



Editorial

Politics of Dress and Appearance

Expressing, Formulating and Contesting Political Ideas and Ideologies

In October 2020, Finland's Prime Minister Sanna Marin appeared in the Finnish fashion magazine *Trendi* wearing a black blazer with a plunging neckline and no top underneath, which caused an uproar in the social media (see Odom 2020). Her outfit choice was branded 'inappropriate' for someone in a top political position. In the article accompanying the photograph, Marin explained that she usually tends to look the same; she wears the same kind of clothing and has the same hairstyle in order to avoid discussion about her appearance. She knows that women's appearance is a constant subject of discussion and criticism, and her choice of appearance is a political statement. (Peltola 2020.) Her typical outfit consists of a black tailored suit with trousers and a black or white shirt, which is a 'standard uniform' for a politician. As studies of parliamentary representation from the perspectives of gender studies and performance studies, for example, have demonstrated, institutional power also operates through performative acts such as modes of behaviour, norms of dress and other institution-specific cultures (see e.g. Rai & Johnson 2014). Institutional parliamentary cultures are usually based on a gendered hierarchy that favours men (Lovenduski 2014), of which the dress code of black or dark suit is a good example: it indicates traditional male attributes of power, authority and confidence. The reason why Marin's and women politicians' appearance is a constant topic of discussion is that they draw attention to the hidden expectations that a politician and a prime minister is a particular kind of man (cf. Lovenduski 2014, 19).

The articles of this theme issue of *Ethnologia Fennica* (2/2021) discuss the politics of dress and appearance. They analyse the role of dress and fashion in expressing, formulating and contesting various political ideas and ideologies, social norms, cultural ideals and social statuses.

In her article "Behind the scenes. The Mari teacher's wardrobe in Central Russia", Ildikó Lehtinen discusses teacher's attire as a political phenomenon in the context of the Mari people, a Finno-Ugric minority living in Central

Russia. The teacher's dress code consists of a dark dress with a white collar. Similarly to men's formal dark dress, it is usually considered a self-evident choice for teachers, whose role during the Soviet era had a central importance in building a new socialist state and shaping the politically desired ideal of "Homo Sovieticus". Teachers' physical appearance represented the moral and ethical standards of the profession, socialist taste and modern ideals of hygiene and beauty. In Mari communities, women teachers had a dual role as teachers and representatives of the Mari culture. Lehtinen demonstrates how teachers combined these two roles through their choice of dress: at school, they dressed according to the dress code of the profession, and at home they followed Mari society's norms and wore the traditional costume. She analyses teachers' choices of dress as a balancing act between the macro- and micropolitical world and between collective and private life.

Joanna Weckman's article "Creating a 'Lapp' character – Sámi dress utilised as costume in early Finnish theatre" explores the ways in which the Sámi – an ethnic minority living in the northern parts of Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia – were represented in late 19th and early 20th century Finland. As Weckman notes, clothing has always been used to maintain and emphasise social meanings, values and hierarchies, but costumes, in particular, have an essential meaning in reflecting and constructing assumptions of nationality and ethnicity, for example. The representation and treatment of the Sámi people and culture as primitive and as an "other" to Finnishness date back to the 19th century. Weckman shows that several sources that depict Sámi culture from a colonialist viewpoint, including actual Sámi clothing in a museum collection, have served as a model or inspiration for performance costumes. In the late 19th and early 20th century political context, representations of Sámi people were used in the early Finnish theatre to highlight the sophistication of Finnish culture and blond-haired blue-eyed Finnish ethnicity.

The thematic review articles discuss the politics of dress in the fields of folklore and diplomacy. "The Fashions of Snæfellsnes: A case study of clothing and textiles in four sagas of Icelanders" by Kait Sepp discusses how social norms and cultural ideas were reflected in the clothing and textile imagery of the Icelandic sagas of Snæfellsnes. Anna Niiranen's review article "Diplomatic Wives, Cultures of Dress and Brita Kekkonen: A New Study on the Cultural History of Diplomacy Has Started" presents her ongoing post-doctoral research on diplomatic wives. Diplomatic wives had an important representative and practical role in diplomacy, and they were expected to always be stylish and elegant, with special knowledge of the etiquette and dress codes. Niiranen's research will discuss sartorial ideals and demands of dress

in diplomacy by analysing the history of the dress collection of Finnish diplomat's wife Brita Kekkonen.

In addition to the thematic articles and review articles, this issue also features two reviews of dissertations in Ethnology and Nordic Folklore Studies. In his dissertation reviewed by Eija Stark, Konsta Kajander studied issues related to appearance and class in 19th century Finland, where modernisation began to change social rankings. Catarina Harjunen's dissertation about queer perspectives on erotic encounters between humans and nature spirits is reviewed by Maria Bäckman.

Arja Turunen and Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto

Greetings from the Editors-in-Chief: thank you and goodbye!

Our three-year period as Co-Editors-in-Chief of *Ethnologia Fennica* is coming to an end. It has been an interesting and rewarding journey, during which we have learned a great deal about our field, teamwork and scientific publishing. At times, we have experienced inadequacy and frustration with the limited time and resources we have had to offer when trying to manage and develop the editorial work while working full-time for demanding research projects and navigating through uncertain academic careers. In small fields, the publishing of high-quality peer-reviewed articles and other texts requires hours and hours of unpaid work. And it can only be done with the help of others, and of a strong team. Indeed, collaboration and collegial support are the bright side of editorial and academic work. We want to thank all the members of the Editorial Team, the authors, many colleagues who have acted as reviewers or helped to find them, and our publisher Ethnos ry for co-operation during our period as editors.

We warmly welcome the new Editors-in-Chief Maija Mäki and Kirsi Sonck-Rautio and wish them the best success in steering the journal!

Eerika Koskinen-Koivisto and Tytti Steel

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