produces the 'effects that it names.'"¹²⁷ The Reception's exclusivity and the media's way of representing its every detail as worthy of reporting is paradoxical: a social event in which only a chosen few get to participate becomes the center of a collective Finnish experience.

In addition to the handshaking line, the dance floor is another vortex of etiquette policing. In 2007, two chefs were spotted dancing among the guests and some days later this was deemed 'inappropriate' in tabloid media. Such press articles often seek for statements from professional etiquette coaches, who then provide post-reception analyses of how the etiquette was broken.¹²⁸ The strict etiquette provides an official point of reference for negotiating 'appropriateness.' In 2010, style consultant Leena Sarvi stirred conversation after stating in a radio show that same-sex couples should not dance at the Reception, labeling non-hetero couples' dancing as "provocation" and lacking respect.¹²⁹ While some people agreed with Sarvi's homophobic comments, she received a backlash and sharp statements from some of the guests who danced

¹²⁵ Space, or rather the lack of it, is an infamous element of the Reception. The limited space and vast amount of guests makes the event a crowded and potentially uncomfortable situation. Maria Pettersson, for example, describes her experience as a guest in 2019 as "sensorially unpleasant" due to the lack of space and long durations of waiting in line (Maria Pettersson, Personal Interview. Dec 14, 2020)

¹²⁶ Some of these articles include "At the Castle Gala as a regular person: Punch tasted bad, the atmosphere was too crowded!" and "First-timers reveal what the Castle Gala is really like: "I was surprised by how many of us are here that are just wondering about." ("Taviksena Linnan juhlissa: Booli oli pahaa, tunnelma liian tiivis!" *MTV Uutiset*, 6 Dec 2011; Hämäläinen, Velipekka. "Ensikertalaiset kertovat, millaiset Linnan juhlat oikeasti ovat: "Yllätyin siitä, miten paljon täällä on meitä, jotka vain ihmettelevät"", *Yleisradio*. 6.12.2019).

¹²⁷ Paasi, "Dancing on the Graves," 28.

¹²⁸ Satu Salminen, "Linna paheksuu tanssivia kokkeja." *Iltasanomat*, Dec 9 2007.

<https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000000048891.html>

¹²⁹ "Leena Sarvi arvosteli Linnassa tanssineita homoja." *Iltalehti*, Dec 8, 2010.

<https://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/a/2010120812828515>

with same-sex partners.¹³⁰ As stated by Paasi, the dancing same-sex couples “resisted the norms of the hetero-masculine national space.”¹³¹ By doing so, the couple’s engagement in dance represented a new era in the national celebration and made a lasting change in the reiterate practice of national identity-building.¹³² Negotiations about the conventions, etiquette and appropriateness of guest behavior during the Reception is hence a reflection of what is deemed appropriate and acceptable in the Finnish society in general.

The Afterparty: Casual and Scandalous

After the Reception at the presidential palace is over, many guests proceed to an afterparty to continue their evening. While some political parties have their own events in different locations, the official afterparty is typically organized at a high-end restaurant or hotel venue and is broadcasted live on television by Yleisradio just like the preceding Reception. The event consists of live music, dancing and casual socializing and is less formal than the Reception itself. The program is directed and executed like a typical music gala. Popular Finnish artists are performing while the Yleisradio hosts roam around to interview the guests.¹³³ Between the performances interviews are conducted. Representatives of the press are eager to ask the guests about their impressions from the presidential palace and report on who might have had too much to drink, and who shared a taxi home. Most commonly a scandal or two are made out of the afterhour anecdotes, when the afterparty attendees get into an occasional fist fight or lose their balance and stumble down the icy street. A famous incident was when mentalist Noora Karma hypnotized congress member Ilkka Kanerva on live television in 2012. Kanerva ended up falling on the floor

¹³⁰ “Mr. Gay Finland hämmästyi homoparien tanssimista koskevasta arvostelusta.” *Iltaalehti*, Dec 8, 2010. <https://www.iltalehti.fi/uutiset/a/2010120812831781>

¹³¹ Paasi, “Dancing on the Graves,” 29.

¹³² After the homophobic comments about the same-sex couples, Elina Laavi, the vice chair of Seta (the biggest Finnish LGBT organization in Finland) made a statement saying that seeing same-sex couples on the dancefloor represents a change in Finnish society and advocates for not having to hide one’s sexuality. (Ranta, Jarno. “Seta tyrmistyi Tima T.A. Mikkoselle: Mautonta!” *Iltaasanomat*, Dec 8, 2010 <https://www.is.fi/linnanjuhlat/art-2000000362197.html>).

¹³³ Maria Pettersson, video interview with the author, Dec 14, 2020.

and later expressed that he had not consented to such an outcome of the situation. Yleisradio made a formal apology for the incident.¹³⁴

The afterparty does not quite reach the status of ritualized ceremony like the Reception itself. This is due to the less exclusive venue and the lack of initiation rituals, which play a crucial role at the Reception and materialize especially in the handshaking. Also the absence of the presidential couple and the elderly war veterans, who embody the State and Finland's wartime past at the presidential palace, turns the afterparty program from a ritual to a more general celebratory event. Hence, viewing the afterparty, also due to it being a more recent addition to the scheduled television programming of the Independence Day, has not been transformed to a collective tradition quite like the Reception. The afterparty is voluntary entertainment both for the Reception attendees and the television spectators, and hence free from the obligations of attending or spectating.

¹³⁴ “Yle pahoittelee hypnotisoinnista aiheutunutta mielipahaa.” *Yle Uutiset*, Dec 7, 2012. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-6407842>

CHAPTER I. PAULIINA FEODOROFF AND MILJA SARKOLA - *A NUMBER*

Figure 1. Feodoroff (left) and Sarkola (right) on the red carpet after greeting the presidential couple.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ Image source: Pasi Liesimaa, *Iltalehti*. (Tiina Saari, “Nyt puhuu linnassa kohahduttanut Pauliina Feodoroff: “En hyväksy tapaa, jolla Suomi kohtelee saamelaisia,” *Iltalehti*, 7 Dec 2015 <https://www.iltalehti.fi/linnanjuhlat2015/a/2015120720793545>)

In 2015 the official theme of the Reception was “culture.” According to the Office of the President of the Republic, the theme was inspired by the 180th anniversary of the Kalevala epic and the 150th anniversary of the birth of the composer Jean Sibelius, among anniversaries related to other “significant Finns.”¹³⁶ The guest list was constructed to represent “the full spectrum of contemporary culture” including minority cultures and individuals who are engaged in cultural activities on the grass-roots level.¹³⁷ One of the invitees was theatre and movie director, activist and nature guardian Pauliina Feodoroff. She received the invitation mainly due to her position as the president of Saa’mi Nue’tt Skolt Sámi cultural foundation, which works towards preserving Skolt Sámi heritage for future generations.¹³⁸

The Skolt Sámi are a small ethnic minority group that belongs to the Sámi, the only indigenous group within the European Union.¹³⁹ The Sámi homeland area (*Sápmi*) consists of areas now known as Northern Finland, half of Sweden and Norway, as well as some parts of the Kola peninsula in Russia.¹⁴⁰ There are between 75 000 and 100 000 Sámi people out of whom between 50 000 and 70 000 live in Norway. According to a 2015 survey, there are around 10 500 Sámi people living in Finland.¹⁴¹ In Finland there are three Sámi groups that are linguistically and culturally distinct from each other: the Inari Sáme, Skolt Sáme and North Sáme.¹⁴² In Finland, the Sámi Act legislates cultural autonomy for the Sámi in the Sámi homeland area. The implementation of the cultural autonomy is governed by the The Sámi Parliament, the self-government body of the Sámi which is an independent legal entity functioning under the

¹³⁶ The official statement from the Office of the President of the Republic reads: “This year’s theme was culture. In many ways, this year marks an anniversary of Finnish culture: the 180th anniversary of the Finnish national epic Kalevala, the 150th anniversary of the birth of Jean Sibelius, Akseli Gallén-Kallela and Pekka Halonen, and the 100th anniversary of the birth of Tapio Wirkkala, Toivo Kärki, Olavi Virta and Tapio Rautavaara. The guest list and the reception programme reflected these anniversaries in various ways.” It is worth noting that none of the names mentioned belong to women. “The President’s Independence Day Reception of 6 December 2015.” *President of the Republic of Finland*. 6 Dec 2015.

<https://www.presidentti.fi/en/news/the-presidents-independence-day-reception-on-6-december-2015/>

¹³⁷ “The President’s Independence Day Reception of 6 December 2015.”

¹³⁸ Mira Sharma, “Nyt puhuu 169-tunnuksella Linnassa poliittisesti kantaa ottanut Pauliina Feodoroff.” *Iltasanomat*, Dec 7, 2015. <https://www.is.fi/linnanjuhlat/art-2000001047970.html>; Saa’mi Nue’tt Facebook page.

<https://www.facebook.com/saaminuett/>

¹³⁹ “The Sámi in Finland.” *Samediggi*. <https://www.samediggi.fi/sami-info/?lang=en>

¹⁴⁰ “Saamelaiset Suomessa.” *Samediggi Official Website*. <https://www.samediggi.fi/?lang=en>

¹⁴¹ Kukka Ranta and Jaana Kanninen, *Vastatuuleen - Saamen kansan pakkosuomalaistamisesta*. (Helsinki: S&S, 2019), 19.

¹⁴² North Sáme is spoken in Finland, Norway and Sweden, Inari Sámi is spoken exclusively in Finland and Skolt Sáme in Finland and Russia (“The Sámi in Finland.” *Samediggi*. <https://www.samediggi.fi/sami-info/?lang=en>)

Ministry of Justice.¹⁴³ Feodoroff, being Skolt Sámi, represents a minority of a minority. There are between 700 and 1000 Skolt Sámi people in Finland, and the Skolt Sami language is the most endangered out of the Sámi languages, with an estimated 250-300 speakers.¹⁴⁴ Between 1949-1952, the Skolt Sámi were forced to relocate from their homes to locations around the Inari municipality as a result of the Russian-Finnish borders established after the 1944 war.¹⁴⁵

Having grown up in Keväjäu'rr (Finn. Keväjärvi), close to Inari in the Finnish part of Sámi homeland, Feodoroff graduated with a Master's degree in theatre direction and dramaturgy from Helsinki Theatre Academy in 2002 and gained recognition by directing the first full length Skolt Sámi fictional film *Non Profit*, shot over a period of ten years between 1997 and 2007.¹⁴⁶ Her community-centered documentary theatre projects include the touring 2016 *Elonkehä (Laulujemme täytyy muuttua) jotta me voisimme muuttua*, which addressed the Climate Change Risk Assessment Report, and *CO2lonialNATION*, which was based on the assimilation experiences of Sámi people in Norway and premiered in Giron Sámi Teáhter in Trondheim in 2017.¹⁴⁷ Feodoroff's advocacy for Sámi rights and nature conservation extends beyond artistic merits. She served as the President of Sámi Council, an non-governmental organization which advocates for the rights of Sámi people across the Sámi homeland area, between 2006 and 2008. In addition, she has led and participated in numerous campaigns ranging from protecting old forests in Eastern Finnish Lapland to advocating against mining pressures faced by the rural

¹⁴³ Tanja Joona, "ILO Convention No. 169 and the governance of indigenous identity in Finland: recent developments." *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 24, No 2-3 (2020): 243; "Samediggi." *The Sámi Parliament Official Website*. <https://www.samediggi.fi/task/?lang=en>

¹⁴⁴ Sara Wesslin, "Kolttsaamelaiset oireilevat yhä sota-ajan kokemuksen vuoksi – Kolttien kyläkokous työstää yhteistä hyvinvointisuunnitelmaa." *Yle Uutiset*, 19 Sep 2016. https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/sapmi/kolttsaamelaiset_oireilevat_yha_sota-ajan_kokemuksen_vuoksi_kolttien_kylakokous_tyostaa_yhteista_hyvinvointisuunnitelmaa/9177019; Sara Wesslin. "Ylpeys ylläni." 11 Nov 2018. *Yle Uutiset*. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10494369>; "Saamelaiset suomessa," *Samediggi*. <https://www.samediggi.fi/saamelaiset-info/>

¹⁴⁵ Sara Wesslin, "Ylpeys ylläni." Feodoroff's father's side of the family of reindeer herders were exiled to Finland from Suõnnjel (Finn. Suonikylä) in the Russian part of the Sámi homeland area. ("Venice Biennale 2022: Pauliina Feodoroff." *Office for Contemporary Art Norway*. <https://oca.no/venice-biennale/venice-biennale-2022-20220423/pauliina-feodoroff.1>

¹⁴⁶ "Venice Biennale 2022: Pauliina Feodoroff"; Ben. "Pauliina Feodoroff, courageous beacon of hope (Finland)." *Paul K. Feyerabend Foundation*, May 9, 2017. <https://www.pkfeyerabend.org/en/2017/05/09/pauliina-feodoroff-courageuse-source-despoir-finlande/>.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.; Tuomas Rantanen. "Elonkehä - Laulujemme täytyy muuttua (jotta me voisimme muuttua)." *Voima*, Apr 6, 2016. <https://voima.fi/arvio/valloittavat-klovnit-elonkehan-asialla/>; Sara Wesslin and Martta Alajärvi. "Millainen on kolonisoitu Saamen kansa? - näytelmä tarttuu kipeisiin asioihin totuuskomission voimin." *Yle Uutiset*, Feb 18, 2017. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9467481>

Sámi communities in Russia.¹⁴⁸ Feodoroff has also worked towards removing queer stigmatization within Sámi communities by publicly speaking about her experiences as a lesbian Sámi woman and participating in initiatives such as the Sápmi Pride festival.¹⁴⁹ She arrived at the 2015 Reception together with her wife Milja Sarkola, who is a Finnish Swede director, playwright and author. Sarkola graduated as a theatre director from Helsinki Theatre Academy in 2006, and worked as the creative director of Theatre Takomo together with Feodoroff in Helsinki between 2008 and 2012.¹⁵⁰ In 2011 Sarkola became nationally recognized with her play *Perheenjäsen* (Eng. “Family Member”) which won her the prestigious Thalia theatre prize. Her work is autofictive and deals with themes such as power dynamics, class structure, queer desire and sexuality.¹⁵¹

Noticed at the Handshaking Line: What Does the ‘169’ Stand for?

A video clip from the arrival hall shows Feodoroff lining up first and approaching the presidential couple with a serious face and confident steps. She gives a firm handshake to president Sauli Niinistö. Feodoroff gives a brief nod and can be seen uttering with “*Hyvää Itsenäisyyspäivää,*” (“Happy Independence Day”) and proceeds to do the same with the first lady Jenni Haukio. While Feodoroff’s facial expression remains serious and stoic, Sarkola follows her and repeats the handshaking with a polite smile. They leave the arrival hall across a red carpet side by side. The scene is over in 10 seconds.¹⁵² While Sarkola is dressed in a minimalistic black, sleeveless dress, Feodoroff’s appearance represents her Skolt Sámi identity. She wears a stylized version of the traditional Skolt Sámi traditional dress, consisting of a long skirt and a separate blouse with pearl-embroidered belt unique to the Skolt Sámi tradition. The outfit is

¹⁴⁸ Feodoroff has also served as the chair of the Access to Art and Culture Committee that was put together by Finland’s Ministry of Education and Culture in 2009 (Ben. “Pauliina Feodoroff, courageous beacon of hope (Finland);” “Taiteen ja kulttuurin saavutettavuus - Loppuraportti. Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriön työryhmämuistioita ja selvityksiä 2014:15.” *Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö*. 2014.

¹⁴⁹ Aletta Lakkala, “Sápmi may be a quiet place for queer people.” *Yle Sapmi*, Aug 31, 2017.

¹⁵⁰ Maria Säkö, “Milja Sarkola tekee teatteria omasta elämästään: “Toivoisin, että osaisin kirjoittaa niin, ettei läheisteni tarvitsisi pelätä.” *Helsingin Sanomat*. May 11, 2015. <https://www.hs.fi/kulttuuri/art-2000002823009.html>

¹⁵¹ Kaisa Saario, “Milja Sarkola, ujo aktivisti.” *Apu*, March 3, 2015. <https://www.apu.fi/artikkelit/milja-sarkola-ujo-aktivisti>

¹⁵² Pasi Liesimaa, “Nyt puhuu Linnassa kohahduttanut Pauliina Feodoroff: “En hyväksy tapaa, jolla Suomi kohtelee saamelaisia.” *Iltasanomat*. 7 Dec 2015. <https://www.iltalehti.fi/linnanjuhlat2015/a/2015120720793545>

complemented by a small leather carrying case and peaked shoes.¹⁵³ Maybe the most eye-catching element in their appearances, however, is the number 169 written with a marker on both of their bodies. Feodoroff has the number written in red marker on the side of her head, while Sarkola has it written in black marker on her arm. Both numbers are placed on the right side of their bodies, so that the television cameras could capture the detail upon their arrival to the reception hall (*Figure 1*). The numbers do not appear decorative, but are clearly written in a bold, clear, non-aesthetic style to be captured by the cameras and fellow reception-attendees.

In articles published soon after the reception, Feodoroff revealed that ‘169’ refers to the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) Indigenous and Tribal People’s Convention 169. Drafted in 1989 by the International Labor Organization, a United Nation specialized agency focusing on fair work and employment conditions, the convention 169 advocates for indigenous and tribal people’s rights to maintain and develop their traditional livelihoods within the nation-States where they live.¹⁵⁴ By ratifying the convention, the government of a given country commits to fighting against discriminatory practices and working towards enabling indigenous peoples to nurture their cultural heritage and participate in decision-making.¹⁵⁵ Having been ratified by the governing bodies of 23 countries in total, Norway is the only country with a Sámi population that has ratified the convention.¹⁵⁶ In 2015, the year of Feodoroff and Sarkola’s visit to the Reception, there was hope that more than 25 years after the ILO Convention 169 was drafted, it would also be ratified in Finland. The Sámi Parliament and numerous international human rights organizations put pressure on the government to ratify the convention before March 13, which marked the last working day of the parliament at the time.¹⁵⁷ According to the Minister

¹⁵³ The Skolt Sámi women’s dress also traditionally includes a handmade, embroidered hat. Each Sámi group has their own style of dress, which varies based on family heritage and home area. The traditional attire is usually worn for special occasions and celebrations. The younger generations who wish to keep the traditions alive often also give the dresses their own modernized twists, following trends in style and material (Sara Wesslin. “Ylpeys ylläni.” 11 Nov 2018. *Yle Uutiset*. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10494369>; “Yleistä tietoa puvuista,” *Sámi duodji*. <https://www.samiduodji.com/puvut>)

¹⁵⁴ “About the ILO.” International Labor Organization. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm>

¹⁵⁵ “Understanding the Indigenous and Tribal People Convention, 1989 (No. 169). Handbook for ILO Tripartite Constituents.” *International Labor Organization* (Geneva: 2013): 1.

¹⁵⁶ “Ratifications of C169 - Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).” *Normlex*, International Labor Organization. <https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/lang--en/index.htm>

¹⁵⁷ Tanja Joona, “ILO Convention No. 169 and the governance of indigenous identity in Finland: recent developments.” *The International Journal of Human Rights* 24, no. 2-3 (2019): 250.

of Justice Anna-Maija Henriksson, the process was now closer to completion than ever before.¹⁵⁸ Together with the President of the Sami Parliament, Klemetti Näkkäljärvi, Henriksson had drafted a Government Bill on the convention with an added explanation on Article 14, which concerned land ownership. The suggested clause would have increased Sámi people's rights to decision-making in the Sámi homeland area while leaving the state-owned lands to the Finnish state. The Government Bill was drafted hand in hand with the renewal of the Sámi Act, which called for a more restrictive definition of Sámihood. It was central to the agreement between Henriksson and Näkkäljärvi that the ratification of the ILO 169 would require the renewal of the Sámi Act to be accepted.¹⁵⁹

On March 10th 2015, the Finnish Parliament voted against the renewal of the Sámi Act and hence rejected the new, more restrictive definition of Sámihood.¹⁶⁰ This led into the resignation of Näkkäljärvi, who stood by the original agreement which considered the renewal as a prerequisite for the Sámi Parliament's to proceed with the ratification. Henriksson decided to pursue the ratification process with the support of the vice-chairpeople of the Sámi Parliament who took charge after Näkkäljärvi's resignation.¹⁶¹ The Sámi youth advocacy organization Suoma Sámi Nuorat (Finnish Sámi Youth) organized a protest outside of the governmental building on the 13th of March. The purpose of the peaceful protest was to show displeasement about the Parliament rejecting the renewed Sámi Act and how Sámi voices were silenced by the lobbying of non-Sámi decision makers. The main agenda of the protest was, however, to advocate for the ratification of the ILO C. 169. The protest, called Čáhppes ráidu (Eng. *Black*

¹⁵⁸ In an interview with Yle, published 29 of Jan 2015, Henriksson states: "*Vi är nu närmare än någonsin tidigare. Det är bara arbetsprocesserna i grundlagsutskottet som kan sätta stopp för det.*" ("We are now closer than ever before. Only the work processes of the Constitutional Committee can put a stop to this.") Maria Wasström, "Samerna tålmod börjar tryta." *Svenska Yle*, Jan 21, 2015.

<https://svenska.yle.fi/artikel/2015/01/29/samernas-talamod-borjar-tryta>

¹⁵⁹ Jona, "ILO Convention No. 169 and the governance of indigenous identity in Finland: recent developments," 250.

¹⁶⁰ One of the main reasons behind the advocacy for the more restrictive definition was the concern about including too many people in the electoral roll of Finland's Sámi Parliament. As explained by lawyer and researcher Piia Nuorgam, Sámi people want to prevent a situation in which people who they do not consider to be Sámi would gradually gain more influence in the decision-making considering the Sámi (Dan Robert, Larsen: "Forsker: -Samene frykter at altfor mange blir med i samemantallet." *NRK*, 12 March 2015).

https://www.nrk.no/sapmi/forsker_-_samene-frykter-at-altfor-mange-blir-med-i-samemantallet-1.12255983

¹⁶¹ Guttorm, et al. "Saamelaiskäräjien ILO-kanta on muuttumassa." *Yle*, 11 March, 2015.

<https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-7859356>

raito)¹⁶² encouraged people to wear all black to support the cause.¹⁶³ However, due to the Sámi Act's failed renewal and disagreements about the legality of the conditions imposed by the added explanation on Article 14, the government voted against the ratification.¹⁶⁴¹⁶⁵

Sauterian Analysis: Levels of Theatrical Communication in the Intervention

The flow of guests into the arrival hall is rather fast, hence not everyone will establish the initial sensory level of communication with the spectators.¹⁶⁶ However, in Feodoroff and Sarkola's presence there were many elements which were likely to catch the spectators' attention. Sauter points out that already during these moments of first impressions, there are many social constructs at play: factors such as the performer's age, gender and ethnicity all influence the way spectators react to exhibitory actions.¹⁶⁷ As discussed before, the Reception is traditionally a heteronormative space where even the "appropriateness" of dancing same-sex couples has been a topic of public discussion. A female couple like Feodoroff and Sarkola challenges some of the event's conventions by simply making an entrance and being present in the space. At the sensory level of communication, before any further cognitive and interpretational evaluations were made, the script was then already queered, and a kind of an intervention was executed in the historically heteronormative space. In addition to the physical attributes, the performer's mental state, whether they appear "nervous, proud, stressed, tired" or otherwise, count as exhibitory actions.¹⁶⁸ As described above, from the video clip it can be observed that Feodoroff's face remains stoic

¹⁶² Raito is a word describing a long line of reindeers. (Source: "Raide, raito ja raitio." *Kotimaisten kielten keskus*).

¹⁶³ Sirkku Savusalo, "Saamelaisnuoret osoittavat mieltä perjantaina Helsingissä." *Yle*, 12 March 2015.

<https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-7861720>

¹⁶⁴ Joona, "ILO Convention No. 169 and the governance of indigenous identity in Finland: recent developments," 251.

¹⁶⁵ Later in the fall of 2015, after the selection of the new parliament and hence government, another setback for the Sámi rights in Finland emerged. A draft of a Government Bill for the renewal of the law considering the Finnish forest administrator Metsähallitus was missing the previously included sections about the Sámi. The sections that were removed from the proposal were aiming to prohibit action which might endanger Sámi culture and regulate the usage and management of State-owned land and water areas in the Sámi homeland (Aletta Lakkala.

"Saamelaiskulttuurin heikennyskieltoa ei palautettu metsähallituslakiin." *Yle Uutiset*. 10 March 2016.

<https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-8734952>

¹⁶⁶ It must be noted that another factor is that not every guests' name will be mentioned by the announcers and not every person will be zoomed in on by the television cameras.

¹⁶⁷ Sauter, "Playing is Not Pretending," 66.

¹⁶⁸ Sauter, *Eventness*, 57.

and serious throughout the handshaking part. She does not appear delighted or excited, but quite the opposite. A spectator who is not aware of the context of the ‘169’ or Feodoroff’s work might interpret that she is nervous to attend the Reception, or maybe shy in front of the cameras. Further knowledge on the context of her attendance and background is therefore needed for further interpretation of her presence.¹⁶⁹

Sauter mainly relates performers’ encoded actions to movement and sound dictated by a set of stylistic conventions. However, also aesthetic elements such as clothing and props contribute to the interpretation of encoded actions. Sauter states: “Just like in everyday life, costumes are signs that signify a number of characteristics of their wearer.”¹⁷⁰ Such is the case of Feodoroff and Sarkola in the moment of their first appearance in the reception hall. Most spectators are likely to register that Feodoroff’s dress is a traditional one and refers to a specific cultural and ethnic background.¹⁷¹ However, Feodoroff’s dramatic smokey makeup and mohawk hairstyle create a contrast with the Skolt Sámi dress and her overall style combines tradition and heritage with alternativeness and elements of punk counterculture. Playing with different aesthetics and hence resisting stylistic conventions resonates with her queer identity and can also be read as a representation of her intersectional identity as both queer and Sámi. Even the spectators who did not recognize Feodoroff were likely to interpret that she is someone who wishes to resist the norms and is proud of her identity.¹⁷² The strategically placed numbers, again, go more harshly against the aesthetic conventions of the event. Due to the numbers’ style being far from ornamentation, the detail can quickly be labeled as a demonstration of a kind and not interpreted as a decorative addition. Just like a costume can distinguish a theatrical event from everyday life, the number ‘169’ distinguished Feodoroff and Sarkola’s demonstration from a “typical” entrance to the Reception.

¹⁶⁹ Sauter, *Eventness*, 57.

¹⁷⁰ Sauter, *Theatrical Events*, 67.

¹⁷¹ Traditional clothing at the Reception is not an exception to the conventions. Many other people have attended the Reception in their traditional clothing, and representing one’s heritage and culture is a commonly seen phenomenon in the Reception.

¹⁷² Also, if we were to go further with the visual analysis, it could be noted that the dynamic between the appearances of the couple contributes to the effectiveness of the intervention. Sarkola’s dress of choice communicates allyship to her partner and the cause - black is, in addition to being simple and stylish, commonly recognized as the color of mourning. When walking side to side towards the other hall after greeting the presidential couple, Sarkola’s minimalistic black dress balances out and directs more attention towards Feodoroff’s colorful traditional dress.

While the notion of fictional meaning refers more to the realm of performing arts, symbolic meanings play a central role in Feodoroff and Sarkola's entrance, intervention and overall presence at the Reception. The symbol '169' made a direct reference to the ILO C-169 convention, but as Feodoroff elaborated to the press during the Reception, also pointed at deeper issues related to the treatment of the Sámi in the Finnish society. By analyzing the context, background and execution of the intervention in the framework of the performatives and animatives at play, the embodied actions can be fully unveiled.

The Number 169 as an Animative

The "forces of the inappropriate and disruptive," as Taylor calls them, are always pressuring the specific circumstances needed for performatives to function in an expected or 'proper' way. Taylor uses the aftermath of 1968 student protests in Mexico City as an example of how political animatives can work against state-powered performatives and, by doing so, expose their frameworks. In an attempt to take the power back and redress the revolting students, the state officials demanded civil servants to gather on the central square for a counterprotest which Taylor describes as a "performance of party loyalty" as well as an "oversize show of national unity and purpose."¹⁷³ While the civil servants did gather on the square, instead of acting as passive agents in the state-controlled show, they proceeded in unison to bleat like sheep and yell "We're sheep of the administration. We're being herded."¹⁷⁴ The civil servants are present, but not in the way the government demands: they attend "as sheep, not as subjects but as subjugated political animals."¹⁷⁵ For Taylor, it is this transformation from being a subject to performing subjugation that gives the agency back to the civil servants. By turning themselves into non-agents in the staged performance of national unity, the civil servants disrupted the script and took control over their own representation.

Even though the modern-day Finnish Independence Day Reception is distant from the sociopolitical and historical context of Mexico City in 1968, the underlying tactics and dynamics of Feodoroff and Sarkola's intervention resonate with the ones described by Taylor. Feodoroff

¹⁷³ Taylor, *¡Presente!*, 45.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

revealed that she had considered rejecting the invitation and not arriving at the Reception as an act of protest against the delay in the ratification process. In an interview published the day following the Reception, Feodoroff reflects on the paradoxical nature of the attendance decision, stating that both being absent and attending in order to execute an intervention would have negative consequences:

“If I stayed home, the topic would not get any kind of exposure and at the same time it would appear as if I scorned Finland’s independence. And if I do attend and try to bring up the topic, it will also be interpreted in a way that I do not know how to behave or that I scorn the etiquette.”¹⁷⁶

Feodoroff’s comment captures the symbolic significance of the event, as she points out that purposeful inattendance, not being present, would potentially be interpreted as “scorning Finland’s independence.” The way in which Feodoroff describes the decision of attending versus not attending as a double-edged sword reveals that in context of the Independence Day Reception inattendance, *not being present*, is maybe not punishable but politicized.¹⁷⁷ The invitation can hence be interpreted not only as an honor and recognition of the invitees merits, but also a responsibility of a kind. As it appears through Feodoroff’s pre-Reception dilemma, even if the invitation is unwanted, one must make the decision not to attend at the expense of being accused of disdain for the nation. This further illuminates how the Reception is beyond a patriotically coded, exclusive gala. The event becomes the state’s call for being present and contributing to the carefully curated consensus of Finnish nationhood and unity, where rejecting the invitation becomes comparable with rejecting this consensus.

If Feodoroff and Sarkola were to paint the number on themselves during a protest march for Sámi rights, the visual element could be described as an aesthetically typical tactic for the occasion. Executing the same tactic at the presidential palace introduces a more powerful symbolism and subversive dynamic to their message and challenges, rather than rejects, the

¹⁷⁶ Original Finnish. “*Jos jään kotiin, asia ei saa minkäänlaista näkyvyyttä ja samalla ikään kuin halveksisin Suomen itsenäisyyttä. Ja jos menen paikalle ja yritän nostaa asian esille, niin sekin tulkitaan siten, etten osaa käyttäytyä tai halveksin etikettiä*” (Mira Sharma: “Nyt puhuu 169-tunnuksella Linnassa poliittisesti kantaa ottanut Pauliina Feodoroff” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 7th Dec 2015).

¹⁷⁷ With this I mean that inattendance does certainly not have legal consequences. However, the public discussion and speculation about someone’s inattendance, especially if it is speculated as protest, might be considered a punitive reaction to not attending the Reception.

state's performatives at play. Feodoroff and Sarkola's approach challenged the stylistic conventions of the event, which in return enhanced the symbolic level of communication. Furthermore, what significantly distinguishes the Reception situation from a general protest situation are the different conventions, authoritative performatives and hence expectations for the codes of action at play. Taylor calls the Mexican government's attempted 1968 performance of control and redress a "performative command to be presente," which to an extent resonates with the politics of presence and absence at the Reception.¹⁷⁸ If invited, one should be present and through their presence validate the conventions within the presidential palace. Feodoroff and Sarkola arrived and were present, hence they did not directly reject the performative command to be present. However, they were not present *in a way they were expected to*, because they questioned the Reception's conventions instead of accepting and validating them. Feodoroff and Sarkola resisted the power of the authoritative performative, the call to being *presente* and validating the Reception's consensus through the number written on their bodies.

Pitfalls in the "Grand Narrative": Historical Context and Marginalized Voices

Feodoroff was invited to the Reception, among other merits, due to her position as the president of Saa'mi Nue'tt Skolt Same cultural foundation. Considering that the theme of the 2015 reception was "culture," it can be interpreted that Feodoroff's role in the Reception's script was to represent the Skolt Sámi. Furthermore, Feodoroff's presence was curated to represent not only her personal efforts and career, but the Finnish state's recognition of Sámi culture in general. Feodoroff's (and, through allyship, Sarkola's) refusal to participate in the expected collective approval of the authorized performatives highlighted that alternative narratives exist and marginalized voices must be heard. By politicizing their attendance, Feodoroff and Sarkola reclaimed the agency over their own representation.

As previously discussed, a central narrative in Finnish national histories is one that emphasizes persistence, survival, and unity under challenging circumstances. The patriotically coded, war-centered canon is military-masculine, which means that in the grand narrative of the birth of the Finnish nation pushes the minority voices to the margins. One example of this is how

¹⁷⁸ Taylor, *¡Presente!*, 47.

the indigenous Sámi population is often either missing or mentioned as a side-plot in the history of Finland, and often forgotten from the school syllabi of Finnish basic education.¹⁷⁹ As noted by journalist-authors Kukka Ranta and Jaana Kanninen, the Finnish national narrative is usually told from the standpoint of a victim: the image of Finland's poverty-stricken folk having been oppressed first by Sweden and then by Russia is strongly embedded in the collective memory culture. The victim-narrative is further enhanced by emphasizing how Finns were labeled as a non-White, inferior race by 19th century racial theories and eugenics.¹⁸⁰ In addition, scholarly narratives about national histories in Finland are generally disconnected from European slave trade and colonialism. A prevailing notion is that Finland had no overseas colonies and is therefore "innocent" in this context. However, the Sámi population in Finland has historically been subject to settler colonialism and assimilation policies, as well as extensive inferiorization through physical anthropology.¹⁸¹

The starting point of the oppression of the Sámi can be considered to be the Settlement Bill of Lapland which allowed settler colonialism in Lapland, approved by Swedish King Carl XI in 1673 and 1695. It is believed that beforehand under Swedish rule, the Sámi had rights to their lands and waters which resembled ownership.¹⁸² During the 18th century, the agricultural settlements and state policies resulted in the gradual suspension of the traditional Sámi self-organization into village communities, *siidas*. Finnish settlers took over the Sámi lands and waters and Sámi societal structures were replaced by Finnish ones.¹⁸³ The Sámi aimed to defend their rights to land through lawsuits which they often lost, and the tension between the settlers and the Sámi sometimes led into violent conflict and death.¹⁸⁴ Reindeer herding and the nomadic

¹⁷⁹ Pekka Torvinen, "Historian unohtamat - valtaväestö ei tiedä saamelaisista mitään," *Ylioppilaslehti*, Oct 23, 2019 <https://ylioppilaslehti.fi/2019/10/historian-unohtamat/>; Pippuri, Juha: "Saamelaisten historia on yhä näkymätön osa suomalaista yhteiskuntaa, vaikka he ovat asuttaneet Saamenmaata jo ennen nykyisiä valtionrajoja." *Seura*, Jun 12, 2019.

<https://seura.fi/asiat/tutkivat/saamelaisten-historia-on-yha-nakymaton-osa-suomalaista-yhteiskuntaa-vaikka-he-ovat-asuttaneet-saamenmaata-jo-ennen-nykyisia-valtiorajoja/>

¹⁸⁰ Ranta and Kanninen, *Vastatuuleen*, 23.

¹⁸¹ In her intra-Nordic analysis of racial and colonial history, Suvi Keskinen has established that in addition to the colonization of the Sámi, Finns in fact were involved in colonialism and settler colonialism alongside other Nordics in the Americas, Africa and Australia (Suvi Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences, Colonial/Racial Histories, and National Narratives: Rewriting Finnish History." *Scandinavian Studies*, 91, No 1-2 (2019): 166).

¹⁸² Tanja Joonas, "ILO Convention No. 169 and the governance of indigenous identity in Finland: recent developments." *The International Journal of Human Rights*, 24, No 2-3 (2020): 241.

¹⁸³ Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences, Colonial/Racial Histories, and National Narratives." 175.

¹⁸⁴ Ranta & Kanninen, *Vastatuuleen*. 46-47.

lifestyle it requires is an important cornerstone of Sámi culture, alongside fishing, gathering, hunting and traditional handicrafts.¹⁸⁵

The geopolitics of the 19th century made drastic changes to these livelihoods and cultures. Traditional fishing waters were no longer accessible and the new borders cut through reindeer herding routes, while access to the Arctic Ocean was cut completely. The Sámi now needed to choose which state's citizenship they would have.¹⁸⁶ Finland's assimilation policy was never official, but rather a set of unwritten rules which were informed by the nationalist ideas of homogenous language and culture.¹⁸⁷ One of the strongest manifestations of the assimilation attempts was the change in the educational system after the Second World War. Whereas before teachers who spoke some of the Sámi languages traveled to Sámi villages, the Sámi children were now sent to Finnish-speaking boarding schools.¹⁸⁸ The boarding schools existed from 1940s to 1970s and played a central role in the endangerment of Sámi languages and generational trauma. The schools were often located far away and the children were only receiving teaching in Finnish. Speaking their Sámi mother tongues was discouraged and even punishable, which led to feelings of shame about one's culture and language.¹⁸⁹

Another source of shame and inferiorization were the practices of racial biology and physical anthropology which emerged as academic disciplines during the 19th and 20th century. According to the racial taxonomies that evolved from the work of the 18th century theories of scientist Carl Linnaeus, the "superior" Nordic race included the Swedes, Norwegians and Danes. Finns ranked low on the racial hierarchy, however the Sámi were inferiorized even further due to

¹⁸⁵ Reindeer herding became a central livelihood for the Sámi in the 16th century, before which they focused on deer hunting. Nowadays around a fifth of Sámi own reindeers. (Ranta & Kanninen. *Vastatuuleen*, 19-20).

¹⁸⁶ As a result of Finland becoming a part of Russia in 1809, the border between Sweden and Finland was strengthened and the Sámi *siidas* were shattered across several states. The Norwegian-Russian border was closed in 1852 and the Swedish-Russian border in 1889, which further complicated the lives of the Sámi (Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences, Colonial/Racial Histories, and National Narratives," 175; Torvinen, "Historian unohtamat - valtaväestö ei tiedä saamelaisista mitään").

¹⁸⁷ The assimilation policies were the strongest in Norway, where Norwegianization of the Sámi was an official government policy. Sweden's approach was based on segregation: the reindeer-herding Sámi wanted to be kept separate from the mainstream society in an attempt to keep their traditions "pure," while the Sámi who did not do reindeer herding were subject to assimilation (Ranta and Kanninen, *Vastatuuleen*, 28; 153-154).

¹⁸⁸ Suvi Keskinen notes that the boarding school system as a tool for assimilation of indigenous people is by no means only a Finnish phenomenon, but a part of colonial practices in many other parts of the world as well ("Intra-Nordic Differences," 176).

¹⁸⁹ Sara Wesslin, "Kielensä kadottaneet lapset - näin saamen kieli pestiin pois." *Yle Uutiset*, 7 May 2017. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9579558>

their nomadic lifestyle assumed primitiveness.¹⁹⁰ Finnish researchers were eager to prove the theories about Finnish and, to an extent, Sámi people's inferiority as false, hence scientific racism did not gain as much support in Finland compared to other Nordic countries. However, in the beginning of the 20th century, the Sámi were subject to multiple international and Finnish studies.¹⁹¹ The research methods were often experienced as traumatizing and humiliating, as they involved methods such as measuring the participants' skulls and being photographed naked.¹⁹² Sámi skeletons were also dug up and taken away to be investigated, with the consent of the church, for the purpose of research from the beginning of the 19th century until the 1930s.¹⁹³ As noted by Suvi Keskinen, the Finnish studies towards the Sámi in the early days of independence can be seen as attempts to distance Finns from the racialized and non-civilized 'Other' in order to manifest Finland as a modern, racially unified nation belonging to the West.¹⁹⁴

Skin as the Stage for '169' and the Explicit Body

Feodoroff and Sarkola's choice of writing the number on their bodies made a significant contribution to the subversive potential of the '169' as an animative. While the number could alternatively have been embroidered on their dresses, or just addressed during interviews, its placement on their bare skin created new layers of significance. As stated by Taylor: "Bodies make their own claims in ways that cannot be adequately understood by looking primarily at linguistic paradigms. Political bodies are amplified bodies—expanded by the mission, emotion,

¹⁹⁰ Finns were classified as having Mongolian roots especially due to the skull studies of Friedrich Blumenbach. Finns were characterized as intellectually lacking and ugly, and the idea of Finnish people as being inferior to the other Nordic people was especially spreaded by Swedish race biologists. (Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences," 172-173). There were efforts to establish that Finnish Swedes (the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland) were racially separate and superior to the Finnish-speaking Finns (Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences," 174; Ranta & Kanninen, *Vastatuuleen*, 134).

¹⁹¹ Ranta and Kanninen, 135; Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences," 173-174.

¹⁹² As noted by Ranta and Kanninen, even though the Finns were also subject to the physical anthropology experiments, the dynamic between representatives of the majority population measuring the majority population and the majority population measuring the already oppressed and inferiorized indigenous group is completely different. (Ranta & Kanninen. *Vastatuuleen*, 118; 140; Keskinen. "Intra-Nordic Differences," 176).

¹⁹³ During this time, around 300 Sámi skulls were dug up from graveyards, most of them taken to Helsinki to be measured and archived. Whereas skull measuring and other methods of physical anthropology were abandoned in Sweden and Norway after World War II, in the Finnish part of the Sámi homeland area the studies continued until the 1970s due to the research mission "Human Adaptability" led by doctor Aldur W. Eriksson's between 1966-1973. (Ranta and Kanninen, *Vastatuuleen*, 119, 132; Keskinen. "Intra-Nordic Differences," 176).

¹⁹⁴ Keskinen, "Intra-Nordic Differences," 174-175.

and aspirations that animate them”¹⁹⁵ The ‘169’ operated as an animative and performed its function from the surface of the interveners' skin and this way, the number did not politicize their speech or their dresses, but their bodies, which amplified the message further.

Even though the intervention does not fall under the category of performance art per se, the way in which the couple utilized their bodies as sites of resistance resonates with theatre and performance scholar Rebecca Schneider’s concept of the ‘explicit body.’ Schneider has theorized the body as a stage across which feminist performance artists “re-enact social dramas and traumas which have arbitrated cultural differentiations between truth and illusion, reality and dream, fact and fantasy, natural and unnatural, essential and constructed.”¹⁹⁶ Performance utilizing the body as stage can hence make explicit the often implicit socio-cultural constraints and historical meanings which surround and stick to the engendered body as “sedimented layers of signification.”¹⁹⁷ The subversiveness of explicit body performance stirs from how they confuse, collapse and collide literal and symbolic meanings with each other. One of Schneider’s examples is The Guerilla Girls, the USA activist group whose kitschy gorilla mask help them remaining anonymous but also materializes, makes explicit and renders literal the symbolic paradigm of women and people of color “as less evolved, more “primitive,” than the implicitly higher primate, white Man.”¹⁹⁸ Similarly, especially against the surface of Feodoroff’s shaved hair, the ‘169’ simultaneously materializes and renders literal the urgency of the ratification matter as well as the painful history of scientific racism.

In an interview published a day after the intervention Feodoroff states that “In Finland the discussion about the Sámi always circles around how we are numerically so few and how this is such a marginal issue that it ought to wait.”¹⁹⁹ The number written on her body makes explicit that behind the numbers are real people, who face the consequences of the political decisions deemed marginal and hence secondary. Materialized in the number on her head, the convention sticks to Feodoroff’s skin and follows her everywhere she goes in the presidential palace, making evident the way in which she has carried the burden of advocating for the ratification for decades

¹⁹⁵ Taylor, *Performance*, 128-129.

¹⁹⁶ Rebecca Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, (New York and London: Routledge: 1997), 7.

¹⁹⁷ Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, 2.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁹⁹ Orig. Finnish: *Suomessa keskustelu saamelaisista pyörii koko ajan siinä, että meitä on numeerisesti niin vähän ja tämä on niin marginaalinen asia, että tämä joutaa odottaa* (Sharma. “Nyt puhuu 169-tunnuksella Linnassa poliittisesti kantaa ottanut Pauliina Feodoroff.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 7th Dec 2015).

with no concrete results. When operating from the surface of her skin, the animative seems to remind us that numbers can also be violent. The physical anthropology examinations performed on Sámi bodies reduced individuals into measurements which in turn were written down in numbers and utilized in making arguments which inferiorized the Sámi.²⁰⁰

Furthermore, skin in itself can function as a metaphor of how collectivities form and function. Sara Ahmed has discussed not only individuals but also collectives as “having a skin” in the context of how emotions influence the way bodies surface in relation to other bodies. Calling skin “a border that feels,” Ahmed compares having emotions with surfaces pressing against one another, and impressions as marks left on our skin surfaces.²⁰¹ She writes:

The impressions of others surface as marks on the body, in which the marks become a sign of absence, or a sign of a presence that ‘is no longer’. The impression is a sign of the persistence of others even in the face of their absence. The skin may in this way record past impressions, past encounters with others, who are others insofar as they have already made an impression. Hence the very impression of the skin surface is itself an effect of impressions. (Ahmed, 2004, 30).

When thinking of skin as a border that feels and as an archive of past impressions left upon it by others, the placement of the ‘169’ on the skin surface can be read as a symbol of the poor treatment of the Sámi. The past has left a mark on the skin of the Sámi community; the skin remembers and carries its marks and wounds in the form of generational trauma. This metaphor is made explicit and literal through the number written by a marker on Feodoroff’s skin.²⁰² In many of the interviews in which Feodoroff explains the intervention, she confirms that the number did not only reference the convention, but also the overall status of the Sámi in Finland. According to her, structural forced assimilation of the Sámi “into Finns, Finnishness” is still in function and evident in policies regarding land and water rights, teaching Sámi history, funding

²⁰⁰ If the visual analysis was to be taken further, the shaved head and number written on skin also makes a reference to the overall tattooing and marking individuals and minority subjects with serial numbers. Maybe the most obvious example of this dehumanizing practice is the holocaust.

²⁰¹ Sara Ahmed, “Collective Feelings, Or The Impressions Left by Others.” *Theory, Culture & Society* Vol 21, 2 (2004), 39.

²⁰² The number was also written on Sarkola’s skin, but the effect is different as she is not Sámi. As mentioned before, I approach Sarkola’s role in the intervention as being a partner and an ally.

of the language and visibility of Sámi media.²⁰³ With the number on her head, these complex bureaucracies and negotiations behind the advocacy work for Sámi rights unfold on her body. Oppression might not be as systematic as before, but still persists. The marks remain and the skin does not forget.

Ahmed talks about how pain as an intensified feeling, caused by collision of two surfaces, makes us aware of our skin as a bodily surface and a mediator between us and others, inside and outside.²⁰⁴ She argues that such moments of intensified feelings also function at a larger scale, shaping collectivities and attaching specific emotions to specific groups. Ahmed writes: “It is not just that we feel for the collective (such as in discourses of fraternity or patriotism), but how we feel about others is what aligns us with a collective, which paradoxically ‘takes shape’ only as an effect of such alignments.”²⁰⁵ Impressions left on the collective’s skin by bodily others simultaneously separate them from these others and align who belongs inside the collective’s borders. The exclusiveness of the Reception resonates with the metaphor of the skin, as the practices of invitation and initiation into a significant Finn can be read as mediation between a specific inside and outside, ‘us’ versus ‘the others.’ With the number on her skin, again, Feodoroff intensified her presence at the Reception by drawing attention to how the Sámi have historically been aligned outside of the collective and are still marginalized through policies which trivialize their rights as indigenous people. While the patriotic narrative of the Reception focuses on feeling *for* the collective, the number on Feodoroff’s skin turned the situation around and pushed people to reflect on *how* the collective feels about the Sámi. The number pasted on her body made explicit both past traumas, as well as the socio-political hierarchies of modern day Finland which had led Feodoroff and her partner into the ironic situation where Sámi culture is included in the official programme of the Independence Day, yet continuously pushed to the margins politically. When operating from the surface of the skin, the message simultaneously becomes more personal and more political.

²⁰³ Aletta Lakkala. “Saamelaisaktivisti kommentoi poliittista kannanottoaan Linnan juhlassa: “Olemme pakotettuja olemaan ikäviä.” *Yle Uutiset*, 7 Dec 2015; Tiina Saari, “Nyt puhuu Linnassa kohahduttanut Pauliina Feodoroff: “En hyväksy tapaa, jolla Suomi kohtelee saamelaisia.” *Ilta-lehti*, 6 Dec 2015.

²⁰⁴ Ahmed, “Collective Feelings,” 29.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.



Figure 2. The ‘169’ written with a red marker on the side of Feodoroff’s shaved head.²⁰⁶

Tone-Policing, Doing Something Versus Doing Nothing

In an interview published a day after the Reception, an “etiquette coach” Kaarina Suonperä judged the intervention as inappropriate. According to her, the event is not for “personal demonstrations,” and stated that guests should be in attendance with a joyful attitude, and not with a “me and my opinions-mentality.”²⁰⁷ Suonperä’s approach portrays Feodoroff and Sarkola as being selfish for bringing up a political issue during the celebration. Her interview is an example of tone-policing which uses the “anywhere else *except* the Independence Day Reception” argument to wipe out potential disruptions in the event’s patriotic narrative. At the end of the interview Suonperä makes an appeal, using the war veterans as an argument: “...the most important thing in the Independence Day celebrations is the veterans and Lotta Svärd members. They bring up their own opinions very little. They would have a lot to tell, remind, and

²⁰⁶ Image source: Pasi Liesimaa, *Iltalehti*. (Tiina Saari, “Nyt puhuu linnassa kohahduttanut Pauliina Feodoroff: “En hyväksy tapaa, jolla Suomi kohtelee saamelaisia,” *Iltalehti*, 7 Dec 2015 <https://www.iltalehti.fi/linnanjuhlat2015/a/2015120720793545>)

²⁰⁷ Pauliina Leinonen, “Tapakouluttaja paheksuu 169-naisten kannanottoa: “Väärä paikka.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 7th of Dec. <https://www.is.fi/linnanjuhlat/art-2000001047989.html>

teach us. They have not done that, and still are the heroes of this celebration.”²⁰⁸ By declaring the veterans and Lotta Svärd members as the silent heroes of the nation, Suonerä argues that the only correct way to attend the Reception is through neutral respect and humbleness. Hence, in this context, suffering of the Sámi due to nation-building, such as the force-migration of the Skolt Sámi, is forgotten or at least comes secondary to the experiences of the war veterans. A question about who has the right to mourn and protest hence arises and becomes a topic of negotiation. Furthermore, the labeling of the intervention as inappropriate reflects the Reception’s status as a genre and Feodoroff and Sarkola’s way of attending, their specific way of *doing* the Reception, as breaking the genre’s conventions.

In an article published on the same day, Feodoroff notes that while many people thought that the intervention was “tasteless” and engaging in political processes is considered the only “correct way” to make a difference, the Sámi Parliament has fought for the ratification of the ILO C-169 for the previous quarter century.²⁰⁹ Her comment strongly resonates with a question asked by Diana Taylor: “What can we do when apparently nothing can be done, and doing nothing is not an option?.”²¹⁰ When decades of political activism has led to very little concrete solutions or actions from the government’s side and the decision making about the Sámi is still mainly in the hands of non-Sámi people, attending the Reception through neutrality and respect was not an option for Feodoroff. In an interview published after the Reception Feodoroff, aware of how executing an intervention during the event is likely to be judged as inappropriate, stated: “If this was boorish and shameful behavior, I carry my own boorishness and shamefulness.”²¹¹ She hence accepts the possible stigmatization brought upon her for speaking up for her cause, reclaiming the shame and refusing to be silenced by it.²¹²

²⁰⁸ Orig. Finnish: “...itsenäisyyspäivän juhlien tärkein asia ovat veteraanit ja lotat. He itse tuovat hyvin vähän omia mielipiteitään esille. Heillä olisi paljon kerrottavaa, muistutettavaa ja opetettavaa meille. He eivät ole sitä tehneet, ja he ovat kuitenkin näiden juhlien sankarit. (Leinonen. “Tapakouluttaja paheksuu 169-naisten kannanottoa: “Väärä paikka.” *Iltasanomat*, 7th of Dec).

²⁰⁹ Pasi Liesimaa, “Nyt puhuu Linnassa kohahduttanut Pauliina Feodoroff: “En hyväksy tapaa, jolla Suomi kohtelee saamelaisia.” *Iltasanomat*. 7 Dec 2015.

²¹⁰ Taylor, *Presente!* 2020, 2.

²¹¹ Orig. Finnish: “Jos tämä nyt oli moukkamaista ja häpeällistä käytöstä, kannan itse moukkamaisuuteni ja häpeällisyyteni.” (Mira Sharma, “Nyt puhuu 169-tunnuksella Linnassa poliittisesti kantaa ottanut Pauliina Feodoroff.” *Iltasanomat*, Dec 7, 2015).

²¹² Shame and shamelessness are discussed in more depth in Chapter III about Marins and Vallarén.

Animatives and Interpretation: What if the Code Isn't Cracked?

In addition to being directed toward the media in hopes for exposure, the intervention also functioned as a tool for face-to-face confrontation. Feodoroff saw the Reception as an opportunity to stir up conversations with some of the decision makers who act as gatekeepers in the ratification process. Day after the Reception she commented in an interview with *Ilta-Sanomat*: “If I stroll among them (members of the parliament) for even that few hours, and they look and go “what does that old hag have written on her head,” there’s a chance that a conversation might spark.”²¹³ Feodoroff’s humorous self-irony resonating from the comment turned into real irony during the Reception, as several members of the parliament approached her to ask the meaning behind the number. Among these MP’s were individuals who had voted against the ratification of the convention.²¹⁴

The effectiveness of animatives is dependent on whether they can be understood by the spectators: they require interpretation to function. A performative utterance cannot be efficiently challenged or refused if none of the witnesses understand the context of the animative. Taylor underlines that “...the animative is not a physical symptom or reaction to a stimulus but a codified act of noncompliance.”²¹⁵ In Sauter’s terminology, then, the actions must be decodable for the spectators in order for their significance to transmit. This is especially applicable to interpreting symbolic meaning. According to Sauter, the key to transform embodied actions into symbolic communication is recognizable references. He writes that these references “can derive from various sources which — and this is important to emphasize — the actor and the spectator share to a large extent as long as they belong to the same cultural sphere.”²¹⁶ Whereas the ‘169’ was rather easily interpreted as some kind of a demonstration, the many articles explaining the meaning behind the number to the public implies that most of the spectators did not seem to understand what it symbolized.

²¹³ Orig. Finnish: “*Jos edes sen muutaman tunnin ajan pyörin heidän (kansanedustajien) keskuudessaan, ja he katsovat että ”mitä tuolla eukolla lukee päässään”, niin asioista saattaa viritä keskustelu*” (Sharma, “Nyt puhuu 169-tunnuksella Linnassa poliittisesti kantaa ottanut Pauliina Feodoroff,” Sharma).

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Taylor, *Presente!*, 48.

²¹⁶ Sauter, *Theatrical event*, 2000, 60.

The spectators' inability to interpret the reference and hence not understand it became a real-life demonstration of how individuals who are not Sámi, and seem to not know much about the Sámi, are the ones making crucial decisions about the Sámi. Feodoroff's account of the conversations she had during the Reception proves that in the case of her intervention, the message was *not* obvious to all audiences. In other words, the animative she acted out was not automatically decoded by everyone who witnessed it. However, the general public's and the politicians' unawareness and ignorance of the topic, and hence their lack of understanding of the symbolic level, does not automatically mean that the animative was not effective. In fact, in case of this intervention the general inability to decode the meaning regardless of belonging to (at least partially) the same cultural atmosphere made the message even stronger, as the unawareness symbolized the general lack of knowledge about the Sámi.

The Missing Performative

In addition to challenging the normative ways of being present at the Reception, Feodoroff and Sarkola also pointed out the absence of a specific performative utterance: an apology. In Norway, both the Evangelical-Lutheran church and the State apologized to the Sámi in 1997. Soon after in Sweden, the church started to give reconciliation services to the Sámi, and the Minister of Agriculture and the Sámi Annika Åhnberg uttered an official apology on behalf of the entire government in 1998.²¹⁷ In 2012, bishop of the Diocese of Oulu Samuel Salmi apologized to the Sámi for the oppressing and humiliating actions of the Finnish church. He expressed shame for the church's involvement in physical anthropology and assimilation processes.²¹⁸ The State of Finland, however, has not made an official apology to the Sámi.

In her analysis of the role of national shame in discourses of reconciliation, Ahmed has discussed official apologies from governments as speech acts. Problematizing Austin's notion of emotions as inner states which are "either expressed or not expressed through words," Ahmed points out that apology can 'do something' without expressing a 'true feeling.'²¹⁹ Firstly, Austin's

²¹⁷ Ranta & Kanninen, *Vastatuuleen*. 29.

²¹⁸ "Samuel Salmi pyysi saamelaisilta anteeksi." *Kaleva*. 4th of Feb 2012. <https://www.kaleva.fi/samuel-salmi-pyysi-saamelaisilta-anteeksi/1790480>

²¹⁹ Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 115.

theory relies on happy performatives being the product of a sincerity from the utterer, while an apology might be accepted even if the one apologizing is not truly sorry. Furthermore, an apology can potentially be interpreted as a promise of further action or compensation.²²⁰ An official apology can hence function beyond its symbolic value and make the nation simultaneously accountable for past wrongdoings *and* responsible for future compensation and action. The exact reasons for the lack of Finland's official apology to the Sámi can only be speculated. However, the avoidance of this specific performative utterance is strongly linked to the delay in the ILO-169 ratification process. Because the conditions of a successful or happy apology are not fixed, the representatives of the nation cannot predict the exact outcome of the speech act. The decision makers could be appealed to prove the sincerity of their apology by approving the ILO convention, among taking other concrete actions related to the Sámi. As stated by Ahmed, "...the apology could become the basis of an appeal for compensation; it could be 'taken up' as evidence of responsibility rather than feeling."²²¹ By denying the apology from the Sámi, the official representatives of the Finnish nation seem to communicate an unwillingness to take urgent and concrete action to improve the lives of the Sámi.²²²

Highlighting the power of the performative utterances and importance of vocabulary, Ahmed takes the example of the 2001 UN conference on racism where apologies for slavery and colonialism were demanded from representatives of Europe and America by representatives from African countries.²²³ The words 'apology' or 'sorry' were missing from the final declaration, hence the apology was refused. Ahmed notes that the refusal to apologize "repeats the violence that structures the logic of the demand in the first place," and hence functions as a speech act (and an act of violence) itself.²²⁴²²⁵ Feodoroff and Sarkola's intervention hence underlines that the

²²⁰ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 115.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Furthermore, an official apology would give agency to the Sámi as they would have the power to decide whether the apology is rejected or accepted.

²²³ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 116.

²²⁴ Ibid., 117.

²²⁵ Similar negotiations about phrasing and words also took place in Finland, as a truth and reconciliation process concerning the Sámi in Finland was initiated by the Sámi Parliament and taken upon by the government led by Prime Minister Juha Sipilä in 2017. Initially the government wanted to remove the word "truth" from the official title of the commission and only talk about reconciliation. However, the Sámi Parliament insisted that there is no reconciliation without the truth (Ranta & Kanninen. *Vastatuuleen*, 30). According to the Prime Minister's Office, in Finland "The aim of the commission's work is to collect Sámi people's experiences of the actions of the Finnish state and its various authorities and to make this information visible to the public." ("Truth and Reconciliation Commission Concerning the Sámi People" *Prime Minister's Office*.) The documentary theater production

silence of the Finnish state is loud and communicates that being invited to the Reception which celebrates Finland's independence as a gesture of honor is simply not enough. Actions, not gestures, are urgently needed. The number painted on Feodoroff's head becomes a symbol of an ironic paradox: while the invitation represents the state's official recognition of her efforts to advocate for Sámi culture, she is still waiting for an official apology which would recognize the generational trauma that Sámi people carry mostly due to the establishment of the very nation.

CO2lonialNATION, which Feodoroff directed for Giron Sámi Teáhter in Norway's Trondheim in 2017, was inspired by the reconciliation processes among Canada's indigenous people. By building the script based on interviews conducted with the Sámi across their homeland area, Feodoroff and the team created and staged their own truth and reconciliation process (Sara Wesslin and Martta Alajärvi. "Millainen on kolonisoitu Saamen kansa? - näytelmä tarttuu kipeisiin asioihin totuuskomission voimin. *Yle Uutiset*, 12 Feb 2017).

CHAPTER II. MARIA PETTERSSON - *A NOOSE*

Figure 2. Maria Pettersson waiting for her partner Juhana Pettersson after shaking hands with the presidential couple.²²⁶

²²⁶ Julia Aalto-Setälä, “Huomasitko? Päätoimittaja Maria Petterssonilta pysäyttävä kannanotto - edustaa kaulassaan hirttoköysi.” *Iltalehti*, 6 Dec 2019, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/linnan-juhlat-2019/a/f146894a-42da-4404-9a12-ecdd09d9eab9>

In 2019, the theme of the Reception was “information and discussion in society.” The official statement from the President’s Office states that the year’s invitees were “people and representatives of institutions that, through their own actions, have promoted discussion in society and the dissemination of reliable information.”²²⁷ The theme reflects the discussion about trustworthy communication and media in the age of the rapidly rising number of fake news and information manipulation, but also Finland’s role as a pioneer in freedom of the press. Among the invitees was journalist and author Maria Pettersson, who was invited to the Reception as the editor in chief of *Journalisti*, the magazine of the Union of Journalists in Finland.²²⁸

Pettersson is an established voice in the field of journalism in Finland. Having studied Russian, political science and economics, she started as a freelance journalist and then worked for the popular urban culture magazine *City*. At the age of 25, she was chosen as the editor-in-chief of *Ylioppilaslehti* (“Graduate magazine”), the largest student magazine in Finland founded in 1913.²²⁹ Having later worked at *Helsingin Sanomat* among other platforms as a journalist and columnist, Pettersson also hosted her own radio show and was a frequent visitor in a television programme about current news at Yleisradio.²³⁰ She started in her current position as the editor in chief of *Journalisti* magazine in 2018.²³¹

An Unusual Garment: Red Noose and Freedom of Speech

In a video clip from the handshaking line, Pettersson is approaching the presidential couple alongside her husband, author, journalist and game designer Juhana Pettersson. The dramatic silhouette of her long-sleeved, black dress alone stands out from the flow of guests. However, the

²²⁷ *Tasavallan Presidentti*. “The themes of this year’s Independence Day Reception were knowledge and discussion in society.” 6 Dec 2019. <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/news/the-main-themes-of-this-years-independence-day-reception-are-knowledge-and-discussion-in-society/>

²²⁸ Maria Pettersson, Video interview with the author, 14th Dec 2020.

²²⁹ In 2012 at the age of 27, Pettersson returned to *City* magazine as the new editor in chief. “Matkalla instituutioksi.” *Ylioppilaslehti*, 1st Apr, 2010. <https://ylioppilaslehti.fi/2010/04/matkalla-instituutioksi/>; “Maria Pettersson City-lehden päätoimittajaksi.” *City*, 17th Oct, 2011. <https://www.city.fi/ilmiot/maria+pettersson+city-lehden+paatoimittajaksi/4103>

²³⁰ Antti Pikkanen, “Instituutio Maria Pettersson.” *City*, 7 Dec 2011. <https://www.city.fi/ilmiot/instituutio+maria+pettersson/4255>

²³¹ Markku Lappalainen, “Maria Petterssonista Journalistin päätoimittaja.” *Journalisti*, 12 Apr, 2018. <https://www.journalisti.fi/ajankohtaiset/maria-petterssonista-journalistin-paatoimittaja/>

most significant element of her look is a bright red rope hanging around her neck. The rope, decorated with white pearls, stands in contrast with the black fabric of the dress and matches with the decorative extensions in Pettersson's hairdo.²³² The unusual garment, even though complementing Pettersson's overall appearance, could not be mistaken as anything else as a hangman's noose, a knot with universal associations to punishment, violence, and most of all death. The reason behind the noose did not remain a mystery for a long time, as Pettersson revealed the context on Twitter already during the Reception by tweeting a picture of her posing in the palace. The tweet reads:

“#CastleGala. Theme is reliable communication and public discussion. Noose hanging around my neck as a reminder about what happens to people trying to exercise freedom of speech in many countries - and what also happened in Finland in the beginning of the independence to wrong-minded people. #freedomofspeech”. (@mariapettersson, *Twitter*; 6th Dec, 2019, 6.57p.m.)²³³

The noose was hence revealed to be a reminder of the harsh realities of journalists worldwide, as well as a reference to some of the darker times in Finland's past. With the tweet about the garment Pettersson simultaneously declared the message she wished to deliver and established freedom of speech as the main topic which she aimed to advocate for during the Reception.

Finland prides itself on press freedom and has continuously ranked among top countries in The World Press Freedom Index. Published annually since 2002 by Reporters Without Borders, (RSF) the index ranks 180 countries and 180 based on the freedom granted for journalists, and according to RSF is “a snapshot of the media freedom situation based on an evaluation of pluralism, independence of the media, quality of legislative framework and safety of journalists in each country and region.”²³⁴ Currently holding the second place after Norway, Finland has always been in the top four of the index and ranked first between 2010 and 2016.²³⁵

²³² Julia Aalto-Setälä, “Huomasitko? Päätoimittaja Maria Petterssonilta pysäyttävä kannanotto - edustaa kaulassaan hirttoköysi.” *Iltalehti*, 6th Dec 2019.

²³³ @mariapettersson, “#Linnanjuhlat. Teema on luotettava tiedonvälitystä ja kansalaiskeskustelu. Kaulassa hirttoköysi muistuttamassa, miten monessa maassa käy ihmisten, jotka yrittävät käyttää sananvapauttaan - ja miten Suomessakin itsenäisyyden alussa kävi väärämielisille. #sananvapaus.” *Twitter*; 6th Dec, 2019, 6.57p.m. <https://twitter.com/mariapettersson/status/1203010687087366146?lang=en>

²³⁴ The index does not consider governmental policies or quality of journalism. (“World Press Freedom Index.” *Reporters Without Borders*. <https://rsf.org/en/world-press-freedom-index>)

²³⁵ “World Press Freedom Ranking List Archives.” *Reporters Without Borders*. https://rsf.org/en/ranking_list/archive

The way in which freedom of speech and press is a central element in how Finland brands itself globally can be recognized from newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* advertising campaign from 2018, when the Russia-United States summit took place in Helsinki. Large billboards with phrases such as “Mr. President, welcome to the land of free press” and news titles such as “Fact checkers find numerous mistakes in Trump speeches” and “Putin shuts down Russia’s largest news agency” were placed along the potential arrival routes of presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump, both in English and Russian.²³⁶ The campaign received worldwide media attention and positioned Finland as an example of a democratic society where press freedom is valued.²³⁷ According to the official press release, the campaign aimed to point out issues with press freedom around the world and stand in solidarity with journalists in both the United States and Russia, as well as remind the presidents of “the importance of free press as a cornerstone of all democratic civil societies.”²³⁸

The act of reminding was also central to Pettersson’s intervention. Just like the core message of the *Helsingin Sanomat* campaign, the noose reminded people that even though the state of press freedom in Finland is good on a global scale, in many places the situation is far from ideal. In an interview Pettersson gave to *Ilta-Sanomat* from the Reception, she states that approximately one journalist is killed in a week worldwide.²³⁹ According to a database collected by the Committee to Protect Journalists, 1365 journalists had lost their lives between 1992 and 2019, 872 of the cases being categorized as murders.²⁴⁰ Pettersson hence took a less local approach to the Reception’s theme by shifting the focus away from national collectivity to solidarity within the profession of journalism worldwide. With the noose, Pettersson drew attention to how press freedom is not only a matter of censorship, but in the most extreme cases a matter of life and death. The noose therefore functioned as a tribute to her colleagues worldwide

²³⁶ “Free Press.” *Helsingin Sanomat Kampanjat*. <https://kampanjat.hs.fi/media/FreePress/Freepress%202018.html>

²³⁷ In the press release the Senior Editor-in-Chief of Helsingin Sanomat Kaius Niemi does also state that “We need to work harder to ensure press freedom in Finland” (*Helsingin Sanomat Press Release*).

²³⁸ ““Welcome to the Land of Free Press”- The largest newspaper in the Nordics Helsingin Sanomat reminds presidents Trump and Putin about the freedom of the press.” *Helsingin Sanomat Press Release*, 16th July 2018.

²³⁹ “Päätoimittaja kohahdutti Linnassa hirttosilmukalla- Panu Rajala kyseenalaistaa erikoisen asusteen taustan: “Menee ohi ja yli.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 7 Dec, 2019. <https://www.is.fi/linnanjuhlat/art-2000006335789.html>

²⁴⁰ As of now, the number of murdered journalists is 898, while overall journalists killed while at work is 1404. “Journalists Killed.” Data, *Committee to Protect Journalists*.

https://cpj.org/data/killed/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&typeOfDeath%5B%5D=Murder&start_year=1992&end_year=2019&group_by=year Accessed: 17 Jun, 2021.

who have lost their lives, and hence became a site of commemoration. The acts of reminding people about the critical state of global freedom of the press and commemorating late journalists materialized in the red rope, turning it into an animative.

The Noose as a Symbol of Violence and Sacrifice

The themes of commemoration and sacrifice are strongly present at the Reception and also central to the grand narrative of Finland as a nation. The fratricidal violence of the Civil War led into collective trauma, guilt and polarization which was compensated for with the idea of collective sacrifice for the fatherland especially after the Winter War.²⁴¹ Christian notions of sacrifice, martyrdom and brotherhood, which emphasize the positive and morally pure fight for independence, shape many war memorials and monuments of the Winter War and Continuation War. This focus emphasizes the collective efforts and unity over individual losses and grief, taking focus away from the corporeal brutality of war and towards a more abstract higher cause: the fatherland.²⁴² With the noose, Pettersson challenged the rhetoric of sacrifice for a higher cause in the context of information and discussion in society. In a video interview, she reflected on the aim of her intervention:

“With this dress I was hoping to bring forward this extremely precious theme, but to also stop people and make them think of the miserable and dangerous conditions in which journalism happens... and how people try to produce knowledge for us at the expense of their lives, and also truly lose their lives while doing so.”²⁴³

²⁴¹ A major ongoing contributor to the narrative of sacrifice are the Heroes' Cemeteries. During the Second World War, Finnish military aimed to transport all fallen soldiers in their home parishes rather than burying them on site. The over 600 Heroes' Cemeteries in Finland function as physical sites of commemoration and mourning, as well as national rituals on red days such as the Independence Day and Remembrance Day for the Fallen (Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory,” 485).

²⁴² Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory, 486;” Riitta Kormano, “Amputoidun maan pirstoutuneet puut: Sotamuistomerkkien luontosymboliikka sisällisodan punaisten ja luovutetun Karjalan uhrien muiston välittäjänä.” *Ihminen sodassa: Suomalaisen kokemuksia talvi- ja jatkosodasta* Helsinki: Minerva, 2006.

²⁴³ Original Finnish: *Toivoin että tällä puvulla voisi yhtä aikaa tuoda tätä oikeesti superarvokasta teemaa, mutta myöskin pysäyttää ihmiset ajattelemaan kuinka surkeissa ja vaarallisissa oloissa tätä arvokasta tiedonvälitystä tehdään ja kuinka ihmiset henkensä kaupalla yrittävät tuottaa meille tietoa ja todellakin menettävät henkensä sen tehdessään*” (Pettersson, video interview with the author, 14 Dec 2020).

Pettersson's focus hence was not only in the positive side of the Reception's theme or reduced to celebrating the state of freedom of speech in Finland. Death and violence, symbolized by the hardly ignorable noose, emphasize tragedy and unnecessary deaths rather than noble and willful sacrifices for a higher cause. The intervention in the celebration of the importance of press freedom reminded the fellow attendees, representatives of media and home spectators what *lack* of press freedom can lead to. Instead of using the rhetoric of journalists sacrificing their lives for the cause of freedom of speech, Pettersson talks about journalists being murdered and working in miserable conditions. Their lives are therefore not given, but lost unwillingly.

Unlike Feodoroff, who remained serious while greeting the presidential couple, a video clip of Pettersson's arrival shows that she enters the handshaking rite with a wide smile on her face. This exhibitory action can be interpreted as showing excitement and happiness, and also establishes a different kind of departure point for the further evaluation of her overall presence and intervention. Feodoroff's seriousness and more aesthetically radical execution of the message communicated that responding to the invite and participating in the Reception was surrounded by the ethical dilemma of attending versus being absent. It can be recognized from her presence that she is not excited to be in attendance, but attending out of the urgency of her cause. Pettersson, again, is expressing a more positive state of mind, which stands in contrast with the brutality of the noose hanging around her neck. The dissonance between Pettersson's exhibitory actions showing delightment and the message of the garment reflects how Pettersson wished to respect the Reception's theme and proudly represent her field of profession but also draw attention to the violence taking place outside of Finland.

Reading further into the visual symbolism of the noose, Pettersson carrying it around her neck while otherwise acting according to the conventions of the Reception seems to comment on how danger can be a part of someone's everyday life. The Finnish proverb "*roikkua löysässä hirressä*" comes to mind: directly translating to "to hang on a loose noose," it refers to arduously waiting for something bad to happen or expecting an uncomfortable situation to resolve. It could also be described as always being under a threat or being uncertain about how things will end up. The noose then symbolizes how, in some countries, journalists do their work with a figurative noose around their neck: in dangerous conditions, or trying to practice their freedom of speech while knowing that authorities will attempt to silence them in any way possible. With the

intervention, Pettersson also brought the violence closer to home. Noose around the neck of a Finnish journalist, even though a decorative one, might provoke a stronger reaction in the spectators. The violence is now symbolically threatening the familiar, making its way to the presidential palace, and imposing itself on a Finnish body. The bizarreness of the sight can make one reflect on freedom of speech as a privilege and suggests that if Pettersson was to work in another country, the presence of the loose noose could become a mundane part of her daily life.

In the video clip from the arrival hall, Pettersson stops and waits for a moment until the preceding guest has finished the handshaking before proceeding to greet the president.²⁴⁴ The reason behind this is that Pettersson's mother-in-law instructed her and her husband to wait until the people in front of them are fully finished with the handshaking before approaching the presidential couple. This way, both her presence and the statement made through her noose garment would be more likely to be captured by the cameras, as the preceding guests are out of the way.²⁴⁵ By this tactical move - or rather, prolonged movement - Pettersson extended the time during which the home spectators could react to the noose. The initial, sensory level of communication, as coined by Sauter, is more likely to be established if the guest is exposed to the camera, and hence home spectators, for a longer time. When the spectators have more time and full exposure of Pettersson's dress and the noose, the likelihood of their initial reactions to her presence turning into further emotional and intellectual responses is amplified. The advice on how to act in the handshaking event in order to ensure one's exposure to the spectators is an example of the kind of oral instructions and tacit knowledge which a Reception guest can receive for their performance in front of the cameras.

Pettersson carrying the noose around her neck was an embodied action, as she was intentionally signifying the struggle of her fellow journalists. Instead of just navigating through the Reception as someone in a festive dress, conventionally 'doing' the Reception, the noose turned her presence into a symbolic act which lasted for the entire duration of the evening. As elaborated by Sauter, spectators are aware that embodied actions are fictive or symbolic - what is needed are recognizable references and a shared cultural sphere.²⁴⁶ Frames of reference, such as

²⁴⁴ Julia Aalto-Setälä, "Huomasitko? Päätoimittaja Maria Petterssonilta pysäyttävä kannanotto - edustaa kaulassaan hirttoköysi." *Iltalehti*, 6th Dec 2019.

²⁴⁵ Pettersson, video interview with the author. 14 Dec 2020.

²⁴⁶ Sauter, *The Theatrical Event: Dynamics of performance and perception*, 60.

the traditions associated with the Reception and the year's specific theme, then assisted the spectators in interpreting and understanding the embodied action of carrying the noose. The noose was stylized in a way which rather made it a signifier of the universally recognizable deathly knot, a prop-like garment or an accessory which cannot and should not function like the original object. It was fictive in the sense that it was easily interpreted as an addition to the dress and not an object to be used in a harmful way.

Overshadowed History: the Taboo of the Civil War

In addition to symbolizing the dangerous conditions that some journalists face, Pettersson linked the noose to “what also happened in Finland in the beginning of the independence to wrong-minded people.”²⁴⁷ The painful legacy of post-independence Civil War of 1918 remained taboo in the story of Finland's independence for a long time, and is still easily overshadowed by the notion of national unity and togetherness which marks the memory culture of Finland in the Second World War, especially the Winter War. Historian Tuomas Tepora has concluded that symbolically, the Winter War “signified the unmaking of the Civil War” by reintroducing the Reds, consisting of the working class and Social Democrats, back to the grand narrative and reintegrated them to the realm of Finnish collectivity.²⁴⁸ The nation forgetting about their sociopolitical differences and past wrongdoings for the sake of uniting against the common enemy can be interpreted as a positive outcome of consecutive conflicts. Yet, the same narrative can also contribute to a polished version of history which pushes the ugly, morally questionable, and uncomfortable to the margins. In the video interview, Pettersson states:

“Finland is a master of negotiation. We have, as one of rare states, negotiated independence for ourselves...things that led to independence were not at all present at the celebration, let alone all the horror which followed after independence.”²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ @mariapettersson, *Twitter*, 6th Dec, 2019, 6.57p.m.

²⁴⁸ Tuomas Tepora, “Redirecting Violence: The Finnish Flag as a Sacrificial Symbol: 1917–1945.” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 7, no. 3 (2007): 153–70.

²⁴⁹ Original Finnish: “Suomi on neuvottelun suurvalta. Olemme yhtenä aika harvoista valtioista neuvotelleet itsellemme itsenäisyyden, Itsenäisyyteen johtaneet asiat eivät ole ollenkaan juhlissa esillä saatika kaikki se kauheus mitä seurasi itsenäisyyden jälkeisinä vuosina.” (Pettersson, video interview with the author. Dec 14 2020).

Her comment summarizes how the general emphasis of the Reception's version of the story of Finland's independence does not in fact address the declaration of independence itself. The negotiations for collecting the needed signatures for the declaration of independence from authorities such as Lenin were successful, yet are overshadowed by the sacrifices of the veterans and fallen soldiers during the later wars. In the context of the Reception, a major factor in this of course is the presence of war veterans in the palace. The polarization and chaos of the Civil War, again, are often compensated with stories of togetherness, especially echoing the mythical Spirit of the Winter War.

The noose drew attention to a taboo topic in the nation's history, and hence functioned as an animative against the official performatives that tend to fluctuate away from the painful and polarizing and towards the victorious and unifying. An underlying message of the intervention hence is that while Finland's efforts and successes to cherish freedom of speech may have positioned the country as a role model for the rest of the world, this status should not be taken for granted. Furthermore, the noose encouraged people to look into the painful happenings in Finland's past which trivialized freedom of speech in the early stages of the nation-building process. As stated by Pettersson: "It is not that long ago since people have been murdered due to their opinions... and solely opinions."²⁵⁰ The reminder challenges the notion that phenomena such as murders of journalists have never belonged to the cultural sphere of Finland and that freedom of speech has manifested as an intrinsic value since the birth of the nation.

Interpretations and Misinterpretations

According to Pettersson, the overall on-site response to the noose was positive. Only one member of the Finnish parliament, Ben Zyskowitz, had approached Pettersson to ask about the meaning of the noose with a suspicious tone of voice. However, after Pettersson explained the context of the garment to him, Zyskowitz also approved the statement and expressed his appreciation for the gesture. According to Pettersson, revealing the context of her dress in the tweet already during the Reception was likely to have contributed to getting the message across, which resulted in less speculation and confusion from the spectators. She was also pleased with

²⁵⁰ Pettersson, video interview with the author, 14 Dec 2020.

how many media platforms were interested in interviewing her, and says she is not sure whether she would have gotten the chance to talk about the cause as much without the help of the noose.²⁵¹

Even though the overall reception of the noose was encouraging and Pettersson got a myriad of opportunities to articulate the message behind the statement, there also was a misunderstanding which Pettersson describes as an “attempt to be shocked.”²⁵² In an *Ilta-Sanomat* article the symbolic significance of the noose was overlooked as the message was interpreted as a direct reference to members of the Red side of the civil war being hanged during the war. In the article author Panu Rajala labels the statement as unclear and unsuccessful. He states that in some countries journalists in fact might be hanged, hence the noose could be fitting, but in context of recent history the statement is ill-fitting and “goes past and beyond” the message.²⁵³ He proceeds to elaborate on how representatives of the Reds also censored right-leaning publications and used violent language which further provoked the polarization of the Finnish society around the civil war.²⁵⁴ Rajala hence interpreted the noose to refer to a specific aspect of the Civil War and aimed to judge Pettersson’s intervention as historically inaccurate.

As Taylor emphasizes, animatives as unspoken resistance require interpretation in order to be effective.²⁵⁵ The *Ilta-Sanomat* article shows how, regardless of Pettersson making an effort to explain the statement via Twitter and numerous interviews to the press, animatives can still be misinterpreted. In this case an aesthetic aspect of unspoken resistance, the red color, led into an interpretation which only focused on a minor aspect of the wider message of Pettersson’s intervention. In the case of this specific article, an intentional misunderstanding for the sake of stirring conversation is also possible considering that before the publication of the article, Pettersson had already further clarified the message behind the noose on Twitter. On the day following the Reception, she tweeted:

²⁵¹ Pettersson notes that some of the journalists present at the Reception were people she knew, such as past colleagues, but not all of them (Video interview, 14 Dec 2020).

²⁵² Pettersson, video interview with the author, 14 Dec 2020.

²⁵³ “Päätoimittaja kohahdutti Linnassa hirttosilmukalla- Panu Rajala kyseenalaistaa erikoisen asusteen taustan: “Menee ohi ja yli.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 7 Dec, 2019. <https://www.is.fi/linnanjuhlat/art-2000006335789.html>

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Taylor, *Presente!*, 48.

“During and around the Finnish civil war people who disagreed or were thought to disagree were murdered. Victims included Reds, Whites, and nonaligned people, murderers were both the Reds and the Whites. During these times of polarized discussion there is a reason to remember history.”²⁵⁶

With the tweet Pettersson hence emphasized that regardless of the red color of the noose, the statement did not exclusively refer to the murders of the Reds.²⁵⁷

Working Around the Etiquette: The Tactical Stylization of the Noose

Incorporating a special message in one’s style is commonly seen at the Reception. As discussed in Viivi Laakkonen’s 2018 Master’s thesis “Finland’s Biggest Dress Part: A Study of the Role of Women’s Appearances at the Independence Day Reception,” especially evening gowns worn at the Reception can be seen as tools for communication. The media exposure one can receive at the event encourages the attendees and the designers of their dresses to make visual references to factors such as identity, values, and cultural background.²⁵⁸ While some elements such as Pettersson’s noose are more visually striking and immediately visible, some messages are more hidden. In the same reception with Pettersson, another dress design made a reference to the issues addressed by the noose. Chair of the Union of Journalists in Finland, Hanne Aho also wished to address the dangers of being a journalist. Designed by Karina Vainio, the sleeves of Aho’s dress were decorated by 49 heart-shaped Swarovski crystals, each of them symbolizing one journalist who had lost their lives that year.²⁵⁹ Unlike in Pettersson’s dress, the decorative detail was very subtle. The meaning behind the crystals could hardly be realized without knowing the context, and crystals in an evening dress can easily be read simply as an aesthetic

²⁵⁶ @mariapettersson, “Suomen sisällissodassa ja sen liepeillä murhattiin ihmisiä, jotka olivat tai joiden kuviteltiin olevan eri mieltä. Uhreina punaisia, valkoisia ja puolueettomia, murhaajina sekä punaiset että valkoiset. Näinä polarisoituneen keskustelun aikoina on syytä muistaa historia.” *Twitter*, 7th Dec 2019. 10:04a.m.

²⁵⁷ Furthermore, in the video interview Pettersson also noted that the violence being referred to was not only relevant to the Civil War, as also during the Continuation War people lost their lives due to refusing to fight.

Metsäkaartilaisuus, “Forest Guards” refers to the phenomenon of men deserting from the frontline or otherwise avoiding their war duties during the Continuation War, sometimes hiding in the forest for long periods of time. Some of them ended up being executed without proper trials. More about the Forest Guards in Ilkka Levä’s chapter “Linjaan vaiko hautausmaalle” in *Ruma Sota* (ed. Sari Näre and Jenni Kirves, Johnny Kniga, 2008: 209-248).

²⁵⁸ Viivi Laakkonen, “Finland’s Biggest Dress Party,” 45.

²⁵⁹ Ulla Yliherne, “Sipoolainen Hanne Aho astelee Linnan juhliin puvussa, joka kunnioittaa työssään kuolleita toimittajia – tänä vuonna menehtyneitä on jo 49.” *Sipoon Sanomat*, 5 Dec, 2019.

<https://www.sipoonsanomat.fi/paikalliset/1218658>

detail typical for evening dress fashion.²⁶⁰ Pettersson's noose again was, not least due to its bright red hue, likely to be the first element in her overall style to capture one's attention.

Pettersson's dress and the noose garment were an outcome of a lucky collaboration. In November 2019 after the invitations had arrived, Pettersson's mother-in-law Arja Pettersson was the director of Helsinki-based dance theater Hurjaruuth which organizes an annual Winter Circus production. At the 2019 premiere, Maria Pettersson had mentioned that she needed a dress for the Reception, when somebody else in attendance suggested her to speak to the production's costume designer Joonas Huotari. Huotari had time in his schedule for a relatively urgent dress project, and together with Pettersson they brainstormed her dress. Pettersson's point of departure for the design was that as a representative of journalists, she wished to use the platform to bring forward a cause related to her field of profession. According to Pettersson, she had discussed with Huotari that the outcome could resemble her everyday style and be theatrical, and hence the statement included in the dress wouldn't need to be subtle. Having agreed on the noose look, Pettersson describes the outcome as being "in addition to a statement, a stylish garment."²⁶¹

Turning the noose into a stylized garment was, in addition to being an aesthetic preference, a tactical choice. Pettersson states that she did not want the statement to go radically against the Reception's dress code because if it did, the focus of the resulting discussion would be in breaking the etiquette rather than freedom of speech.²⁶² She hence wanted to direct attention on the message rather than the execution of the intervention. Her approach was hence slightly different to Feodoroff and Sarkola's, even though both interventions have elements in common as well. Both Feodoroff and Sarkola's as well as Pettersson's interventions were non-verbal statements which were executed through their appearances.²⁶³ However, Feodoroff and Sarkola's

²⁶⁰ Another example of a subtle statement also mentioned by Laakkonen in her thesis is from 2017, when Viima Lampinen who was the chairperson of Finland's main LGBT+ organization Seta at the time, arrived at the Reception in a suit and glitter on the side of their face. In interviews given to the press both at the reception and afterwards, Lampinen declared that the pink, white and blue glitter referenced the trans flag. With their style, they wanted to raise awareness and spark conversation about Finland's outdated trans law. The message was subtle and might have gone completely unnoticed if the spectator didn't recognize the colors of the trans flag, as the glitter detail could just as well be modern, festive makeup (Anu-Elina Ervasti, "Setan Viima Lampinen saapui Linnaan glitteriä kasvoillaan – taustalla kannanotto transihmisten puolesta." *Helsingin Sanomat*, 7 Dec 2017. <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005480602.html><https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005480602.html>).

²⁶¹ Pettersson, video interview, Dec 14 2020.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ In addition the interventions also potentially reached an audience who did not actively follow the broadcast and might have read the articles published about the interventions afterwards. It must be considered that both interventions of course had a verbal element as they were afterwards commented on and explained by Feodoroff and

ILO-169 intervention broke the Reception's conventions more straightforwardly. As an intentional disruption to the aesthetic norms of the event, the number painted on their bodies could easily be recognized as an intervention. A part of their protest tactic was to utilize the visual culture of riot and hence reject aestheticization of the message. Pettersson's noose was not as easily distinguishable as protest. Just like the '169,' it invited the spectators to wonder about the context and find out more, yet utilized an object rather than text. The noose was stylized and decorated with pearls to fit Pettersson's aesthetic. When compared with Feodoroff and Sarkola's intervention, the noose blended into Pettersson's overall look whereas the '169' stood out and quarreled with the festive aesthetics. Whereas the number painted on Feodoroff and Sarkolas' bodies intentionally disrupted the dress code, Pettersson's noose was stylized into a presentable part of the dress while being disturbing due to its associations.

More than a Pageant: Subverting the Focus on Fashion

As an animative, Feodoroff and Sarkolas' '169' disrupted the authoritative performatives which aim to maintain the Reception as a space free of protest and expect the guests to agree with the general patriotic consensus of the event. When considering Pettersson's noose as an animative, slightly different performatives can be plotted. By turning the statement into a garment rather than rebelling against the etiquette with a more radical execution, Pettersson and designer Huotari politicized Pettersson's appearance. This subverts the conventional dynamic of rating female-representing guests' appearances and hence the spectators and media paying more attention to looks rather than the attendees' merits. The invitees' dresses are commented on, evaluated and speculated both before, during and after the reception and are one of the main sources of material especially for the tabloid media. "Queen of the Castle" voting, first launched by tabloid magazine *Iltalehti* in 2002, has ever since encouraged viewers of the Gala to vote for the best-dressed female guest of the Gala.²⁶⁴ In recent years, there has been discussion about the problematic nature of this tradition of evaluating and rating the value of a guest based on their

Pettersson, but with non-verbal protest I specifically refer to the way in which the primary attention to their causes was drawn through visual communication.

²⁶⁴ Teija Lassi, "Muistatko nämä puvut? Linnan kuningattaret 2002-2012," *Iltalehti*.
http://www.iltalehti.fi/linnanjuhlat/2013120417794444_lj.shtml

fashion choices.²⁶⁵ Two members of parliament, Li Andersson and Saara-Sofia Sirén, discuss the tradition of rating the Reception attendee's appearances in a *Helsingin Sanomat* article. Sirén, who has incorporated recycled materials on her dresses, states that "Because I cannot influence whether the publicity around the event is dress-centered or not, I want to do my small part and take advantage of the opportunity to bring forward some things that are important to me."²⁶⁶ Andersson, again, says that she has aimed to take the attention away from her looks by attending the Reception in the same dress for three years in a row. She reflects on when she attended the Reception in 2016 after the government had made harsh budgeting decisions. Having given interviews about the topic and about her uncomfot in celebrating during the challenging times, instead of quoting her comments the tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* wrote "Wow, what lips!"²⁶⁷

The comparison and rating of appearances which resembles a beauty pageant is, to a large extent, maintained by the press and online media that produce appearance-focused content and often circulate the same photos of dresses categorized as either "tops" or "flops." The origins of this gendered phenomenon is naturally linked to the dress code itself being gendered: a long evening gown for women and white tie for men is preferred. As noted by Laakkonen in her thesis, the Reception is also the only annual public event with such a dress code in Finland, which is why the focus on appearances is even more amplified.²⁶⁸ However, the phenomenon can also be traced further back to how personifications of nations have historically been gendered as female. National icons such as Mother Russia, Marianne, Britannia, the Statue of Liberty and Moder Svea function as universal and symbolic representations and embodiments of the nation's ideologies. Johanna Valenius has researched the many representations of Finland's feminine representations which culminate in *Suomi-Neito*, the Finnish Maid. Whether there have been

²⁶⁵ Also some male-representing guest's outfits are discussed in the media, especially if their clothing in some way broke the etiquette. An example of this is when hip hop artist Paleface arrived at the Reception in white sneakers instead of dress shoes in 2010. However, as Viivi Laakkonen notes in her MA thesis about women's appearances at the Reception, the focus is on female-representing guests as they have more room for expression and experimentation than male-representing guests, who must wear a dark suit or white tie ("Linnan juhlat 20120: Palefacen kannanotto - Linnan tennareissa." *Ilta-Sanomat*, Dec 7, 2010; Laakkonen, "Finland's Biggest Dress Party, 23).

²⁶⁶ Minna Nalbantoglu, "Li Andersson halusi puhua eriarvoisuudesta, mutta lehteen tuli otsikko: "Vau mitkä huulet!" - Tältä Linnan juhlien ulkonäkökeskeisyys tuntuu kahdesta kansanedustajasta." *Helsingin Sanomat*, Dec 5, 2018. <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000005921351.html>

²⁶⁷ Nalbantoglu, "Li Andersson halusi puhua eriarvoisuudesta, mutta lehteen tuli otsikko: "Vau mitkä huulet!" *Helsingin Sanomat*, Dec 5, 2018.

²⁶⁸ Laakkonen, "Finland's Biggest Dress Party," 6.

more motherly and even grotesque interpretations of the Finnish Maid, the most commonly known one portrays her as a young virgin Maiden who must be protected from external threats.²⁶⁹ Reproduced as art and occupying central locations as public monuments, the female icons are not thought to be active agents within the nation. The female icons represent the notion that in the processes of nation-building and maintaining collective identities, women symbolize continuity (not least through reproduction), tradition, honor and the sempiternal qualities of a nation. Men, on the other hand, are thought of as the active agents working towards progress.²⁷⁰ As stated by Valenius: “The stony ladies *are*, men *do*.”²⁷¹

Sociologist Nira Yuval-Davis has argued that women often carry the burden of being the “symbolic bearers of the collectivity’s identity and honor, both personally and collectively.”²⁷² Embodying the nation, women signify the boundaries of the collective and hence protect it with ‘proper’ clothing and behavior.²⁷³ She notes that women’s role within the collectivity is paradoxical: while women as a group represent honor and unity which is to be protected and cherished through national projects like war, at the same time they are often “excluded from the collective ‘we’ of the body politic, and retain an object rather than a subject position.”²⁷⁴ Women are hence categorized as the ‘Other,’ and the construction of womanhood is dictated by cultural codes which often work towards maintaining the inferior position through discourses of properness and tradition.²⁷⁵ Having established that the Reception is a patriotic event during which national identities are constructed and shaped, policing the women’s appearances at the Reception becomes a symbolic act of policing how one embodies the nation. As the representatives of “significant Finns,” or as the partners of “significant Finns,” the women must

²⁶⁹ In her research, Valenius focuses on the representations of the Finnish Maid in satirical magazines at the turn of the twentieth century. She emphasizes that the variety of Finland’s personifications at the time was vast, even though the Finnish Maid most familiar to most Finns is young maiden with long blonde hair and often dressed in a national dress. Maybe the most iconic example of such imagery is painter Eetu Isto’s 1899 painting *The Attack*, where a two-headed eagle representing the Russian Romanov empire is tearing a law book from the hands of a female figure with a white dress and long, flowing blonde hair (Johanna Valenius. *Undressing the Maid: Gender, Sexuality and the Body in the Construction of the Finnish Nation*. (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2004), 17; 20-21).

²⁷⁰ Gordon, Komulainen and Lempiäinen, *Suomineiton hei!, 14-14*; Valenius, *Undressing the Maid*, 10.

²⁷¹ Valenius. *Undressing the Maid*, 10.

²⁷² Nira Yuval-Davis. *Gender & Nation*, 45.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁷⁵ Yuval-Davis talks about extreme cases such as murders of women due to them bringing ‘shame’ or ‘dishonor’ to their families and communities by dressing or behaving ‘inappropriately.’ She adds that even when the punitive practices do not reach such extremes, traditions and reinventions of traditions are utilized in controlling women. (*Gender and Nation*, 46-47).

stay in the realm of the ‘appropriate’ by looking impressive without going overboard by drawing too much attention to themselves. Disrespecting the dress code, underdressing, or appearing in a dress which is publicly categorized as ugly or tasteless then goes beyond a personal embarrassment: it is almost an offense to the consensus of the Reception and hence does not respect the overarching themes of the event. As judging the dresses has turned into a “tradition,” it is repeatedly reproducing the dynamic of valuing men for their merits and women for their looks.

As the tradition of rating women’s dresses is strongly rooted in the media practices around the Reception, a guest can hardly avoid becoming the subject of it. Pettersson’s outfit took a subversive approach and utilized the appearance-centered atmosphere for her own cause. The dress, which traditionally has taken focus away from the wearer’s merits, career, and opinions, now becomes the main tool for protest. The attention-catching noose turns into a conversation starter for the exact conversation that its carrier wishes to have, and the media attention is then naturally shifted towards the desired topics. The outfit, which has traditionally reduced the woman’s role to passive representation evaluated on an aesthetic basis, becomes an active agent. Going back to Taylor’s definition of animatives as “embodied, communicative acts that refuse the performative utterance that tries to interpellate and frame them”, the noose garment becomes an animative which refuses to be framed by the conventional standards of beauty, fashion, and style.²⁷⁶

Tweeting from the Reception: a Threat to Tradition?

In addition to making a statement with the noose, Pettersson also executed what could be called a virtual intervention by starting a tweet chain titled “Castle festivities! In this chain, things you don’t see on the telly. Let’s start with the cloakroom queue.”²⁷⁷ The chain chronologically captures her visit in the palace through pictures of scenarios that are usually left out of the

²⁷⁶ Taylor, *Presente!*, 48. In the video interview Pettersson mentions that her outfit along with the noose garment did end up in an article in which dresses were discussed and evaluated. She says that her dress could quite not be labeled as a success or a flop by the article, but seemed to cause confusion in context of the conventional standards of rating the dresses.

²⁷⁷ Original Finnish: @mariapettersson, “Linnan juhlat! Tässä ketjussa asioita, joita et näe telkkarista. Aloitamme narikkajonosta. #linnanjuhlat #linnanjuhlat2019.” *Twitter*, 12 Dec. 2019, 5:59 p.m.
<https://twitter.com/mariapettersson/status/1202995939612463105/photo/1>

broadcast, such as the crowded lobby where people wait to be lined up for the handshaking and pastries layed out for the guests who are waiting for the official catering to begin. With captions such as “Now we’re queueing up for the stairs. At the top of them is perhaps the president.” and photos of miscellaneous paintings of animals found across the halls, Pettersson presents a humorous and alternative approach to the event for her Twitter followers.²⁷⁸ Through the tweets, she engaged in demystifying the Reception and hence offered a more realistic and less polished reportage of the event.

Usage of social media at the Reception has stirred discussion and provoked concerns about the nature of the event. A day after the 2012 Reception, during which the Finance and Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb had been sharing tweets, the tabloid *Ilta-Sanomat* published an article where etiquette coach Kaarina Suonperä, who also later criticized Feodoroff and Sarkola’s intervention, argues that as the Reception is tied to tradition, tweeting and using one’s phone to take pictures is not appropriate.²⁷⁹ In the same article Johanna Sumiala, Associate Professor of Media and Communication Studies at Helsinki University, states that using social media during the Reception challenges the traditional idea that while the elite celebrates, the common folk observe the celebration through television. She notes that while Yleisradio has always had a monopoly-like status in transmitting the celebration to the nation’s living rooms, social media allows the visitors to break these boundaries and erase the hierarchy.²⁸⁰ However, Sumiala also ponders whether guests using social media to document the Reception can reduce the extraordinary nature of the event and does not see the utilization of social media as a fully positive thing. In the article, Sumiala states:

The glamor of the celebration is based on how only specific people are invited. It can be that the specialness of the party disappears if everyone is tweeting from there. The whole idea behind the

²⁷⁸ Original Finnish: @mariapetterss0n, “Nyt jonotetaan portaisiin. Niiden yläpäässä on ehkä presidentti.” *Twitter*, 12 Dec. 2019, 6:12 p.m. <https://twitter.com/mariapetterss0n/status/1202999181763321857/photo/1>

²⁷⁹ Capturing selfies with his fellow invitees and revealing anecdotes such as “The library is the hottest place in the Palace,” alongside a picture of a crowded room, Stubb showed a less glamorous side of the nation’s most followed celebration (@alexstubb, “The library is the hottest place in the Palace.” *Twitter*, 12 Dec. 2012, 8:23 p.m. <https://twitter.com/alexstubb/status/276770267605368832>)

²⁸⁰ Miina Hakala, “Tapakouluttaja paheksuu Stubbin käytöstä Linnassa.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 7 Dec 2012. <https://www.is.fi/linnanjuhlat/art-2000000565633.html>

celebration can go to waste, if the same continues in the future...in theory one can think that no one bothers to make an appearance anymore, when you can participate virtually.²⁸¹

With the rapid popularization of platforms such as Twitter, the organizers of the Reception are no longer able to strictly patrol the impression of the event given to the home audiences. In the words of Taylor, “the forces of the inappropriate and disruptive” now put additional pressure on the frame and image of the Reception.²⁸² The concerned tone about the usage of social media on site reveals how creating a veil of glamor through mystification and filtering the event is deeply rooted in the celebration. Tweeting is interpreted as a threat to the carefully curated “glamor” and “specialness of the party” and hence also Pettersson’s tweets can be considered as a threat to tradition.

The concerns about social media taking away from the Reception further demonstrate the ritualized nature of the event. As discussed before in reference to Taylor, rituals are typically functioning on the basis of ‘doing as a form of belonging,’ where the participants in the ‘doing’ are determined through initiation practices.²⁸³ In the Reception ritual, the invitation enables the invitees to be initiated into the category of “significant Finns,” whereas the home spectators can participate in the media event, but not directly in the doing that is happening inside the palace. The exclusivity of the event, the specific ‘doing,’ is a key factor to its ritual status. By publishing previously inaccessible and unseen behind-the-scenes material from the event on social media, the invitees can shake the traditional dynamics between participants and spectators.

The production of the broadcast plays a very central role in shielding the element of glamor and exclusivity. According to Kalevi Uusivuori, who directed the broadcast in 2000, in practice this means that scenarios such as invitees waiting in a crowded lobby to enter the arrival hall should not be shown on television.²⁸⁴ Representations of the potentially uncomfortable physical realities and sensory experiences of the attendees are hence minimized in order to bring forward imagery of honor and luxury. The discomfort of a big crowd, high temperatures, limited

²⁸¹ Original: *Juhlien glamor perustuu siihen, että sinne kutsutaan vain tietyt ihmiset. Voi olla, että Linnan juhlien erityisluonne häviää, jos kaikki tviittailevat sieltä. Juhlien koko idea alkaa vesittyä, jos sama jatkuu tulevaisuudessa. Teoriassa voisi ajatella, että kuka enää jaksaa mennä paikan päälle, kun voi osallistua virtuaalisesti* (Miina Hakala, “Tapakouluttaja paheksuu Stubbin käytöstä Linnassa.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 7 Dec 2012).
<https://www.is.fi/linnanjuhlat/art-2000000565633.html>

²⁸² Taylor, *Performance*, 127.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁸⁴ Hirvikorpi, *Linnan Juhlat kautta aikojen*, 129.

space and sweaty dresses and suits does not fit into the consensus that being present at the Reception is an honor and should hence be enjoyable. The element of sacrifice becomes relevant once again, as it appears that as a part of the ritualized event the guests agree to give up their personal space and comfort in order to be present at the Reception. In return, they can become a part of a higher cause, which is to honor the nation, the veterans, and independence. In a less sublime but more realistic interpretation, the sacrifice is made in order to appear in front of the television cameras and be a part of the broadcast: is one *truly present* at the Reception if their presence is not captured on television? In the video interview, Pettersson reveals that the palace has rooms with television screens which show the broadcast of the Reception in real-time, stating: “...people are watching the Castle Gala at the Castle Gala, which is rather absurd.”²⁸⁵ The guests observing the live broadcast rather than focusing on the on-site situation reveals how strongly mediatization shapes the event and gives the notions of liveness and presence a twist. Pettersson’s account of the guest behavior in the palace does not only reveal how deeply implemented the act of *watching* the broadcast in the traditions of the 6th of December, but also shows that the cameras do not document the evening, but rather dictate it. *Attending* (the event in the palace) and *appearing* (on television) become complementary acts.

The phenomenon of the attendees following the Reception from screens while being physically present in the palace functions as an evidence of television being a significant performer in the enactment of the Reception. However, it also illustrates the complexity, if not impossibility, of making clear distinctions between live and mediatized events. Performance scholar Philip Auslander notes that many live performances are in fact products of media technology, which trivializes this juxtaposition. Giving the example of sports events and concerts where a majority of the audience is watching the action from screens and hearing the sound through speakers, Auslander notes that devices such as instant replay, simulcast and the close-up are no longer secondary elaborations of an original event, but “constitutive of the live event itself.”²⁸⁶ The Reception also operates in this “economy of repetition” which Auslander

²⁸⁵ Maria Pettersson, Personal Interview. 14th Dec, 2020. In her 2019 tweet chain from the Reception, Pettersson also tweeted a photo of a television screen showing the Reception broadcast, writing: “What does one do at the castle gala? Watch the castle gala.” (Original Finnish: @mariapettersson, “Mitä linnan juhliissa tehdään? Katsotaan linnan juhliä.” *Twitter*, Dec 6, 2019. 6:49 p.m. <https://twitter.com/mariapettersson/status/1203008541499494401/photo/1>)

²⁸⁶ Auslander, *Liveness*, 25.

describes. The broadcast's superimposition is considered so essential to the ceremony that it is screened at the palace, where the attendees have access to 'direct' participation. In this topsy-turvy situation, attending the Reception appears to be depriving people from viewing the broadcast.

Dayan and Katz note that television should not "intrude" on the ceremonies during media events. Rather, it aims to come across as neutral and informative in its commentary and "only rarely intervenes with analysis and almost never with criticism."²⁸⁷ The narration during the official broadcast of the Reception fulfills this informative, yet non-critical function. The commentators assist the viewers in recognizing the guests and their accomplishments, and narrating details such as what will happen next, which song is played by the military band, and what kind of treats are on the menu. The commentary describes and informs, but does not criticize or critically discuss the Reception's theme or society at large. The Yleisradio commentators and overall direction of the broadcast contribute to the general consensus of the event. Tweets such as the ones shared by Pettersson challenge the television's performative by pointing out the exact things that might disrupt the desired outcome of the broadcast.

Social media enables the home spectators to have less polished content from the event, which in turn allows them to better engage with the so-called "inappropriate" forms of participation outside of the official broadcast. Seeing the chaotic, absurd, and even uncomfortable realities behind what is shown on television calls for reactions which are opposite to neutral. They encourage commenting, criticizing, poking fun, and being amused. Alternative sources of information, such as Pettersson's tweets, give the home spectators an opportunity to interact with the attendee and see the Reception from a fresh, "unofficial" point of view. Following the Twitter chain can hence be said to be an animative which resists the "appropriate," "official" and "traditional" form of spectatorship, which in this case have traditionally been dictated by the television broadcast of Yleisradio. The practice of tweeting or otherwise sharing the Reception on social media also allows the invitees to obtain a new role. By posting their perspectives of the event, the invitee takes upon the role of a curious observer rather than a member of the exclusive elite. Considering that Yleisradio has the monopoly over the live broadcast, social media challenges the traditional ways of documenting the event. The carefully

²⁸⁷ Dayan & Katz, *Media Events*, 8.

planned and choreographed camera angles capture selectively, and with more and more guests arriving with a smartphone, strictly controlling what is shown and what is left out becomes impossible. The invitee who shares their subjective experiences, such as Pettersson, forms a more intimate relationship to the home spectators. These interactions and exchanges of footage and reactions function as animatives that challenge the conventional modes of attendeeship and spectatorship. The tweets erase the line between the polished version of the Reception and the embodied experience of physically being present at the palace. Imagining the corporeal realities of the palace can bring the home audience closer to the on-site experience, as learning about the palace being crowded and hot, for example, can help them imagine the physical reality of the event instead of just the honorable and luxurious.

Whereas the tweeting can be seen as another qualitative turn in the nature of public events, it also contains subversive potential which Pettersson utilized in a way which turned the pictures and statements into animatives. Sharing her observations of the surroundings, she rejected the performative of the television, which has traditionally framed the Reception according to a specific aesthetic. With the noose and the tweets, Pettersson emphasized her own agency over the authoritative performatives at play in a way which also resonates with her profession in the field of journalism. She arrived both as a representative of the field and a bearer of a reminder about the global state of press freedom, and managed to shift the focus on the topics for which she wished to advocate. She introduced marginalized narratives into the realm of the Reception's grand narrative through micro-resistance, and also pushed aside the curtain of mysteriousness surrounding the on-site experiences at the palace.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ Afterwards, Pettersson has utilized Twitter in challenging conventional history. In the summer of 2019, Pettersson started to share on Twitter the stories of women in history which she had found interesting and yet lacking from history books and teaching. The tweets gained such a large following and many requests for a book that Pettersson started a crowdfunding campaign. The book *Historian jännät naiset - Merirosvoja, meedioita, varkaita ja vakoojaprinsessoja* ("The exciting women in history: Pirates, medians, thieves and spy princesses") was published in 2020 alongside with an Yleisradio podcast on the same topic (Marika Kataja, "Naisia, jotka saattoivat olla täysiä paskiaisia, mutta jotka muuttivat maailmaa - Maria Pettersson kokosi jännittäviä naiskohtaloita merirosvopäälliköistä miekkamestareihin ja matemaatikoihin." *Yleisradio*, 22 Aug 2020. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11505564>).

CHAPTER III. SANDRA MARINS AND SÄDE VALLARÉN - A NIPPLE

Figures 4 & 5: Sandra Marins in the red dress and Säde Vallarén behind her exposing their breasts during the Independence Day Reception afterparty live broadcast.²⁸⁹

²⁸⁹ Linnan juhlat 2019. *Yle Areena*, 6 Dec, 2019. <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50288600>

In 2019, the official afterparty of the Reception took place at Hotel Kämp in central Helsinki. In the beginning of the now archived live broadcast, hosts Mikko Kekäläinen and Salla Paajanen wish “Happy Independence Day to the people of Finland,” surrounded by guests holding a glass of champagne. Kekäläinen proceeds to state that “at this point of the evening of Independence Day, handshaking turns into high-fives and Jäger March to *Madafakin darra*,” referring to pop singer Roope Salminen’s popular song “*Madafakin darra*,” which translates to “motherfucking hangover.”²⁹⁰ The less restrained language and high-energy intro portray the shift in the atmosphere from the Reception to the afterparty. The host’s playful comment draws a distinction between the Reception’s ritualized proceeding and the more casual and carnivalesque afterparty. However, the undertone remains patriotic and the event’s status as a glamorous and honorary celebration is still present. While the artists play music from their own repertoires, the evening is traditionally closed by one of the performers sharing their arrangement of Finlandia hymn, taken from the famous tone poem *Finlandia* by Jean Sibelius.²⁹¹ The musicians and attendees are mostly in white ties and evening gowns, which implies that the Reception’s dress code extends to the afterparty. No invitation is needed to enter the venue, but the nature of the event can still be described as highly exclusive.²⁹²

Towards the end of the 2019 afterparty, Roope Salminen and his band performed their hit song “*Madafakin darra*.” On the broadcast recording the audience can be seen singing along, dancing and filming the performance on their phones. The camera swipes across the audience. Suddenly a woman close to the stage with a buzzcut and a bright red dress makes eye contact with the camera and exposes her left breast while jumping up and down. She turns around to face another woman with black hair, who can briefly be seen tucking her breast back in her dress. They both laugh cheerfully and the camera cuts back to the stage (See *Figures 4 and 5*). The

²⁹⁰ Linnan juhlat 2019, *Yle Areena*, 6 Dec, 2019. <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50288600>

²⁹¹ Originally composed by Sibelius in 1899 during the nationalist awakening and resistance towards Russian censorship, the current Finnish lyrics to the hymn were applied by poet V.A. Koskenniemi in 1939 after the Winter War (“*Finlandia* by Jean Sibelius.” *This is FINLAND*. <https://finland.fi/arts-culture/finlandia-by-jean-sibelius/>)

²⁹² It is not completely clear what are the rules concerning the guest list at the afterparty. During the video interviews, Maria Pettersson stated that anyone can attend the afterparty, while Vallarén and Marins said that not everyone can attend and some kind of a name list exists. From this I conclude that factors such as dress code affect whether one is admitted to the venue or not. It must be noted that venues such as Kämp are exclusive by default.

moment is over in a few seconds and would become one of the most speculated happenings in the history of the afterparty.²⁹³

What could be interpreted as a spontaneous idea inspired by a festive evening turned out to be a carefully planned act of protest by activists Sandra Marins and Säde Vallarén, who are known as the frontwomen of the topfreedom movement in Finland. Earlier in 2019 they had gained media exposure for organizing a public topfreedom intervention *Tissiflashmob*, translating to “Tit flash mob” or “Boob flash mob.” During the flashmob on the 8th of June 2019, a group of women and non-binary participants removed their tops and ran together to the water on Hietaniemi beach in Helsinki in order to advocate for top freedom and protest against the double-standards behind censoring female nipples. The event was the first one of its kind organized in Finland and gained wide media exposure also abroad.²⁹⁴²⁹⁵ Vallarén was a relatively public figure also before collaborating with Marins due to her popular lifestyle blog *Pin the Fuck Up*, where she discussed feminism and topics such as sexual violence and representation of intelligent women. While Vallarén’s previous activism operated mainly on social media platforms, Marins has more experience from direct action.²⁹⁶ She has previously been involved with movements and networks such as Extinction Rebellion, Greenpeace and Finnish Naisten Linja, which supports women who have experienced domestic violence.²⁹⁷

The intervention executed during the afterparty was a continuation of Vallarén and Marins’ advocacy for the neutralization of the sexualized female nipple. The planning for the execution had already started two months prior to the event. According to Marins and Vallarén, their biggest motive to use the Independence Day afterparty as the platform for their topfreedom activism was the broadcast’s outreach.²⁹⁸ Even though the afterparty broadcast does not reach the

²⁹³ Linnan juhlat 2019, *Yle Areena*, 6 Dec, 2019. <https://areena.yle.fi/1-50288600>

²⁹⁴ Säde Vallarén and Sandra Marins, video interview with the author. 23 Jul, 2020; Elli Harju, “Video: Helsingissä uimarannalla kymmenet naiset riisuivat yläosansa ja juoksivat yhdessä veteen - “Tissiflashmob” ylitti odotukset. *Iltalehti*, 8 Jun 2019. <https://www.iltalehti.fi/kotimaa/a/f4b90fea-238d-4f54-98dc-e314a7251dce>

²⁹⁵ The flash mob was a direct response to a case which had occurred a year before on a public beach in Hyvinkää, Finland. In August 2018, Hanna Tamminen was requested by the beach guards to cover her breasts or leave the site. Refusing to leave, Tamminen had covered her breasts with leaves of a water plant, which resulted in the guards calling the police. After a conversation with the police officers, Tamminen left the beach (Taiga Häkkinä, “Häkeltynyt uimavalvoja käski rinnat paljaana uineen Hannan pukemaan paidan - luova ratkaisu ei kelvannut: Poliisi paikalle.” *Ilta-Sanomat*, 16 Aug, 2018. <https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005793584.html>).

²⁹⁶ Vallarén and Marins, video interview, 23 Jul 2020; Piritta Räsänen, “Roskafeministit.” *Helsingin Sanomat*, 20 Oct, 2020. <https://www.hs.fi/nyt/art-2000006674887.html>.

²⁹⁷ Räsänen, “Roskafeministit.”

²⁹⁸ Vallarén and Marins, video interview, 23 Jul 2020.

same viewer numbers as the Reception itself, it is still among one of the most watched programmes of the year. In 2019, around 1 260 000 people watched the afterparty on television, which makes up to 24 percent of Finland's population.²⁹⁹ Unlike the other interventions discussed previously, Vallarén and Marins' intervention was planned exclusively for the television cameras. While the presence of the cameras was also considered in the interventions of Feodoroff, Sarkola and Pettersson, some of the outreach of their message was still directed towards the fellow Reception attendees. Feodoroff was aware that the politicians who make decisions about the rights of the Sámi are present in the palace, and Pettersson gave numerous interviews to representatives of the media on site.³⁰⁰ Vallarén and Marins' act of exposing their breasts was not directed towards the others present at the afterparty, and according to Marins and Vallarén, no one on site even noticed the intervention. They closely followed the afterparty broadcast on Vallarén's smartphone to see whether the intervention was visible. The breasts were exposed three times before the camera finally captured them. In the interview, Marins further elaborates that by following the direction and editing of the live broadcast before exposing the breasts, they could plot the camera angles and choose a specific camera to orient themselves in a way in which the breasts would be visible.³⁰¹

From Bra-Burning to Sextremism: A Brief History of Topfreedom Activism

Marins and Vallarén's activism can be situated within the wider context of collective efforts towards changing the laws and policies controlling female nudity in public places and social media platforms. In her *A History of the Breast*, feminist historian Marilyn Yalom argues that the link between women's liberation movement and reclaiming the female body dates back to the women's liberation movement which sparked in the 1960's and 1970's. Focusing on the Western and especially Northern American context, Yalom mentions the late 1960's bra-burning acts as one of the first collective demonstrations against oversexualization of the female breasts.

²⁹⁹ For comparison, the same year the Independence Day Reception had 2 485 000 viewers, which makes up 47 percent of the population (Finnpanel TV-vuosi 2020 esitys, PowerPoint presentation, https://www.finnpanel.fi/lataukset/tv_vuosi_2020.pdf. Accessed Nov 3, 2020).

³⁰⁰ Sharma, "Nyt puhuu 169-tunnuksella Linnassa poliittisesti kantaa ottanut Pauliina Feodoroff." *Iltasanomat*, Dec 7, 2015; Pettersson, video interview with the author, 14 Dec 2020.

³⁰¹ Vallarén and Marins, video interview, 23 Jul 2020.

Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, topless demonstrations were used in the United States to draw attention to topics such as pornography, safe sex and the healthcare system.³⁰² In the past decades, the content moderation practiced by social media platforms has become a central issue in discussions about agency and the female body. Sparking from users of Facebook and Instagram whose content has been subject to censorship, virtual initiatives have manifested through a variety of forms ranging from memes and petitions to real-life protests. The first large-scale campaign dates back to 2007, when Facebook was deleting photographs of mothers breastfeeding their children which led to a virtual "nurse-in" which encouraged women to post pictures of breastfeeding on Facebook.³⁰³ The cause gained more coverage and support due to New York filmmaker Linda Esco's 2014 film *Free the Nipple*.³⁰⁴ The hashtag #FreeTheNipple started to circulate in social media as celebrities such as Miley Cyrus and Rihanna posted pictures of their exposed nipples or shirts supporting the initiative on Facebook and Instagram.³⁰⁵

Europe's maybe most well-known and organized activist group utilizing the female breast is FEMEN. The Ukrainian group gone international was founded in 2008 by Anna Hutsol and Viktor Sviatsky.³⁰⁶ Listing sextremism, atheism and feminism as the cornerstones of their ideology, FEMEN aims to reach their ultimate goal of "complete victory over patriarchy" with naked breasts as their "weapon."³⁰⁷ In their direct action interventions about a variety of matters that vary from sex tourism to dictatorships and religious institutions, the activists appear in

³⁰² Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Breast*. New York: The Ballantine Publishing Group, 1997), 243-244. Even though in Europe such collective movements did not form during the period, Yalom mentions the Italian porn star-turned-politician Cicciolina, who utilized her naked breast in her extremely successful political campaign in 1987 (*A History of the Breast*, 246). Cicciolina visited Finland in 1988, where she exposed her breast both to the press and during her visit in the Parliament house in Helsinki (Jukka Lindfors, "Cicciolina vilautti eduskunnalle." 25 Nov, 2015. *Yleisradio*, <https://yle.fi/aihe/artikkeli/2015/11/25/cicciolina-vilautti-eduskunnalle>).

³⁰³ Sarah Myers West, "Raging Against the Machine: Network Gatekeeping and Collective Action on Social Media Platforms," *Media and Communication* 5, Issue 3. (2017): 31-32.

³⁰⁴ With the film, Esco wished to address the double-standards and Puritanism behind the censorship practiced by the agencies controlling films and television shows in the United States. In 2012, during the production of the fictional film about activists who worked towards the 1992 legalization of public toplessness for women in New York city, real demonstrations for top freedom started to emerge on the streets. (Linda Esco, "Why I Made a Film Called Free the Nipple and Why I'm Being Censored in America." *HuffPost*, Sep 12, 2013. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/free-the-nipple_b_4415859 Accessed: Nov 6, 2021).

³⁰⁵ Many of the photos were removed and some of the profiles suspended by Facebook, which provoked further criticism of the censorship which targeted female bodies (Myers West, "Raging Against the Machine," 31).

³⁰⁶ Tiina Rosenberg, "My Cunt, My Rules! Feminist Sextremist Activism in Neoliberal Europe." *Performance, Feminism and Affect in Neoliberal Times*, eds. E. Diamond et al. Contemporary Performance InterActions: 2017, 124.

³⁰⁷ Femen, *Femen Official Blog*, <https://femen.org/>

public places and expose their upper bodies where slogans are written in bold letters. Besides the bold letters written on bare skin, other central elements of the FEMEN aesthetic include traditional Ukrainian *vinok* flower crowns and fists raised up in the air as a symbol of resistance.³⁰⁸³⁰⁹ In reference to Schneider's notion of explicit body performance, gender and theatre scholar Tiina Rosenberg describes the bodies of Femen activists as "human stages on which protest literally unfolds" as they disrobe in public.³¹⁰ As discussed in the context of Feodoroff's intervention in which the message was written on the skin of her head, a message can be amplified when the body becomes the deliverer and stage from which it operates. However, one major element which distinguishes Marins and Vallarén's intervention from the symbolic communication of Feodoroff's protest is the lack of written text or any other visual signifier on the exposed breasts. The breast, as a body part which still remains stigmatized and sexualized unlike the side of one's head, becomes the message itself, not just the stage on which the protest unfolds. Feminist sociologist Theresa O'Keefe defines gendered body protests as "protests that make explicit the use of the female body to call attention to issues that pertain to women's bodies, or simply protests where the gendered body is both subject and agent."³¹¹ With their brief but effective intervention, Marins and Vallarén utilized their breasts as both the subject and the agent.

"What Just Happened?" Surprise, Shock and Intentionality

The intervention was fast and effective. In a few seconds' time, Marins managed to capture the spectators' attention through the element of surprise and the intervention's powerful visuality. When looking at the broadcast record, Marins' exposed breast, surrounded by the bright red

³⁰⁸ Theresa O'Keefe, "My body is my manifesto! SlutWalk, FEMEN and femmenist protest." *Feminist Review*, no. 14. (2014): 8.

³⁰⁹ A tactic similar to Femen's protest was used in November 2019 by Chilean singer Mon Laferte who exposed her breasts on the red carpet during the Latin Grammy Awards. As a sign of support for the anti-government demonstrations and statement against police brutality in Chile, her intervention combined the act of exposure of female breasts and writing on skin. Mon Laferte had the text "*EN CHILE TORTURAN VIOLAN Y MATAN*" ("In Chile, they torture, rape, and kill") written across her chest. The bold, black and capitalized letters appear to be written with a black marker, an aesthetic choice very similar to Femen protest. ("Chilean singer Mon Laferte exposes breasts at Latin Grammys to back protesters." *The Guardian*, 15 Nov, 2019.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/nov/15/mon-laferte-chile-latin-grammys-protest>)

³¹⁰ Rosenberg, "My Cunt, My Rules!" 124.

³¹¹ O'Keefe, "My body is my manifesto!," 3.

fabric of her dress, is almost impossible to ignore. The background of the other afterparty attendees' dark and neutral clothing further enhances the contrast between her and her surroundings. At the very moment of the intervention, Marins also happened to be nearly perfectly centered on the screen (See *Figure 4*).³¹² The composition organically directs the spectator's gaze on her nipple and is therefore visually dynamic and efficient. Prior to this moment she had blended in with the other audience members and had not been directly shown on the broadcast. The moment of the intervention hence established her initial, sensory communication with the audience. As previously discussed, Sauter ties exhibitory acts to first impressions, initial appearances and immediate responses from the spectators. As "acts of showing," they are crucial for establishing the connection between the actor and the audience.³¹³ They also "immediately trigger positive or negative feelings."³¹⁴ An intentionally exposed naked breast in the framework of Independence Day is certain to trigger strong reactions, whether negative or positive. The intervention was effective and widely speculated because this elementary connection with its audience was established through a gesture which broke conventions and was explicit in an unexpected - and, to many - shocking way.

In addition to establishing a connection, exhibitory actions enable the progression from sensory to artistic and symbolic levels of communication. The fact that the intervention was over in a few seconds did not leave much time for further communication to be built upon, or beyond, the initial action. However, its briefness did not mean that the intervention was limited to the sensory level of communication. In the case of Marins and Vallarén, the intervention's full symbolism and potential as an embodied act was realized "in delay" through the discourse that followed after Independence Day. However, the directly perceivable action which simultaneously was (quite literally) exhibitory and encoded, was what caught the spectators' attention and set the stage for the further significations. The act of exposing the breast was an easily distinguishable encoded act, which Sauter explains as conscious gestures that are not involuntary or so-called "natural" movements of the performer.³¹⁵ Being shaped by "not only by individual and cultural conditions, but also by the aesthetic norms of the particular performance," encoded actions are

³¹² Linnan juhlat 2019, 01:37:53 - 01:37:59.

³¹³ Sauter, *The Theatrical Event*, 54.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 59.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

hence interpreted in accordance to genre, style, and cultural conventions and require a certain level of knowledge of these conventions from both the performers and the spectators. While exposing one's breast to the television cameras recording a music festival or a protest might be interpreted as fitting to the genre, during the Independence Day afterparty it radically breaks the conventions and the event's etiquette. The naked female breast is in itself, not only in the Finnish cultural context, charged with meaning and subject to censorship and debate, especially when exposed in public. When exposed during the patriotically coded event, its shock-value for the Finnish spectators is further amplified.

The distinction that Sauter makes between involuntary physical action and intentional gestures is also central to Taylor's explanation of how animatives operate. An act must not only gain attention but also be codified as having an intention for it to turn from noticeable to subversive. As stated by Taylor, "...the animative is not a physical symptom or reaction to a stimulus but a codified act of noncompliance."³¹⁶ In other words, purposefulness and planning are necessary for animatives to function and be recognized as resistance in the first place. Marins' exposed breast could hardly have been interpreted as a wardrobe malfunction or any other kind of involuntary physical symptom. She looks confidently straight to the camera and the dress even has a cut under the breast which makes it easy for her to quickly move the fabric up and down.³¹⁷ The evident intentionality and Marins' confidence is what distinguished these few seconds from an accident and codified it as a purposeful act. The target of the animative was specified more in the following days through the discussion it provoked, but the determined exposure of the breast was immediately interpretable as noncompliance as it contested the conventional and 'appropriate' modes of behavior in the given environment.

The intervention was planned to happen only a few minutes before the end of the live event, which means that Marins and Vallarén executed the intervention quickly on purpose, taking no further contact with the television cameras.³¹⁸ It can then be concluded that the briefness of the act was a calculated tactic. Marins and Vallarén left the audience hanging, which is an effective way to assure that they will look for further information and context for what they

³¹⁶ Taylor, *¡Presente!*, 48.

³¹⁷ Even though Vallarén also exposed her breasts, it was Marins' breast which was the most visible on camera and hence more discussed.

³¹⁸ Vallarén and Marins, video interview, 23 Jul 2020.

had just witnessed. In other words, the animative's effectiveness stemmed from its fleetingness. The symbolic level of communication unfolded along with the aftermath, as the discourse around the exposed breasts extended to many other aspects of the Finnish society. It can be argued that the debate is still, two years after, ongoing.

Development of the Discourse Around the Intervention

The paths of Maria Pettersson, Vallarén and Marins collided in the Kämp hotel lobby area while Pettersson was entering the site and Vallarén and Marins were leaving. Pettersson had previously interviewed Vallarén about her blog, and the two were hence acquainted. Vallarén informed Pettersson about the intervention and Pettersson took the chance to briefly interview the two. She published a 30-second video on her Twitter account, captioned “Säde and Sandra, why did you show your #boobs during the live broadcast of the Independence Day Reception afterparty? #castleparty #afterparty.”³¹⁹ In the video Vallarén and Marins stand next to each other by a wall, with sounds of chit-chat in the background. Marins is holding a kitschy flashing lightbulb with coloring flickering lights above their heads while they respond to Pettersson's question. Marins makes a peace-sign with her hand and states that “My Finland is equal and everyone's boobs are ok.” Vallarén continues with a longer answer, saying:

...maybe this is not the place where men show their boobs but we got quite a lot of attention for our cause... we think that the way in which women's bodies are controlled is directly correlated to how women are controlled in general, and we think that boobs should be ok, well maybe not in the Castle Gala, but sometimes you need to shock people a little bit.³²⁰

After delivering their comments, Vallarén and Marins turn away and exit the scene. Pettersson states that she published the brief interview in order to give Vallarén and Marins a chance to comment on the intervention in their own words prior to the potential scandalization of the act.³²¹ The two hence had some agency over the contextualization of the exposed breasts, as the video

³¹⁹ @mariapettersson. “Säde ja Sandra, miksi näytitte Linnan juhlien jatkojen suorassa lähetyksessä #tissit? #linnanjuhlat #jatkot.” *Twitter*; 11:34p.m. 6 Dec, 2019.

<https://twitter.com/mariapettersson/status/1203080278174027777>

³²⁰ @mariapettersson. “Säde ja Sandra, miksi näytitte Linnan juhlien jatkojen suorassa lähetyksessä #tissit? #linnanjuhlat #jatkot.” *Twitter*; 11:34p.m. 6 Dec, 2019.

³²¹ Pettersson, video interview, 14 Dec 2020.

was published on Pettersson's Twitter account almost immediately after the intervention. The original message was meant to be a continuation of Marins and Vallarén's previous activism which focused on neutralizing the sexualized female nipple. According to Vallarén, they had assumed that the public would interpret the intervention in this specific context, as the tit flashmob was actively discussed in media also outside of Finland.³²²

The message of the intervention was gradually shaped by the responses to the initial act. New levels to the contextualization and meaning of the exposed nipples emerged when the topic of war veterans was introduced in the discussion. Soon after the intervention, Vallarén posted an Instagram video of her and Marins from the afterparty, explaining the intervention they had just executed. The video gained around 1500 comments before being removed by Instagram. Many of the comments mentioned war veterans and accused the women for having disgraced and disrespected their wartime efforts by exposing their breasts. Vallarén believes that the hate speech in the comments was machined from far-right groups and anonymous internet forums such as Ylilauta and Jodel, through which people found their social media accounts.³²³ In the interview, Marins reflects on the shift of the focus from topfreedom to veterans: "The very first interview we gave was about how we want breasts to be equal. That was the agenda, what we went there to do. But when we were fed with all these things, such as disgracing the war veterans, then we responded to that."³²⁴ As the scandal was already stirring, Marins and Vallarén quickly responded to the rather surprising public reaction by recontextualizing the intervention in accordance with the comments they received.

Vallarén published a new photo her and Marins standing in front of a mirror in their evening dresses at the afterparty venue with the following caption:

War veterans, what a lovely excuse! Rest of the year you can rot in your diapers, but once a year you get to be hobby horses of misogyny, thank you for fighting etc. Tomorrow you can go back to the institution,

³²² Orig. Finnish: "*Me aateltiin vähän kun me oltiin tehty se tissiflashmob, mikä oli ollut jopa Daily Mailissä asti, et se on ollut ihan isosti uutisoitu, aateltiin et meidät kyllä osataan yhdistää siihen ja että kaivetaan ne meidän vanhat argumentit ja tän kontekstin siihen ympärille.*" (Vallarén, video interview, 23 Jul 2020).

³²³ Ylilauta is the Finnish imageboard forum equivalent of Reddit and Jodel is a mobile application which allows anonymous discussion with people within a 10 kilometer radius.

³²⁴ Orig. Finnish: "*Se ihan ensimmäinen haastattelu mikä me ollaan annettu on se, että meidän mielestä rinnat pitäis olla tasa-arvoiset... se agenda, se on se, mitä me ollaan menty sinne tekemään... kun meille syötettiin nää sotaveteraanien häpäisemiset, ja kaikki muu...tuli ulkoa, niin me vastattiin siihen.*" (Marins, video interview, 23 Jul 2020).

where no one remembers you. Let's dig you up again in a year, if a nipple is flashed somewhere. Let's pretend together that we care for our elderly #independenceday #finland102.³²⁵

The text, which according to Vallarén was written ironically, resulted in a massive backlash. Vallarén and Marins received around ten thousand messages, out of which approximately one thousand were death threats. Some of the messages described in detail the violence which the sender wished to execute on the women's bodies, such as biting off their nipples. According to Vallarén and Marins the hate speech was gendered, as it also consisted of rape threats, derogatory terms such as 'whore,' and mocking their appearances. In some of the messages their family members were threatened, and a bag of feces was delivered behind Vallarén's door.³²⁶ Vallarén later edited the caption, declaring it as irony and further explaining herself by adding the following text:

I am worried about people's reading skills. We'd certainly need an irony patch, so that children and Nazis can fully participate in the conversation. This post is critique to the comments on the earlier video (removed by Instagram), in which our tits were declared as disgracing war veterans. Here I am criticizing those people who only care about the elderly during Independence Day.³²⁷

Vallarén was surprised by people's literal reading of the Instagram caption, saying that she wrongly assumed that the public would be able to recognize the sarcasm from the text.³²⁸ The response to the intervention, which utilized veterans as a justification for hate speech and threats, echoes a neo-patriotic trend of co-opting wartime symbols and agents for a nationalist discourse.

³²⁵ @missrukiver, "SOTAVETERAANIT - mikä ihana tekosyy! Lopun vuotta voitte mädäntyä vaipoissanne, mutta kerran vuodessa pääsette naisvihan keppihevoseksi 💕 kiitos kun taistelitte yms. 💕 Huomenna voitte taas mennä takaisin sinne laitokseen, missä kukaan ei teitä muista 💕 kaivetaan teidät taas vuoden päästä esiin, jos jossain vilahdaa nänni 🤔 Teeskennellään kaikki yhdessä, että vanhukset kiinnostaa 🍌 #itsenäisyyspäivä #suomi102." *Instagram*, Dec 7, 2019. Accessed Dec 8, 2019.

https://www.instagram.com/p/B5wa6inhXU7/?utm_medium=copy_link

³²⁶ Piritta Räsänen, "Roskafeministit." *Helsingin Sanomat*, 20 Oct, 2020.

<https://www.hs.fi/nytt/art-2000006674887.html>; Vallarén and Marins, video interview with the author, 23 Jul 2020.

³²⁷ @missrukiver, *Olen huolissani ihmisten lukutaidosta. Tarvittaisiin todellakin ironiamerkki, jotta lapset ja natsitkin pääsisivät mukaan keskusteluun täysivaltaisina jäseninä. Tämä postaus on kritiikkiä aikaisemman (Instagramin poistaman) videon kommentteihin, joissa meidän tissit julistettiin sotaveteraanien häpäisyksi. Kritisoin tässä niitä ihmisiä, jotka eivät välitä vanhuksista muulloin kuin itsenäisyyspäivänä.* *Instagram*, Dec 7, 2019. Accessed 8 Dec, 2019. https://www.instagram.com/p/B5wa6inhXU7/?utm_medium=copy_link

³²⁸ Vallarén, video interview, 23 Jul 2020.

Historian Ville Kivimäki notes that such “backwards identity politics” can become dangerously tempting in the midst of economic and social instability and globalization, writing: “A real danger in the current Finnish memory politics of war lies in deliberate oversimplification of the wartime past, whereby the war generation and its sacrifices are consigned to only monolithically conservative and even militantly nationalist meanings.”³²⁹ He is referring to how the veterans have been utilized in the neo-patriotic trend by picturing them as a socially and politically homogeneous group with shared values rather than individuals with their own experience and agency.³³⁰ As Vallarén hints towards with “children and Nazis” in the edited caption, the power and persistence of the narrative around war veterans and independence can be seen in how some of the death threats Vallarén and Marins received came from children, especially boys between the ages of eleven and twelve. As phrased by Vallarén during the video interview, the underage social media users hence took part in the act of being offended *for* the war veterans.³³¹

The Elderly, Guilt, and Shame: Marins and Vallarén as Scapegoats

In her Instagram captions, Vallarén talks about the veterans and other elderly being forgotten in institutions and “people who only care about the elderly during Independence day.”³³² Her comments are related to the public discussion about elderly care in Finland, which was active throughout 2019. In the beginning of the year, staff shortage and quality of care in intensified sheltered housing units were widely discussed and criticized, especially after the Regional State Administrative Agency of Southern Finland sent a letter to the municipalities in which they

³²⁹ Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory,” 497.

³³⁰ The general attitudes towards war veterans have fluctuated over the years. Historian Ville Kivimäki has discussed how the role of the war veterans within the collective memory culture of war was especially trivialized during the 1960s and 1970s due to the period of Finlandization as well as the wave of youth radicalism. Friendly foreign policy approach towards Russia and hence the avoidance of certain controversial topics such as the aggressive nature of the Soviet invasion were experienced as invalidation of the personal experiences and losses of war in general. Rise of the new youth culture and peace movement, again, encouraged the young generations to talk critically about the wars and question their patriotic legacy. This was interpreted by many war veterans as “a humiliation of their wartime efforts” and misrecognition of their experiences. During the 1990s, a narrative based on survival and unity echoing from the wartime provided collective consolation among the economic recession and rapid changes. (Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory,” 497).

³³¹ Vallarén, video interview, 23 Jul 2020.

³³² @missrukiver, “Olen huolissani ihmisten lukutaidosta.” *Instagram*, Dec 7, 2019.

expressed concerns for the elderly's right to good care.³³³ In the interview, Vallarén reflects on how the ongoing debate contributed to the post-intervention hate speech:

“War veterans are comparable with all elderly people... it is true that even though you have a very dear grandma or grandpa, you don't visit them at the nursing home ... and very many people experience a lot of guilt because they simply don't have time, or just don't go, even though they love them...I believe that in some curious way all this materialized in the nipple that was shown on television...the elderly and the guilt. The hatred must [come] from somewhere, because this was talked about at people's jobs and break rooms, there was so much interest towards this topic.”³³⁴

Vallarén hence suggests that individual and collective guilt about the poor treatment of the older generations was channeled as hate towards her and Marins and materialized in Marins' nipple. As seen in the comments which did not only judge the intervention, but Vallarén and Marins themselves as disgraceful, this guilt was then transformed into shame and imposed on the women.

According to Sara Ahmed, while interrelated and overlapping as emotions, shame and guilt operate in different ways. While guilt is related to action and wrongdoings and can hence be separated from the self, shame becomes a defining factor of the self and “becomes what the self is about.”³³⁵ Ahmed states that national shame can function as a “mechanism for reconciliation as self-reconciliation,” writing that acknowledging and admitting to feeling shame about past wrongdoings can restore national pride by bringing the nation into existence as a “felt community.”³³⁶ The shame that is felt in the present about past injustices can contribute to a narrative of national recovery which centers around the idea of “meaning well” and “living up

³³³ Nina Lyly, “Vanhusten tehostetun palveluasumisen epäkohdat: Empiirinen tutkimus Etelä-Suomen aluehallintoviraston ratkaisusta.” Master's thesis, University of Turku. Oct, 2019, 1.

https://www.utupub.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/148628/Lyly_Nina_opinnayte.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

³³⁴ Orig. Finnish: “...sotaveteraanit rinnastuu myös niihin kaikkiin vanhuksiin...se on totta myöskin että vaikka olis vaikka kuinka rakas mummo tai pappa niin ei sitä mennä kattoo sinne vanhainkotiin ja tosi monilla on siitä tosi syyllinen olo että ei vaan ehdi tai ei vaan mee vaikka rakastais sitä...niin mä uskon et sekin jollain ihmeellisellä tavalla rinnastui tähän nänniin mitä näytettiin telkkarissa...et vanhukset ja syyllisyys, jostain sen vihan on pakko (tulla) kun tästä keskusteltiin työpaikoissa ja kahvihuoneissa, ihmisiä kiinnosti...” Vallarén, video interview. 23 Jul 2020.

³³⁵ Ahmed writes: “In shame, more than my action is at stake: *the badness of an action is transferred to me*, such that I feel myself to be bad and to have been ‘found’ or ‘found out’ as bad by others” (*The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 105).

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 101; 109.

to” the nation’s ideals.³³⁷ In the process, people can be released from their individual guilt. Sometimes, a scapegoat is utilized in absolving this collective guilt. The shame is then not collectively admitted to, but placed on the shoulders of an individual who then becomes the subject of public shaming.

By engaging in collectively judging the scapegoat as *not* living up to the nation’s ideals, one can gain the feeling of “meaning well” by protecting the appropriate forms of nationhood and citizenship. Theatre and gender scholar Tiina Rosenberg provides an example of this through the Swedish actress and singer Zarah Leander who worked in the Nazi German movie industry during the Second World War. Although Leander distanced herself from Nazi ideologies, she became a stigmatized and publicly shamed individual who “*embodied* the Swedish catharsis after the war”, and became “the visible scapegoat.”³³⁸ Channeling the shame on Leander and her past hence functioned as a cathartic act which absolved Sweden from potential Nazi sympathies and non-belligerency during the Second World War.³³⁹ In the Instagram caption posted after the intervention, Vallarén describes the veterans as being used as “hobby horses for misogyny,” which directly refers to similar use of shame and guilt where a scapegoat is utilized in search of a catharsis. Plotting the source of guilt in the state of elderly care and people’s inability to make time for the elderly, she addresses the act of being offended *for* the veterans as ironic, if not hypocritical. Her response to the online abuse then suggests that there exists a collective guilt which, instead of being admitted to and used for reconciliation, was channeled on Vallarén and Marins. This way, by implying that the women should be ashamed for the intervention, people could gain catharsis through the idea that they are defending the veterans and their honor. Simultaneously, they would be absolved from the guilt of not caring for the elderly outside of Independence Day.

Visible nipples at the Independence Day Reception have been a topic of speculation also before Marins and Vallarén. In 2004, the term “nipplegate” started to circulate in Finnish tabloid media after singer Jonna Tervomaa attended the Reception in a light satin dress, through which

³³⁷ Ibid., 109.

³³⁸ Tiina Rosenberg, “Queer Feelings: Reflections on Zarah Leander and Gay Diva Worship.” *Nordic Theatre Studies*, vol 21. Föreningen Nordiska Teaterforskare, 2009, 84.

³³⁹ Simultaneously, finding a scapegoat strengthened a narrative of innocence: as Rosenberg points out, the “idea of Sweden as a small, innocent nation surrounded by large and powerful enemies has only occasionally been questioned” (Rosenberg, “Queer Feelings,” 122).

the outline of her nipples could be seen and captured on television and photographs. The nipples became such a widely discussed topic that Tervomaa published an apology on her website, which soon crashed due to a high number of visitors. In 2016, actress Jonna Järnefelt attended the Reception in a silk dress without a bra, which resulted in many tabloid magazines comparing her with Tervomaa. The shame channeled on Tervomaa's body was hence reactivated over a decade after her Reception visit, and attached on another woman's body. The labeling of the women's body parts as inappropriate and reintroducing the "nippegates" in the discourse about Independence Day year after year becomes a punitive, reiterated practice machined by the tabloid press.³⁴⁰ Due to the intentionality and context of their act, in response to Marins and Vallarén's intervention this shame was tangled up with hate.

Online Hate Speech in the Construction of Exclusive Finnishness

The online hate speech targeted towards Marins and Vallarén should be discussed in the context of the political atmosphere which had already earlier in 2019 provoked extremist opinions and polarized discussion. Finland takes pride in being a democratic society that is, in addition to freedom of press, a pioneer in gender equality.³⁴¹ However, in the past years online hate speech has become a growing problem in the country, to the extent that it is considered a serious threat to the freedom of speech and press.³⁴² The issue became more concrete when, on the 10th of December 2019, 34-year old Sanna Marin became the youngest prime minister in the history of Finland. All of the other members of the five-party center-left government were also women.³⁴³ The young, all-female leadership made global headlines and was praised as pioneering in the field of governance and gender equality. However, the government became a target of a

³⁴⁰ Saska Snellman, "Kaksi pientä myynninedistäjää." *Helsingin Sanomat* 19th Dec, 2004.

<https://www.hs.fi/sunnuntai/art-2000004275169.html>; Tuija Siltamäki, "Kolumni: Nännit ovat kantajansa yksityisasia - paitsi silloin kun niistä tehdään kaikkien asia." *Aamulehti*, 7 Dec, 2016.

<https://www.aamulehti.fi/kolumnit/art-2000007480274.html>

³⁴¹ "Finland is a gender equality pioneer." *Ministry of Social Affairs and Health*.

<https://stm.fi/en/finland-is-a-gender-equality-pioneer>; "Finland: Pioneer in gender equality." *International Gender Equality Price*. <https://igep.fi/en/finland-gender-equality>

³⁴² Daniel Lindblom, Joy Hyvärinen and Matteo Stocchetti. "Finland is a world-leading press freedom country, but all is not well." *Politiikasta*, 21 Apr 2021.

<https://politiikasta.fi/en/finland-is-a-world-leading-press-freedom-country-but-all-is-not-well/>

³⁴³ The other members of the government were Li Andersson (Left Alliance), Katri Kulmuni (Centre Party), Maria Ohisalo (Green League) and Anna-Maja Henriksson (Swedish People's Party of Finland).

coordinated online hate speech campaign. A 2021 report about the online harassment of Finnish government ministers from NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence revealed that during their data collection period between March and July 2020, especially the five female ministers sitting in the government were “overwhelmingly victimized by misogynistic abuse attacking their values, demeaning their decision-making skills, and questioning their leadership abilities.”³⁴⁴ The material being collected from Twitter, the study revealed that a bulk of the abusive messages were written from right-wing accounts.³⁴⁵

As observed by gender and media scholars Jenny Sundén and Susanna Paasonen, the language utilized in Finnish online hate speech is often gendered and misogynist. Discussing the affective circuits of online misogyny in a Nordic context, Sundén and Paasonen plot fear and shame as central affects to hate speech in the virtual space. They write: “The strategies and registers of online hate aim at shaming and the creation of fear. Through combinations of verbal abuse, death threats, rape threats, and body shaming, online hate is oriented toward frightening, intimidating, and silencing the other.”³⁴⁶ After their intervention, Vallarén and Marins experienced all these forms of online harassment: verbal abuse, death- and rape threats, as well as body shaming. Such online hate does not only remain in the virtual space, detached from the “real world,” but is aimed to dictate how bodies move. Sundén and Paasonen describe online hate as “a disruptive force aiming to modulate and control the capacities of bodies to act and move, to affect and to be affected by one another.”³⁴⁷ The comments and threats towards Marins and Vallarén can hence, besides misogyny, be seen as attempts to disrupt the women from spreading the message behind their activism further. In addition, the threats of violence were then aimed to formulate fear towards potential future threats and bodily harm.

Ahmed writes about the bodily experience of fear and how feminine bodies are produced as fearful. She describes that fear shrinks bodies and contains them in closed, domestic spaces to avoid the outside world where potential danger and injury is situated. In doing so, fear operates as an immobilizing violence in the present. Ahmed writes that fear “works to align bodily and

³⁴⁴ Van Sant, K., Fredheim, R., & Bergmanis-Korats, G. *Abuse of power: coordinated online harassment of Finnish government ministers*. (Riga: NATO Strategic Communications Center of Excellence., 2021), 50-51.

³⁴⁵ Van Sant, et al. *Abuse of Power*, 5.

³⁴⁶ Jenny Sundén and Susanna Paasonen, “Shameless hags and tolerance whores: feminist resistance and the affective circuits of online hate,” *Feminist Media Studies* 18, no 4, 2018, 646.

³⁴⁷ Jenny Sundén and Susanna Paasonen, “Shameless hags and tolerance whores,” 646.

social space: it works to enable some bodies to inhabit and move in public space through restricting the mobility of other bodies to spaces that are enclosed or contained.”³⁴⁸ Comments encouraging Marins and Vallarén to “watch their back” when walking on the street, for example, were directly aimed at causing the immobilizing kind of fear which would refrain them from freely moving in public. Online hate speech which is aimed to trigger fear hence extends to questions about private versus public space. The relevance of these questions is already amplified during Independence Day, as it is filled with heightened tensions when it comes to politics of space and location.

Politics of inclusion and exclusion are central to the celebration at the presidential palace. However, questions about who deserves to inhabit a specific space extend to the public, as the streets of Helsinki are taken over by a number of demonstrations during Independence Day. One central point of worry which appeared during the aftermath of Vallarén and Marins’ intervention was that people seemed to be more concerned about a nipple than the far-right demonstrations which took place on the same day. Echoing the growing xenophobic and nationalist trends all over Europe, far-right movements have started to become more visible also in Finland especially since 2015, when a large number of asylum seekers arrived in Europe as a result of the Arab spring.³⁴⁹ One of the most visible demonstrations in 2019, under the theme *Turvallinen Suomi takaisin* (“Make Finland Safe Again”), was organized by The Soldiers of Odin, a neo-Nazi affiliated vigilant street patrol group. Some of the protestors were carrying symbols of the far-right group Kansallismielisten liittouma (“Patriotic coalition”). The march culminated in the Hesperia park, where a speech was given also by a representative of the German far-right group Der Dritte Weg (“The Third Way.”)³⁵⁰

The day after Independence Day, Vallarén published a text on her blog in which she expresses her concerns about the events which were addressed to a lesser extent. The sarcastic and sharp tone of the text resonates the style of the Instagram captions which Vallarén had previously posted:

³⁴⁸ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 70.

³⁴⁹ Mattias Ekman, “Anti-Refugee Mobilization in Social Media: The Case of Soldiers of Odin.” *Social Media + Society*, Jan. 2018, 1.

³⁵⁰ Hakkarainen et. al. “Äärioikeistolaisten hihamerkit ja anarkistiliput vilahtelivat Helsingissä, kun tuhannet marssivat itsenäisyyspäivän mielenosoituksissa - Poliisi otti kiinni 13 ihmistä.” *Helsingin Sanomat*. Dec 6, 2019.

Yesterday independent Finland was being celebrated and at least three things happened. Nazis were marching in the middle of Helsinki with permission, doing Nazi salutes and carrying Nazi badges. Hursti's Independence Day reception food aid gathered one thousand participants. It was hoped that some decision-makers would appear, but they were nowhere in sight. Two (2) boobs were exposed during the Independence Day Gala after party. Which one of these enraged the people? Correct, the boob!³⁵¹

The Hursti reception which Vallarén is referring to is the “Independence Day Celebration for the Poor”, organized by philanthropist Heikki Hursti in central Helsinki. The event invites people to gather for a free meal and food aid.³⁵² In the text Vallarén also mentions that whereas a post about the Nazi march on Yleisradio's Instagram account had received 15 comments, at the time of writing the blog post the two pictures on her personal Instagram had already gained over 1500 comments, most of them hateful.³⁵³ By saying that the Nazis were marching “with permission,” Vallarén refers to how in Finland, public assemblies should be registered with the police beforehand. Regardless of the neo-Nazi sympathies, the demonstration was allowed.³⁵⁴

Vallarén's text draws attention to how fear is utilized in the politics of space. Her and Marins' bodies were made subject to threats of violence and hence aimed to be kept out of the public in the future. Simultaneously, the hate directed at them functioned as a punishment for a past action, a punitive reaction to the women utilizing the public broadcasting company and semi-public event as a platform for their activism. The assembled far-right groups, whose public presence was extremely strong in the streets of Helsinki on the same day, did not provoke such a heated debate. Their bodies inhabited public space freely, without threats of violence imposed upon them, and were even secured by the police forces. With her blog text, Vallarén established a connection between their intervention and the topic of taking up space during the Independence

³⁵¹ Orig. Finnish: “Eilen juhliittiin itsenäistä Suomea ja tapahtui ainakin kolme asiaa. Natsit marssivat keskellä Helsinkiä luvan kanssa, tekivät natsitervehdyksiä ja kantoivat natsitunnuksia. Hurstin itsenäisyyspäivän vastaanotto Hakaniemessä keräsi tuhat osanottajaa. Paikalle toivottiin päättäjiä, mutta heitä ei näkynyt. Linnan juhlien jatkoilla näkyi kaksi (2) tissiä. Mikähän näistä sai kansan raivoihinsa? Aivan oikein, tissi! (Säde Vallarén, “Tissit ja sotaveteraanit,” *Pin the Fuck Up* (blog), Dec 7, 2019. <http://www.ptfu.fi/2019/12/tissit-ja-sotaveteraanit.html?m=0>).

³⁵² Miikkulainen, Lauri. “Vähävaraisten itsenäisyyspäiväjuhla järjestettiin karsittuna versiona - kävijät kansoittivat Hakaniemen torin.” *Yle Uutiset*, Dec 6, 2017. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9965035>

³⁵³ Vallarén, “Tissit ja sotaveteraanit,” 2019.

³⁵⁴ The police have been criticized for remaining neutral in allowing public gatherings. Before being banned in 2020, a march by the Finnish branch of Nordic Resistance movement, the originally Swedish neo-Nazi organization, was guarded by the police who appealed to how the police's job is not to distinguish between right and wrong opinions. (Eero Mäntymaa, “Poliisi turvaa myös uusnatsien marssin - “Poliisi ei määrittele, mikä mielipide on oikein ja mikä väärin.”” *Yleisradio*, Nov 29, 2016. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9321145>)

Day, drawing attention to how a lack of public discussion about such assemblies can develop into silent acceptance of xenophobic ideologies and limitation of freedom of speech and movement.

Sunden and Paasonen argue that online hate speech is intersectional, because while being misogynist, it is also directed towards other groups of people categorized as the ‘Other.’ In their virtual context, they summarize that the most commonly targeted are “non-men, non-white, and non-straight subjects who make noise and embody difference on public online platforms.”³⁵⁵ All these different, sometimes intersecting groups of ‘Others’ who experience online hate are “deeply entwined with a widespread cultural contempt for feminine and racialized bodies.”³⁵⁶ The hate then stems from bodily difference and deviation from a white, cis, heterosexual male norm, which also dominates the military-masculine grand narrative of Finland’s journey towards independence.³⁵⁷ Similar trend of negotiating the “correct” kind of Finnishness by categorizing specific groups of people as ‘Others’ and excluding them from the national narrative can be seen in the wider context of collective remembering. Ville Kivimäki notes that “in today’s neo-patriotic memory culture the alleged values and attitudes of the wartime generation tend to be used to define exclusive Finnishness, the outsiders varyingly being immigrants, Swedish-speakers, ‘communists’, homosexuals and so on.”³⁵⁸ In the neo-patriotic narrative, the war veterans as the “ideal Finns” are falsely portrayed as exclusively white, heterosexual and politically homogenous group. This idea of the veterans as a homogenous group is then utilized in the processes of exclusion.

‘Otherness’ is also central to processes of shaming. Ahmed describes how shame can be claimed to be brought in the nation by “illegitimate others” who in some way fail to “reproduce the national ideal.”³⁵⁹ Whether it be queer ‘Others’ or immigrant ‘Others,’ their bodies can be judged as shaming, as they challenge or exceed conventional constructions of proper citizenship and nationhood. In Marins and Vallarén’s case, the ‘Otherness’ stems first and foremost from

³⁵⁵ Sunden and Paasonen, “Shameless hags and tolerance whores,” 650.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 645.

³⁵⁷ A 2019 European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance Report recognizes that while racist and intolerant hate speech targets especially asylum-seekers and Muslims, online hate speech is also commonly directed towards LGBT people, Jewish people, people of African descent and the Roma. The report notes that especially neo-Nazi groups are known to systematically use hate speech (ECRI Report on Finland (Fifth monitoring cycle). *European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance*. 10 Sep, 2019: 9. <https://rm.coe.int/fifth-report-on-finland/1680972fa7>)

³⁵⁸ Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory,” 497.

³⁵⁹ Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 108.

their gender. In the video interview Vallarén states: “...anyone else doing the same would have gotten the same reaction from the public, it was not personal... it was not hatred towards Säde and Sandra, it was hatred towards women.”³⁶⁰ As discussed in relation to the tradition of evaluating women’s appearances during the Reception, Nira Yuval-Davis argues that women typically hold a paradoxical position within the collectivity. They simultaneously embody the collectivity’s boundaries, honor and unity and are yet inferiorized into the condition of ‘Otherness.’ The construct of a ‘proper woman’ is maintained through cultural codes around women’s clothing and behavior.³⁶¹ These ideas are visible in the far-right’s populist propaganda where one of the central narratives is that the nation’s women must be protected from the threat of sexual attacks and violence imposed on them by refugees and other non-white immigrants.³⁶²

Writing about the relationship between masculinity, violence and far-right street politics, media and communications scholar Mattias Ekman notes that far-right groups are historically dominated by men and a specific kind of masculine culture. He writes that in the “regenerated fantasies of disciplined and obedient men, far-right activists consider themselves the vanguard in defending “European” and “Nordic” values.”³⁶³ Idealization of violence is then linked with honor seen as a necessary tool to protect the nation from external threats - in other words, the ‘Others.’ Considering this, the misogynist hate speech towards Vallarén and Marins, as well as the Finnish government, reveals a discrepancy in the far-right narrative of protection and well-meaning. Threatening the women’s bodies makes it apparent how justifying violence as a necessary tool for “protecting the nation’s women” has never been a motivating factor behind their operations. The far-right commentators used the fear stemming from the violent speech to turn the women into ‘Others’ who deviate from the values which “must to be protected,” and are hence seen as threats and deserving of violence.

Due to their intervention, Marins and Vallarén doubled their ‘Otherness’ against the backdrop of nationalist and sexist ideologies by first being women, and then by becoming the “illegitimate other” who challenge the national ideal of proper citizenship.³⁶⁴ By exposing their

³⁶⁰ Marins and Vallarén, video interview, 23 Jul 2020.

³⁶¹ Yuval-Davis, *Gender & Nation*, 46-47.

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ Ekman, “Anti-refugee Mobilization in Social Media: The Case of Soldiers of Odin,” 4.

³⁶⁴ Or, more specifically, the idea of proper performance of citizenship during Independence day.

breasts, they were not only seen as failing proper citizenship, but also as failing proper womanhood. As Marilyn Yalom notes, in most of Western history women's breasts have been subject to men's control, whether it be individual control in the domestic sphere, or exercised collectively by male-dominated institutions.³⁶⁵ Utilizing one's breast in protest is hence subversive by default, as it challenges and collapses the notion that women's breasts should be under men's control. At the same time, the act of showing one's breasts in protest turns women and their bodies into active agents, which in turn challenges the far-right narrative of women's bodies being passive and vulnerable and hence in need of male protection from outside threats. Vallarén and Marins turned their status of "double-Otherness" into a subversive force which illuminates the deeply misogynist undertones in right-wing propaganda which co-opts narratives of care and protection.

Humor and Shamelessness as a Feminist Tactic of Resistance

Sunden and Paasonen plot shamelessness as a feminist tactic of resistance against online hate and misogyny. In their Nordic context, they explore how linguistic appropriation has been used by different groups targeted by online hate to subvert shaming into empowerment. In Sweden and Finland, derogatory gendered terms such as *hagga* ("hag"), *suvakkihuora* ("tolerant whore") and *kukahattutäti* ("flowerhat auntie") have been reclaimed and repurposed in feminist social media platforms the same way in which terms like "queer" and "dyke" have been turned into sources of pride.³⁶⁶ Furthermore, as a tactic of resistance, shamelessness operates not by rejecting shame, but by utilizing it. Sunden and Paasonen write:

As shame is something that makes identity, there is no getting rid of shame. Shamelessness thus is not the opposite of shame, or the absence of shame, but something that *plays with* shame and attempts of shaming by intervening in its affective dynamics of operation, by turning them around, by knowingly ignoring or ridiculing attempts to shame.³⁶⁷

As previously discussed in the context of Ahmed, unlike guilt, shame sticks to a person, not just their actions. Shamelessness is hence a subversive practice, which takes advantage of how shame

³⁶⁵ Yalom, *A History of the Breast*, 241.

³⁶⁶ Sunden and Paasonen, "Shameless hags and tolerance whores," 645.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 651.

constructs identities. Since the beginning of the discourse formulation around the intervention, Vallarén and Marins used sarcasm and wit to advocate for their cause. Their style of activism is playfully provocative and humorous, and it could be said that their topfreedom activism is built on public performances of shamelessness; refusing to be ashamed of one's body. This tactic of resistance is also recognizable from the way in which Vallarén and Marins utilized online platforms to reorient the punitive shame imposed upon them during the aftermath.

On the 11th of December, five days after the Independence Day, Vallarén and Marins appeared on the *Iltalehti* tabloid's online talk show *Sensuroimaton Päivärinta (Päivärinta Uncensored)* where journalist Susanne Päivärinta interviewed them about the intervention. In the talk show Vallarén and Marins wore matching shirts, which have a printed image of breasts blocked by prison bars with their nipples censored by illustrated pictures of a mouth. Päivärinta, referring to the 'uncensored' in the talk show's title, tells Vallarén and Marins that they can expose their breasts during the talk show if they wish. Vallarén, pointing at her shirt, states "Unfortunately, our boobs have been censored," to which Marins adds "They are jailed."³⁶⁸ Päivärinta proceeds to ask what has led the breast to be "in prison," to which Marins responds: "They have proven to be somehow too dangerous to be let free...It took two seconds for it to destroy Finland's independence, feminism, war veterans, and Roope Salminen."³⁶⁹

The satirical tone of the conversation reveals humor and self-irony as central elements in Marins and Vallarén's response to the outrage. By using the exaggerated rhetoric and referring to Marins' breast as being "dangerous" and hence "imprisoned," they appropriate the comments which deemed the nipple as a disgrace to the veterans and the nation, and also display their ability to discuss the scandalized intervention in a non-serious way. The approach shows that the women were not willing to be silenced or afraid due to the hate speech; it rendered the hate as unsuccessful. Additionally, by labeling the breast as dangerous, they imply that the people who were enraged by it potentially feel the single breast as a threat and a source of fear. The ones sending the threats and accusing the women of disgracing Finland's independence are then

³⁶⁸ *Original Finnish*: "“Ikävä kyllä, meidän rinnat on nyt sensuroitu.” “Ne on vankilassa.” Sensuroimaton Päivärinta, “Linnan jatkojen tissiaktivisteille rajut seuraamukset: tappouhkauksia ja varoitus työnantajalta.” *Iltalehti* talk show, 00:43, Dec 11, 2019, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/iltv-paivarinta/a/ba44cf06-63a1-4a56-8545-24d2f9827660>.

³⁶⁹ “Ne on todistetusti liian vaarallisia jotenkin päästää vapaaksi...Kaks sekuntia meni siihen että se tuhosi Suomen itsenäisyyden, feminismin, sotaveteraanit, ja Roope Salmisen.” Sensuroimaton Päivärinta, 00:50, *Iltalehti* talk show, 00:43

portrayed as having both overreacted to the intervention, and having failed at their attempts to silence Vallarén and Marins through fear. The shame and ridicule was hence reoriented and returned back to the people behind the hate speech, and the discourse about the nipple disgracing the veterans was ridiculed. The aesthetic element of the T-shirts further resonates with the kind of wit, imagination and playfulness which Sunden and Paasonen recognize as a common factor in feminist shamelessness.³⁷⁰

Marins and Vallarén also utilized shamelessness in dealing with the legal side of the intervention's aftermath. Marins and Vallarén contacted the police and made a report about the death threats and other harassment they had faced after the intervention.³⁷¹ However, it soon appeared that the police were unwilling to investigate the case further, asking Marins and Vallarén whether the investigation could be canceled, appealing to how the women had received "the attention they wanted." Marins and Vallarén did not agree to withdrawing their reports, yet the police eventually closed the case.³⁷² During their interactions with the police, it was revealed that several people had made a police report about Marins, accusing her for indecently exposing herself in public.³⁷³ On February 18, 2020, two months after the intervention, Marins made an Instagram post in which she revealed that the preliminary investigation on her nipple had been dismissed. Explaining in the caption that the prosecutor had ended the preliminary investigation due to the act not being sexual in nature and not exposing "actual" genitals, Marins humorously writes: "Well now! I have an official document at home which states that the female nipple is not a genital or sexual by default. Next summer will be hot and legally tit-filled."³⁷⁴ At the end of the lengthy caption written in Finnish, Marins provides a sarcastic English summary: "My left

³⁷⁰ Sunden and Paasonen, "Shameless hags and tolerance whores," 653.

³⁷¹ Their initial interaction with a police officer upon reporting the messages was positive, and the women were hopeful that the case would encourage taking online hate speech, especially towards women, more seriously. (Vallarén and Marins, video interview with the author, 23 Jul 2020; Päivärinta, "Linnan jatkojen tissiaktivisteille rajut seuraamukset," 10:40).

³⁷² Vallarén and Marins, video interview with the author, 23 Jul 2020; "MTV Uutiset läsnä naisviha näkyväksi -mielenosoituksessa – "Haluamme poliisiin ottavan vakavammin naisiin kohdistuvan verkkohäirinnän ja vihan"" *MTV Uutiset*, 17th Oct 2020.

<https://www.mtvuutiset.fi/artikkeli/seuraa-suorana-kello-14-55-mtv-utiset-lasna-naisviha-nakyvaksi-mielenosoituksessa-haluamme-poliisiin-ottavan-vakavammin-naisiin-kohdistuvan-verkkohairinnan-ja-vihan/7957342#gs.dy70xt>

³⁷³ Again, even though both Marins and Vallarén exposed their breasts, Marins' breast was the only one properly seen in the broadcast.

³⁷⁴ Origin. Finnish: "No nyt! Mulla on kotona virallinen dokumentti, joka sanoo että naisoletettu nänni ei ole genitaali eikä defaulttina seksuaalinen. Ensi kesä tulee olemaan kuuma ja laillisesti tissintäyteinen." @sandyclit. "Moi! Tässä kuvassa on yläosaton minä ja poliisisedät." *Instagram*. Feb 18, 2020.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/B8t4iGgBOYT/>

nipple has been under police investigation since last December but it's free now.”³⁷⁵ With this statement, she underlines the absurdity of the situation and ridicules the people that reported her, as well as the police forces. The same rhetoric of imprisonment versus freedom as a metaphor of censorship and punitive processes surrounding female nudity, which the women used in the *Päivärinta* talk show, was hence applied on social media. The aftermath and the police getting involved, and Marins’ humorous take on the situation, subverted the punitive action into evidence of the way in which women’s bodies are controlled. The police’s response, which was supposed to silence the activists, in fact amplified their message.

The Intervention as a Body Protest & Its Legacy

Sunden and Paasonen note that feminist forms of resistance are not only reactive to online misogyny, but also “productive in providing a space for feminist counter-imaginaries within an otherwise rather depressive Nordic political climate.”³⁷⁶ The empowering effect of shamelessness can build communities through solidarity, both in the virtual and the “real” world. Besides the negative reactions to Marins and Vallarén’s intervention, the women also gained a lot of support. Recognizing a need for organized feminist activism in Finland, Marins and Vallarén founded Cult Cunth, an intersectional feminist and interdisciplinary artistic activist group. In their first year of operating, the group organized “tit flash mobs” around Finland to advocate for the emancipation of the female nipple and started a campaign called *Naisviha näkyväksi* (“Make Misogyny Visible”).³⁷⁷ In October 2020, the group organized a demonstration against online harassment in front of the Pasila police station. The demonstration was especially targeting the police for not taking seriously the threats and hate speech that Vallarén and Marins faced after

³⁷⁵ @sandyclit. “Moi! Tässä kuvassa on yläosaton minä ja poliisisedät.”

³⁷⁶ Sunden and Paasonen, “Shameless hags and tolerance whores,” 652.

³⁷⁷ The group started to spread the hashtag #naisvihanäkyväksi on Instagram after the prime minister Sanna Marin received criticism for having posed on the cover of a fashion magazine in a revealing blazer. Cult Cunth encouraged social media users to pose in a similar blazer using the hashtag. Additionally, Cult Cunth has drawn attention to the sexist bias in the language used by tabloid media, as well as intervened in the urban landscape by pasting cut-out pictures of male nipples on nude female statues as a protest against censorship. (@cvltcvnth. “Tytöjen päivänä ja jokaisena päivänä kultti on whit @sannamarin ja #tyttöjenpuolella. *Instagram*, Oct 11, 2020. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CGNYUz7hFAE/>)

their intervention.³⁷⁸ The campaign culminated in *Naisvihagaala* (“Misogyny Gala”) on the one-year anniversary of Marins and Vallarén’s intervention. The gala was streamed on Instagram and gained thousands of viewers.³⁷⁹ Organized for the second time in 2021, the Misogyny Gala offers a carnivalesque and anarchist alternative to the tradition of watching the Reception from television.

Cult Cunth has become a visible actor in the field of Finnish feminist activism. Marins and Vallarén’s resistance towards the shaming they faced hence resulted in ongoing, collective action. Instead of being immobilized by fear and threats of violence, the women mobilized a movement. The animative of exposing their breasts during the afterparty was hence so powerful that it still animates people into action. The intervention showed how bodies, as sites of resistance, are not blank canvases prior to being layered with slogans or symbols of protest, or simply made explicit as done by Marins and Vallarén. In the words of Rebecca Schneider:

“A mass of orifices and appendages, details and tactile surfaces, the explicit body in representation is foremost a site of social markings, physical parts and gestural signatures of gender, race, class, age, sexuality - all of which bear ghosts of historical meaning, markings delineating social hierarchies of privilege and disprivilege.”³⁸⁰

Bodies hence always exist in a specific historical and cultural context and in relation to other bodies, forming intercorporeal and intersubjective hierarchies and power dynamics. The way we read and react to each others’ bodies, consciously or unconsciously, is conditioned by numerous intersecting social structures, categories and binaries. Similar idea is also expressed by Sauter through his category of exhibitory action and sensory communication, as he emphasizes that simply appearing - in other words, exposing oneself - in front of an audience is an act itself, as the body is perceived through “culturally conditioned norms.”³⁸¹ This means that gendered body

³⁷⁸ Vallarén and Marins, video interview with the author, 23 Jul 2020; “MTV Uutiset läsnä naisviha näkyväksi -mielenosoituksessa – ”Haluamme poliisin ottavan vakavammin naisiin kohdistuvan verkkohäirinnän ja vihan”” *MTV Uutiset*, 17th Oct 2020.

³⁷⁹ During the satirical and carnivalesque gala, Marins and Vallarén as well as other Culth Cunth members nominated and awarded the most misogynist place, action, and news title, among other categories. The public vote gained over 5000 votes, and the award for the most misogynist place was given to the police station. (@naisvihagaala. “Nvg1.” *Instagram* live stream. 6 Dec 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CIIdquesqRjs/>; Juuso Pikkarainen, “Naisvihagaala 2020 palkitsi Suomen misogynisimmat ihmiset, paikat ja teot.” *Kaupunkikanava*, 10 Dec 2020, <https://kaupunkikanava.fi/naisvihagaala-2020-palkitsi-suomen-misogyynisimmat-ihmiset-teot-ja-paikat/>

³⁸⁰ Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, 2.

³⁸¹ Sauter, *The Theatrical Event*, 54.

protests operate in a complex web of historically, socio-politically and culturally conditioned webs of meaning. Schneider describes how, when bodies are made explicit by feminist performance artists, these webs of meaning can become visible: “Peeling at signification, bringing ghosts to visibility, they are interested to expose not an ordinary, true, or redemptive body, but the sedimented layers of signification themselves.”³⁸² Even though Marins and Vallarén executed their interventions as activists rather than performance artists, their act of resistance operated in the same way. By revealing their breasts, they did not only unfold their skin, but layers of significations, aggressions, and politics surrounding the Finnish Independence Day. During the online talk show interview, Vallarén reflected on the myriad of unexpected sediments of meaning the intervention brought to daylight:

“Now, when looking at the aftermath you realize how needed this was, we didn’t even know it would be *this* needed. So many things revealed due to one nipple... how women’s bodies are still caged - what was our exact agenda, which we want to bring up... through women’s bodies, women and female-passing people [are being controlled] and other rights are being trampled. The veterans got attention, you’re welcome... The Nazi march was criticized, Hursti’s food aid was brought up... as well as hate speech.”³⁸³

Vallarén’s comment points at how animatives can operate in unexpected ways. As Taylor states, they have the ability to “challenge and exceed discursive formulation.”³⁸⁴ Marins and Vallarén’s intervention is an example of how an embodied act of resistance, which originally was executed to advocate for top freedom, provoked discussion about a myriad of other topics such as online hate, the state of elderly care, freedom of speech, and the lack of police action against online harassment towards women and other ‘Others.’ Utilizing shamelessness as a tactic of resistance, Vallarén and Marins subverted and rerouted the affects of fear, shame, and hate and utilized them in amplifying their own message.

³⁸² Schneider, *The Explicit Body in Performance*, 2.

³⁸³ Origin. Finnish: “Nyt kun katotaan tätä jälkipuintia niin huomaa vasta miten tarpeellinen tä oli, me ei edes tiedetty et se olis näin tarpeellinen. Tässähän on nyt paljastunut vaikka mitä pelkän yhden nännin ansioista...se miten naiskehoja edelleenkin vangitaa, mikä on just se meidän agenda, et mitä me halutaankin tuoda esille... naiskehojen kautta ihan myös naisia ja muitakin oikeuksia poljetaan, tai naisoletettujen, sanotaan näin. Nyt on veteraanit saanut huomiota, olkaa hyvät... Natsimarssia kritisoiitiin, Hurstin leipäjono tuli puheeksi... ja vihapuhe.” Sensuroimaton Päivärinta, “Linnan jatkojen tissiaktivisteille rajut seuraamukset: tappouhkauksia ja varoitus työnantajalta.” *Iltalehti* talk show, 04:50, Dec 11, 2019, <https://www.iltalehti.fi/iltv-paivarinta/a/ba44cf06-63a1-4a56-8545-24d2f9827660>.

³⁸⁴ Taylor, *Performance*, 127.

CONCLUSION

In previous research on Finnish Independence Day, discussion of history and descriptions of ascetic atmosphere and military proceedings of commemorative practices have overshadowed the unexpected, playful and subversive. This thesis has focused on the latter by looking into how individuals, rather than assemblies, have used the national day as a platform to protest in creative ways. The primary aim of this thesis was to investigate how Feodoroff, Sarkola, Pettersson, Marins and Vallarén utilized their presence to subvert and challenge the construction of Finnish nationhood during the Finnish Independence Day Reception and its afterparty. To reach this aim, I deployed what I call an ‘inclusive methodology,’ which has allowed me to use a variety of source material ranging from interviews to archival videos and social media posts. Through a theoretical framework which draws from the fields of performance, media, affect and gender studies, I contributed an interdisciplinary analysis of the events and three acts of protest. The thesis hence responds to the need for theoretically and methodologically experimental studies of national days and nationhood in the contemporary Finnish context.

The first research question took into account the necessity to establish the official performatives that the interveners targeted by addressing the specific narratives which materialize in the dramaturgy of the events. Through a discussion of the guest list and the symbolic significance of the invitations and the ritualized handshaking, I plotted military-masculine and war-centered narratives of Finnishness which emphasize the themes of reconciliation, sacrifice and unity. With the concept of performativity as my theoretical point of departure, I argued that these narratives materialize in the choreographies that are annually reiterated during the Reception and its afterparty. Through the broadcasts that reach millions of Finns, the action is presented to the home spectators as manifesting ‘appropriate’ forms of patriotism and ‘significant Finnishness.’ The framework of performance can hence efficiently reveal how the repetition of symbolic acts and specific narratives can render invisible ideologies which push some groups of people and moments in history to the margins.

The second research question asked how Feodoroff, Sarkola, Pettersson, Vallarén and Marins used theatrical communication to turn their presence into political animatives which challenged the events’ narratives and subverted the official performatives at play for their own

purposes. The analysis of the interventions was based on Diana Taylor's conceptual animatives and Willmar Sauter's levels of theatrical communication. Combining Taylor and Sauter allowed for a detailed investigation of how the acts of protest operated in the present-tense and gained new meanings through the discourse that followed. This discussion was complemented by Sara Ahmed's theorization of the role of emotions in nation-building. All interventions utilized different theatrical tactics for provoking discussion and drawing attention to topics which they experienced to be lacking from the narratives of the events. What the acts of protest all have in common is that the symbolic level of the interventions' communication operated in a way which revealed multiple layers of significance beyond the initial topic of demonstration.

The number on their skin echoing a violent past of settler colonialism and scientific racism, Feodoroff and Sarkola politicized their presence in the midst of celebration and brought with them a demand for the ratification of ILO Convention 169. Their intervention raised awareness and reminded the audiences both at home and at the palace that indigenous representation at the Reception does not equal justice for the Sámi, and recognition of one person's merits does not satisfy the urgent demands for indigenous rights in Finland. By wearing a symbolic and visually provocative garment, Maria Pettersson performed acts of reminding and commemorating. In addition to advocating for press freedom, the notions of sacrifice and violence which manifested in the noose intervened in the Reception's memory culture which emphasizes reconciliation and victory at the expense of forgetting the more painful parts of history, such as the Civil War. Her animatives operated also in the virtual realm, as her tweets questioned the official performatives of the Yleisradio broadcast by sharing her own subjective and playful observations from the Reception. With the quest to gain exposure for their topfreedom activism, Sandra Marins and Säde Vallarén exposed their breasts to the television cameras and provoked a chain of events which demonstrates the unpredictable and uncontrollable nature of animatives. The aftermath revealed how gendered hate speech is a serious threat to equality in Finland, and how female bodies are still subject to punitive discourse and legal debates. Their utilization of social media and shamelessness finally resulted in solidarity and collective action.

The interventions discussed in this thesis showed that when the political potential of bodies and appearances is enhanced through visual elements, strong message and tactical

utilization of television and media, one does not necessarily need barricades or chants to get their point across. My third research question had to do with how the events' mediatized form amplified the interventions' subversive power and influenced the aftermath and discussion that followed. With their concept of media events, Dayan and Katz provided me with a theory of the changing nature of public events which helped me to reflect on the notions of liveness and presence in relation to the Reception and its afterparty. I have argued that the primary audience for the events, and hence the interventions, are the home spectators that follow the broadcasts. With this argument I challenged the traditional ontology of performance requiring physical presence and hence allowed myself to see the mediatized form of the events as an opportunity to explore how the presence of the cameras turns the Reception and afterparty-attendees into performers. Furthermore, I argued that the cameras were a crucial tool for the interveners as without them the acts of protests would have gone unnoticed. To illuminate the behavior-policing and scandalization that are central to the discourse around the Reception and afterparty, I looked into how the interventions were discussed in the press. I have argued that the interventions disrupted this discourse which focuses on fashion choices and etiquette by turning their bodies and outfits into active agents that drew attention to their chosen causes. In reference to how both Sauter and Taylor emphasize the importance of context and recognizable references in the processes of interpretation, I also argued that social media helped the interveners gain agency over the interpretations of their acts of protest.

Finland has been successful in establishing itself as a Nordic welfare country that pioneers in the field of freedom of speech and press, as well as gender equality. This has become apparent during conversations about the topic of this thesis with both Finnish and non-Finnish people, as I have often been asked: "What is there to protest about in Finland?" I like to think that my discussion of the interventions provides answers to this question. All three acts of protest pointed at notions of Finnish nationhood which require attention, action and awareness and encouraged the audience to take a critical look into Finland's past, present and future. Feodoroff, Sarkola, Pettersson, Marins and Vallarén reminded the spectators and fellow event-attendees that it is not insignificant which kind of narratives dictate the representation and understanding of our collective identities.

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