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A Genderplay beyond the binary. A feminist ethnographic analysis on interpretations of gender in Finnish burlesque

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This article analyses the parodic and (self-)ironic, non-verbal and kinetic means that are used to communicate the critical framing of the paradox of using mainstream gendered imagery in Finnish burlesque art. My theoretical lens follows Rosalind Gill's theory on resexualisation of women's bodies from being the object of the critical male gaze to "owning" the gaze. I extend Gill's theorisation also to male and non-binary bodies and how the sexuality of these bodies is redefined onstage, as they are usually not seen as the objects of heteronormative sexual fantasies. I examine the deconstruction of gender stereotypes in burlesque art through the exaggeration, parody, and (self-)irony associated with burlesque, and how these manifest themselves in performances in the form of physical appearance, gendered mannerisms, and clothing. This research provides a significant contribution to global burlesque studies by examining the political and gendered aspects of burlesque art in Finland. It emphasizes political consciousness and critiques societal power structures, leading to a more inclusive and politically nuanced understanding of burlesque. Additionally, it extends the analysis of the deeply gendered nature of burlesque to include men and other genders, examining gender distribution within the field and highlighting the breaking of gender roles through various social and cultural practices.

Keywords: burlesque, gender roles, performance, representation, femininity, masculinity

Avainsanat: burleski, sukupuoliroolit, performanssi, representaatio, naiseus, maskuliinisuus

Introduction

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The emergence of contemporary burlesque[1] happened in 1990s' New York, when like-minded underground performers combined punk, rockabilly, cabaret, pin-up, and vintage aesthetics to create a performance art that played with elements of revealing and hiding parts of their bodies. Showing the almost naked body is still a key aspect of burlesque. Today's burlesque has made a wider impact globally in the 2000s (Mehr 2019, 83–86; Baldwin 2010[2004], 41–48, 51–54). The Finnish burlesque scene began to develop in the late 2000s, as the pioneers of Finnish contemporary burlesque wanted to bring the art form, the aesthetics, and the atmosphere of the underground clubs in the US to Finland.

In this article, I adopt a feminist approach to burlesque research in examining sexual (self-)objectification, the dismantling of heteronormative gender categories, and the social construction of gender, identity and privilege. I analyse the construction of gender-producing power relations through interviews with Finnish burlesque performers and observations from Finnish burlesque events, focusing on the representations of gender and sexuality in burlesque art.

Burlesque brings various visualisations of gender onstage: cis-gender men and women, androgyny, non-binary, gender bending and mixing. Presenting and questioning gender is one of the most interesting aspects of burlesque for my research participants: as many gendered practices cannot be easily categorised as feminine/masculine or female/male, subcultures such as burlesque aim to promote gender inclusivity, to offer various forms of gender representation, and to deconstruct gender norms by revealing the values associated with the gender system in society (e.g., Shin 2020; Nally 2009).

Burlesque art explores heteronormative cultural representations of different genders and their power relations by subverting traditional gender roles and displaying diverse expressions of femininity and masculinity. This aligns with Butlerian theorization of gender as performative, suggesting that the distinctions between "male" and "female" are constructed through repetition and social performance. Norms create expectations for gendered behaviour. While gender performance requires the existence of norms, it also holds the potential for change and redefinition through instability and parody, thereby reshaping the understanding of gendered reality (Butler 2006[1990], i, 32-33). This exploration is crucial for the art form (Paasonen 2017; Bordo 2003).

Burlesque femininity can, however, be challenging for both audiences and performers themselves, as it can be (mis)read as a reproduction of normative heterosexuality (Ferreday 2008, 53). Professor of gender and power studies Kay Siebler agrees that 'the burlesque in mainstream culture serves to oppress female sexuality in very traditional ways instead of what it intends to do: empower women to celebrate their sexuality through performance' (2015, 561). Siebler argues that burlesque's feminist politics are constrained in their ability to challenge traditional patriarchal female sexuality scripts. Although 'some performances underline the complexities of desire, sexuality, and identity, their critiques often do not go far enough in their interrogation of power structures and the politics of sexuality' (ibid.). This contradiction is also recognized among burlesque performers, as one performer pointed out in an interview:

> [i]t would be ridiculous to claim that we can constantly break gender assumptions, because we live in them and have learnt from them, and through them certain ideas and roles are still perpetuated. One cannot separate oneself from them because they are such an integral part of us that we do not always realise where we are reinforcing and breaking them. – P 4

I investigate the paradox inherent in burlesque performance, where artists employ traditional heteronormative imagery of femininity and masculinity to challenge gender boundaries and dismantle normative gender assumptions. I ask, *what nonverbal, kinetic, parodic, and (self-)ironic patterns are used in burlesque performances to convey the paradoxical and critical portrayal of gender representations?* Because most burlesque performances are non-verbal, the kinetic elements of the performances (movements, postures, gestures, facial expressions and gaze), physical appearance, and the use of costumes and accessories are key signifiers of expression and communication. I analyse how these elements are used in burlesque performances to portray gender, showing how performers both express specific gender representations and, at the same time, challenge the assumptions tied to those representations.

Research into burlesque has increased since the 2000s. It has centred on North America, but in recent years, more studies have been published on European burlesque art. Previous research on burlesque highlights women's emancipation through sexuality and nostalgic femininity and has approached burlesque as a site of parody and resistance (e.g., Ferreday 2008; Dodds 2013; Montgomery 2022; Cervellon & Brown 2018; Tzouni 2020). Research has emphasized women's freedom of self-expression, but it has also highlighted the strong maintenance of normative gender representations (Siebler 2015). While contemporary boylesque has as long history as does burlesque done by women both internationally (from the 1990s) and in Finland (2000s), previous research on burlesque has been female-centric and paid little attention to male performers (Whitehead 2014) or to non-binary performers.

My research contributes to global burlesque research by examining its critique on normative gender representations. It positions burlesque as a politically conscious and critical art form and explores the practical ways in which burlesque art addresses the challenges of gender representations in burlesque performances. My analysis shows that, despite its short history, burlesque art in Finland represents a politically conscious trend in the global burlesque context that critically examines the power structures and normative assumptions of society. In addition, my article counterbalances the gender bias in existing burlesque research by incorporating men and other genders. Compared to earlier research, I look more broadly at gender distribution within burlesque and the way gender roles are dismantled in the field. My article is the first academic study of burlesque in Finland.

Rosalind Gill's theory of resexualisation and reclaiming the gaze through parody and irony

The performers I spoke with in the interviews, saw the burlesque dancer as a liberator of women's sexual agency. I analyse this view through Rosalind Gill's (2003; 2007)

theory rooted in popular culture and media that women voluntarily participate in their own sexual objectification. Gill proposes that contemporary sexualised representations of 'new femininities' (i.e., women's choices regarding their appearance and sexuality are freely chosen) highlight sexual confidence and autonomy of women. According to Gill, these representations emphasise women's agency, transforming them from passive objects to active subjects within sexualised culture, indicating an evolution towards liberated subjectivity. This change represents the modernization of the feminine, in which sexual knowledge and action are central (Gill 2003, 103; Gill 2007, 151).

However, Gill points out that there are some key problems in the shift from passive objects to active subjects. Only some women are constructed as active, desiring sexual subjects: heterosexual, young, slim, and beautiful women[2]. Using the 'valued look' can reinforce beauty ideals upheld by other people. This social surveillance of women's bodies is linked to the pervasive sexualisation of culture. Because women's bodies are constantly being monitored in media and culture, their heteronormative attractiveness is under constant threat. Their femininity is subject to constant control and discipline to conform to strict standards of successful femininity and attractiveness. (Gill 2007, 149-150, 155).

The male gaze refers to the portrayal of women through a masculine, heterosexual lens, presenting women as sexual objects for the enjoyment of heterosexual male viewers (Mulvey 1975). The objectifying male gaze is internalized also by women, creating a self-policing narcissistic gaze. This self-disciplinary gaze replaces any 'outside' agent acting on women, and Gill proposes that this self-disciplinary gaze is a deeper form of exploitation than objectification (Gill 2003, 103–104). She suggests that the choice of using (re)sexualisation or self-objectification in contemporary (media and popular) culture as a source of power is contradictory because it is seemingly liberating but poses challenges in recognising heteronormative domination (Gill 2003, 104).

The connection between burlesque and the new femininities expressed by Gill is evident in the liberating nature of burlesque, where performers choose to present themselves as sexual beings and objects of desire. The use of (self-)irony in burlesque performances plays a crucial role for developing new perspectives to the examination of cultural objectification and sexualisation. Exaggeration, parody and irony, which are at the ideological core of burlesque, are mediums through which to distance oneself from heteronormative ways of thinking. Gill refers to a [feminine] retro image and nostalgia, which are key elements also in burlesque, as a "device in the construction of contemporary sexism" (Gill 2007, 159–160). Nostalgia suggests that sexism is something in the past and that the retro image is a contemporary form of emancipation that draws upon sexist imagery through irony and consciousness (ibid.).

Parody can be understood as a practice characterized by repetition, innovation, and imitation. Parody operates through a tension between sameness and difference. Irony is the strategy which reveals the apparent affirmations of critique or denial of that which is being represented. Irony conveys one meaning while implying the opposite (Salimbeni 2025, 599–600). Parody and irony use carnivalism to celebrate and rejoice while simultaneously mocking and ridiculing (Bakhtin 1995, 13). Their subversive nature is often associated with a critical mindset, self-consciousness, and reflective

nature, allowing the questioning of various social hierarchies and acting as a counter-discourse (Hutcheon 1995, 4, 28–29). Burlesque performers use exaggeration, parody, and (self-)irony to blend humour with cultural references and social critique. Their comedic approach captivates audiences through irreverence and unexpected conflicts, infused with a camp sensibility. By creatively fusing movements, props, and music, burlesque humour aims to provoke reactions and laughter, while recycling stereotypes that subvert traditional narratives and societal expectations (Sally 2022, 119, 125, 209).

Irony can be very difficult to convey, as it is affected by circumstances and context. Although something may be intended as ironic, it depends on the recipient whether they understand it as such (Hutcheon 1995, 11). Similarly, the recipient may interpret something as ironic even if it may not have been intended so. For this "[I]rony's indirection considerably complicates the various existing models of intersubjective communication" (Hutcheon 1995, 10–11). In my research, this means that the meaning of a burlesque performance is always open to audience's interpretation, and the intended meanings of the performance may remain hidden and unnoticed by the audience.

In this article, I examine the paradox of gender representations in burlesque, where (gendered) bodies and heteronormative and sexualised gender representations are used in performances from the perspective of resexualisation. I investigate how burlesque draws on normative imagery and related parodic and (self-)ironic, non-verbal and kinetic means of "performing gender" to define performers' embodiment and sexuality. I also show how burlesque artists seek to resist the internalised male gaze and its reproduction, and what "owning" the gaze means to them.

Research data and research methods

My empirical research data consists of 1) sixteen semi-structured open-ended interviews with Finnish burlesque performers [to whom I refer to with pseudonyms P 1, P 2, P 3…], and 2) observations of fifteen Finnish burlesque events of different scales in various cities between the years 2019 and 2021. The interview participants had varying expertise in burlesque art, and at the time of the interviews, their ages ranged from 25 to 50. They were able-bodied, or at least without visible physical disabilities. The participants were not all cisgendered (meaning that one identifies with the gender one was assigned at birth), assumed-male or female, or heterosexual. Also, their burlesque personas' genders did not necessarily correspond to their offstage gender identities. Of the interviewees, half were assumed-male or non-binary. In the observed performances, most of the performers or characters were assumed-women (out of ten performers each evening one or two performers were assumed-male or non-binary), except for events whose theme focused on male performers and drag artists. Additional profile information cannot be provided due to potentially compromising participants' anonymity.

Participants were invited to participate in the study through personal invitations based on my recollections of interesting performers and performances I had seen over the years, as well as my connections to the Finnish burlesque community. These contacts were formed through private conversations and through my taking part in burlesque

dance lessons and burlesque events as a frequent audience member and as an occasional performer as a state kitten artist[3]. I obtained consent from each interviewee to participate in the study and conduct interviews. The semi-structured interviews were kept open-ended and conversational, and I strove to ensure that the questions were not psychologically harmful. For privacy and confidentiality, the discussions were organised in a private apartment, reserved study rooms in libraries, and on Zoom. The interviews were recorded and transcribed, and they will be saved to the Finnish Social Science Data Archive for long-term preservation.

To get a sense of what burlesque as an art form means and enables for the participants, I asked the participants to define how they understand burlesque, what it means to them, and what kind of topics or themes they felt were important to them. We proceeded to general questions about gender imagery in burlesque and on to more specific questions of interesting and/or challenging portrayals of gender on stage, gendered embodiment, and participants' evaluation of binaryness, normativity, and toxicity of gender concepts through burlesque art. This was done to get a sense of generalisations and truisms regarding societal gender concepts, their impact on gender representations in burlesque art, and the means of challenging deeply rooted normative gender imagery. With each topic, after obtaining a general overview of the participants' views, I asked additional and clarifying questions. Since the concept of gender is framed by cultural and social norms, the participants' views can be seen representing both personal views of the narrative moment as well as broader cultural norms and ideals (see Potinkara, Raippalinna & Turunen 2022, 334; Johnstone 2018).

The observed burlesque events were similar to each other. The host of the evening introduced the audience to the practices of the burlesque night and what was expected of the audience. Each burlesque evening consisted of several performances, between which the host kept up the rhythm of the night with small talk with the audience, while the stage kitten cleaned up and prepared the stage for the next performance. The performances' duration was usually around five minutes, with variations in themes and intensity. The meanings of some performances could be understood at an allegorical level; in others the story was more straightforward. Some performances I saw a couple of times during data collection, others only once. Visual choices (i.e., costumes, makeup, lightning) and music influenced the mood of the performances. The performers were welcomed to the stage and escorted away with applause.

I took notes by hand on each performance, writing down the name of the performer and the possible gender of the performer or character (however, this was based purely on my assumptions, unless I had prior knowledge of the matter). I recorded the costumes, makeup, setups, music, body language, facial expressions and gestures, and the dramatic arc of the performance, i.e., what happened in it. I also wrote down my interpretations of the performance and the theme. I recorded to some extent the reactions of the rest of the audience; however, I was not able to follow their reactions very closely during the performances.

I began the analysis by coding, microanalysis, and identifying emerging themes from the transcribed data and field notes, such as representations and experiences of gender, sexuality, societal gender concepts, and queer presentation in the context of burlesque

art in Finland. From these I identified two descriptive, partially intertwined patterns in burlesque performances that were used to deconstruct gender assumptions and offer alternative ways of interpreting and defining gender and sexuality. These patterns were: 1) *exaggeration, parody and (self-)irony,* and 2) *physical appearance, gendered mannerisms and clothing*. The first pattern denotes the subversive nature of burlesque performances, whereas the second illustrates the specific ways in which this subversiveness is manifested. Although I address them separately in the analysis, in practice, these patterns are closely interlinked. The first pattern deals with the performer's relationship to the subject matter (such as heteronormativity), while the latter pattern concerns the practical means by which heteronormativity is maintained and/or, in this case, questioned by harnessing these means through exaggeration, parody and irony.

In the research setting, I highlight the performers' own views on burlesque and the related paradox of gender representations, as expressed in interviews. On the other hand, I examine how the paradox is addressed in the performances themselves, which is more a matter of my own interpretation or reading. My knowledge based on the tradition of feminist research supports my analysis and influences the way I read and perceive interviews. Together with my own experiences in the burlesque field, these influence the creation of knowledge. By analysing the similarities and differences between burlesque performances and interview responses from the performers, I compare the information they produce within the broader social context and the everyday practices in which gender and differences are constructed. Nevertheless, my viewpoint on burlesque is not necessarily representative of the burlesque culture or its participants as a whole in Finland.

I have developed confidential relations and a strong participant-observer role in the burlesque community in Finland over the years. I am an assistant *stage kitten* performer, a member of a Finnish burlesque organisation, a burlesque researcher, and an active audience member. With these various positions, I have gained access to the group, as well as a multidimensional perspective and understanding of burlesque as a community and as an art form (on the formation of trust in the ethnographic field, see e.g., Jouhki & Steel 2016; Hämeenaho & Koskinen-Koivisto 2014; Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008). However, standing near my topic of study has demanded extra consideration. I have reflected on whether the respondents provided me with thorough and substantial research material, although I trust that they did. I have also tried to be aware of my own choices and assumptions, as well as how my insider knowledge and experiences may affect my research.

Exaggeration, parody and (self-)irony

The pattern of exaggeration, parody and irony challenges normative gender descriptions by promoting caricatures and mockery of gendered expressions, seeking liberation from dominant reality and social order through playful humour and questioning hierarchical structures. In this article, exaggeration, parody, and (self-)irony are shown to emerge from social and political issues, such as gender power relations, sexuality, and everyday expectations associated with men and women. The setting in which this pattern operates is shaped by the sociocultural context, in which gender representation is constructed

through interaction between learnt behaviour, cultural meanings of different genders, and social structures. In burlesque, key tools for parody and irony are humour and comedic elements. Comedy is used to observe different events and situations and the interpretations of them. Through humour, we process the experiences, attitudes, emotions, and cultural meanings associated with these observations. Humour and comedic elements feed off each other and become actualised through each other. Joking, irony and parody can be used to address cultural norms and taboos, and the contradictions in the meaning of jokes are the clashes between these cultural expectations (Virtanen 2003, 5-9).

Whatever the performer's self-identified gender, burlesque is thought foremost as a field of femme. Performers adopt attributes perceived as feminine as part of the stage persona's/character's identity. One observed performance had a portrayal of femininity that turned a non-sexualised figure into an emphatically female body. I interpreted this as an interesting example of parody and (self-)irony:

> A performer came on stage looking like a paper doll (the dress and limbs were separate parts as a costume on top of the performer's own body). The performer took off the paper doll outfit: arms, shoulders, and dress. Underneath the costume was a blank, light-coloured bodysuit, to which the performer painted pieces of a female body: a naval and vagina. She bent over (back facing the audience) and painted menstrual blood with red loose glitter by rubbing the glitter on drawn vagina. She proceeded to draw thongs with the glitter and took off her earrings and placed them as nipples. Last, she took glitter on both hands and rubbed the shape of breasts with her hands. (Field notes 2020).

The performance suggests that the paper doll character is an epitome for how femininity is strongly linked to the physical body and how a woman's identity is constructed through her sexuality (Gill 2007, 149). The performer embodied the feminine character by giving it a materially sexed body of a woman. This represents to me the 'burlesquing of femininity,' a (self-)ironic, exaggerated, perhaps even eccentric version of femininity. It references the British feminist cultural theorist Debra Ferreday's (2008) definition of 'burlesquing the girl,' which represents a caricature of femininity. This 'burlesquing of the girl' draws attention to the often-unconscious performance of femininity in burlesque, challenging the normalization of dominant feminine identities and revealing the constructed nature of feminine identities (ibid, 49).

To be political and feminist, burlesque must include feminist commentary and provide complicated questions to the audiences about female sexuality, female bodies, and power and control issues (Siebler 2015). In terms of parody and irony, it is crucial for the performance that the audience recognizes the subversion of patriarchal views on female sexuality. The performer should encourage the audience to critically examine these representations and subversions (Siebler 2015, 567). Also, viewer's own genders and sexualities affect their interpretations of the gender-related roles and norms of the performers and characters.

There are fewer male performers in Finland (approximately 20 % are men) than women who are the majority of performers, producers, and audiences. This can distort men's position in burlesque and what is expected of them. One participant recalled a fan dance (in which a performer dances with large feather fans, revealing and covering the body with them) by a male performer she had seen, saying, "It breaks these [general and gendered] images and gives a new twist, especially to femininity" (P 13). However, as there is less competition, a male performer's number might immediately be interesting and novel for audiences due to his gender rather than the content of the performance:

> [As a man] I can do a little bit of a poor fan dance, and it is always like, "Oh, a man doing a fan dance." On the other hand, these numbers also break the expectations and challenges of masculinity. – P 12

In general, men are not expected to position themselves as the sexualized object of the gaze or to behave sensually or femininely. One participant explained that it can be challenging not to take advantage or gain 'extra points' by being a man on stage, as "doing exactly the same things as a female-presenting performer on stage is immediately somehow exciting and new" when a man is the performer (P 12). Because burlesque is a female-dominated community, the presence of a male performer self-presenting as a sexualized objects is perceived as a positive and reinforcing experience. It breaks the expectations and ideals of masculinity because it is thought that "being under the gaze and being an object is seen as something that a man should not be" (P 12). What is particularly interesting here is the new perspective on resexualisation and power, in which male artists choose to present themselves as sexual objects, thus challenging the dominance of the male gaze (Gill 2003, 103–104).

People in the burlesque community – performers, producers and audiences – see burlesque as a feminist art form emphasizing empowerment, freedom, and acceptance of difference[4]. Yet there are also counter-voices to this notion. Critics in the US declare that especially mainstream (or classical) burlesque art is enforcing traditional and oppressive ideals of women's sexuality and current beauty standards by mimicking whatever society is told is "sexy" (Siebler 2015; Pench 21.8.2012). The problematic nature of this is known in the Finnish burlesque community as well:

> If we think about an imaginary example where a super-classical assumed-female is doing a very feminine expression and uses a lot of the movements of classic burlesque or fifties "puppiduu-cuteness." If there is no self-irony or sarcasm present, then it [can] reinforce thinking that "women are cute, lovely, prancy things, or should be put on a pedestal." – P 2

Although humorous exaggerations and carnivalization of gender are used to question these norms, it should be noted that most gender representations in burlesque lean toward normativity. While feminine portrayals can be a source of parodic pleasure and destabilise dominant normative femininity, they can also reinforce the constructed nature of feminine identity. The sexual objectification of self as "active, confident, assertive female subjects" relates to the questions of subjectivity and representation and their relationship, and how we have internalised the socially constructed ideals of

beauty (Gill 2007, 154). Unquestioned portrayals of normative representation of femininity can be problematic:

> In a number where a "classic pin-up girl is the object of gaze," it is possible that the [cis-gender woman] performer does not think about [the content of the performance] and might be happy with it. She might not have problematised this to herself as a performer, although she should have. The intention [of reinforcing gender roles] of that representation can be unintentional or intentional. – P 8

The interviewees I spoke with were aware of the weight of heteronormative femininity, and this was evident in one of the observed performances. The performers were doing household chores in doll-like costumes with unnatural smiles. They were doing robotic, repetitive movements (sweeping the floor, putting food in the oven, washing a window). They used robotic movements to take off their cleaning gloves, then they froze and were reset. Their movement became more humanized by being softer and fluid. They began to rotate their hips and arms in large arcs. Underneath their tulle dresses were lace corsets. I pondered in my fieldnotes whether corsets could represent chains here. They took off their corsets, lay down on the floor and then sat with their legs crossed. At the end, they took off their corkscrew-wigs and revealed their own long hair (though I noted in my fieldnotes that long hair, too, is commonly seen as very feminine). The number was said to deal with the roles women are put into and breaking free from them. This performance can be viewed through the lens of irony, in which breaking out from doll-like housewife characters distances the performers from traditional gender roles and ideals. This distancing is done by referring to sexist and conservative values, while at the same time emphasising that these beliefs are not the performers'/characters' own as they break free from their robotic and obedient roles (Gill 2007, 159).

In my experience, many burlesque performances parody attitudes related to women's social status and expected behaviours, with women taking part in discussions on the social regulation of their bodies (Gill 2007, 155). This is evident in the description of a performance below, depicting women taking back their own spaces, bodies, and sexual power:

> Two women came to the stage with cleaning utensils. The music was Queen's 'I want to break free'. Women had on pink cleaning outfits which they took off [the pink outfits might have symbolized beauty standards for women]. The music then changed to Aerosmith's 'Pink'. Women had on pasties[5] illustrated with the Facebook logo. At the end of the performance, the women took the pasties off, revealing bare glittered nipples. They held up a banner that read "free the nipples." (Field notes 2020).

Another performance portrayed gender more ambiguously and played with grotesqueness, which seemed to me as exaggeration and (self-)irony:

> The performer had her hair covered, wore a black covering outfit, and was rolling in circles on a platform with opera music playing on background. She took off the black outfit, and underneath were a glitter bra and shorts.

> The music changed to disco. The performer was bent down "upside down" on the platform, spinning on it at the same time. She had placed a sock puppet in her crotch and she used the puppet for lip-synching. After the sock puppet scene in the latter song, the performer sat on the edge of the stage, took lipstick from her bra, and drew sharp triangular eyebrows on her forehead. The eyebrows reinforced an image of Divine[6] -like makeup, emphasizing its "un-prettiness." As she got up again and began to dance with large movements and shaking her chest, she grimaced, squinting her eyes and opening her mouth wide, sticking out her tongue like Gene Simmons in the band Kiss. At the end, as the performer threw herself onto her back, she spread her legs wide and shook her thighs, making her leg muscles tremble. She was playing with exaggerated aesthetics, outlandishness, and rough movements, violating the assumptions of both gender stereotypes. (Field notes 2021).

In my interpretation, the exaggeration and self-irony in the performance focused on gender expression and the disruption of its visual and physical patterns. At the beginning of the performance, the performer is reserved, but as the song changes, she becomes more uninhibited. The restrained and controlled sexuality and physicality of a woman became more aggressive, and her makeup broke the traditional ideal of femininity and beauty. The broad body movements, leg spreads, and facial expressions she used can be interpreted as utilizing expressions traditionally considered masculine.

One of my male interviewees (P 12) reflected on how, in everyday life, men's focus on their appearance is less common and the category of 'basic Finnish masculinity' entails a certain disregard for appearance. The naturalness is seen as more positive for men than for women – "'authentic masculinity' wins the day" (Gill 2007, 158). Thus, objectification is not equally present in the life of a hypothetical 'average guy' as it is in the life of an 'average woman' in Finland. The average guy's sexualisation and the 'traditional dude' male characters are often portrayed through humour (P 12), where traditional expressions of masculinity serve as an introduction to the comedic nature of the depiction (Virtanen 2003, 4). From my observations, I identified a concrete example of this depiction:

> A car builder from Haukipudas [a rural district in northwest Finland]: The portrayal of a horny young man. Attire consists of a beer brand cap, Adidas tracksuit, too-big Levi's jeans, 'sweaty' trainers, and generic t-shirt. The performer has pencilled on a weak, low-growing moustaches below the nose. Comical performance and gestures – the number is a cacophony of the 'horny young male' associated stereotype. As the performance goes on, the stripping is done 'awkwardly,' resembling the stripping dance in the movie *American Pie 1* by the protagonist Jim. During the stripping, the character 'trips' as pantlegs are stuck to trainers. The boxer shorts are decorated with a car dice ornament, and the tassels are made by Wunderbaums. When a stage kitten comes to clear the stage, she smells the shoes, saying, "This one smells like testosterone, another like toxic masculinity." (Field notes 2020).

The character might be a portrayal of a so-called basement-dweller or mama's boy, who, stereotypically thought, has had very little if any sexual experience. This performance implies a contrast between rural and urban municipalities, suggesting that rural residents are viewed as "less cultivated" and stereotyped as hillbillies, or 'juntti' in Finnish. The portrayal of 'juntti' is generally conveyed through negative connotations of unrestrained and crude behaviour, sexual virility and enthusiasm, simplicity, and physicalness. But it can also be approached light-heartedly as independent, self-reliant, lacking education but having common sense and good nature. I see the portrayal of the 'juntti' in the above observation falling into the latter category. The 'juntti' is considered a strong comical trope in Finnish entertainment culture, and it is invariably depicted in the same way, although there have been minor changes in details (see, e.g., Ahjopalo 20.10.2015; Sutinen 2016). Gender is deeply tied to this stereotype, as 'juntti' is mostly portrayed in Finnish culture as a man.

Although not all boylesque[7] artists in Finland question normative concepts of masculinity or gender categories, many aim to bring out different points of view on manhood and masculinity. It can be challenging to portray variation in masculinity, as the social construction of 'a man' is narrow and dictates acceptable behaviour through hegemonic masculinity as an ideal type, subordinating other embodied versions of masculinity (Shin 2020; Gill 2007, 158). One of the interlocutors (P 16) told it is important to break the traditional masculine Chippendales-aesthetic[8], as it can be troubling to see only one type of masculinity. He wants to renew what is considered 'masculine'. In the Finnish boylesque scene there is a diverse imagery of ageing men, men with bigger stomachs or fuller bodies, skinny men, trans men, drag kings, and others. In burlesque art, patriarchal masculinity is dealt with, for example, by laughing at toxic masculinity and depictions of a macho man who does not cry or show emotions:

> When I started to think about the drag character, I clearly envisioned why am I doing him, what kind of qualities I want him to have. - - At the very beginning I channelled into him all the assholes I have previously met, the ones who misbehaved with a sexist attitude "I can do whatever I want and touch whomever I want the way I want to". This might have changed a bit, but the main idea still is that "anything is possible to him and he can do whatever he wants". – P 4

The exaggerating and parodic nature of burlesque relies on avoiding and dismantling all kinds of single truths and single definitions – whether they concern norms related to sexuality, physicality, age, or gender. Creating tension and releasing it through parody and irony is an essential part of the exaggerated nature of burlesque.

Physical appearance, gendered mannerisms and clothing

Mixing physical appearance, gendered mannerisms, and clothing are patterns used for deconstructing gender assumptions and embracing gender diversity and fluidity. With these patterns performers commented on and confronted socio-cultural descriptors of gender. Some performers played with gender assumptions by blending them together (P 3, P 9, P 12 and P 13), or 'moving between' different gender representations even during one number (P 10). One participant told how they felt "very strongly for [the

character] to be a man" (P 7) while also performing genderfluid numbers for the male character. Many of my participants expressed that the most intriguing performances are those with vague gender signals. The 'gendered bodily markers' (i.e., breasts or a beard) could also be mixed, which created yet another possibility for gender illusion. Breasts and 'a bulge' are fundamental for creating the illusion of assumed gendered bodies. However, one participant, in talking about another colleague, told me that:

> The X does not always mark [the spot]: [this performer] many times has a sock in their [g-strings] and breasts are not necessarily bound. This may cause feelings of confusion to the audience: "am I looking at a man or a woman", or "I do not know what is inside the trousers, and there are breasts". – P 3

A few interviewees discussed how 'the bulge in trousers' can be a glitter bomb, or three breasts can be revealed beneath the dress on an assumed male body. These types of tricks are common gimmicks (ways to attract attention) used in burlesque. It was also brought up that embodiment and gendered nuances have a huge significance for spectator, especially when portraying a gender other than one's designated gender: "for example, if a male character is played by an assumed female performer and is left with a feminine gait, the character can transform into a 'gay-ish figure'" (P 1). Embodiment can also create challenges to genderfuck[9] performances, as it takes up a lot of skill to convey the intended message:

> If one goes to perform in front of non-burlesque audience, assumably [the gendered body markers] help the audience to understand the gender we are talking about. But I would not want to disparage audiences' understanding of it [by saying something like] "they don't understand I am a woman because I don't have breasts". One can express [gender] in so many other ways. But those are the uncomplicated ways - - the ones we use when we do not want to leave anything uncertain. There are breasts and a bulge in trousers so that 'they will get it'. – P 6

Burlesque gender representations use different ways of moving and taking up space. They relate to what one wants to convey to the audience and how to highlight which characteristics are related to specific gender. Two non-binary interviewees said they sometimes followed and imitated people of all genders while walking off-stage to explore how their experiences of the world change, how they relate to space and other people, and how they move in relation to them.

Australian feminist Moira Gatens (1996) conceptualises imaginary bodies as understandings and representations of ourselves and other's sexed bodies, and how we examine and interpret the meanings of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and the culturally varying ways of being male or female. Masculinity and femininity are interconnected through complex societal and cultural networks of meanings of gender-appropriate forms of behaviour. These traits are interconnected with the sexed body and its cultural significance and can be perceived differently when acted out by different assumed genders. For example, assertive moves may be seen as important for a man to be successful, attractive and socially accepted, whereas for a woman the same type of

behaviour would likely be understood as too 'bossy', too loud, too visible, and too much (Gatens 1996, xiv, 11–13, 30; Turunen 2019, 280; Entwistle & Wilson 2001, 4). This type of portrayal can also be seen as a form of reassertion of sexual difference, where traits considered as masculine demarcate the difference from femininity, "transposing old and clichéd notions" of gender difference that are privileged by male dominance and serve to uphold existing imbalances (Gill 2007, 158-159).

My fieldnotes include some numbers in which gender roles were contravened and mixed. The first had a clear gender-bending theme. The performer was dressed in a gentlemanly outfit; she used understatedly masculine movement and language, and her makeup was feminine. She wore a corset and tassels under the suit. Her hair was in a long plait under a bowler hat on the head. The movement language in transitions from place and postures from one to another was very expressionless, but the stripping was done in a very grandiose and theatrical way. The performer waved the plait like a whip. Her bulky, assertive, and arrogant appearance was exciting.

In sociocultural context, the default assumptions of behaviour are often gendered. When a person of a different gender engages in behaviours typically associated with a specific gender, it challenges societal expectations and gives new meanings to those actions (Migdalek 2021,722; Gatens 1996). The observed performance combined gender re-representation and the playful use of gendered mannerisms and roles – commonly associated with a specific gender – through masculine-looking costumes and body language, alongside feminine-looking makeup and long hair, thereby subverting the idea of gender difference. I see this to be in line with Gill's (2007, 159) view of irony and consciousness, in which irony is used to create a safe distance between oneself and certain ways of thinking, to present different sides of a perspective. For example, sexism or gender differences can be cloaked in irony to express that they do not belong to one's own way of thinking.

Moving between and combining masculine and feminine expressions provide entertaining humour but also urge viewers to see their own gender assumptions as stereotypified. In the performances I saw, feminine and masculine expressions were combined, for example, by combining baby doll aesthetics with a male character, and by mixing Western films and macho body language with feminine expressions and makeup. One performance played with the butch-femme dichotomy by depicting a male stripper, who was nonetheless portrayed by a person with an assumed female body – the performer used the body language and gestures of male strippers, but at the same time emphasised that the purpose was not to try to be male. The mixing of masculinity and femininity was also made in the observed performances with concrete references, such as female soldiers and androgynous and caricatured depictions of historical figures like Joan of Arc and Mozart. These performances helped the viewer reconsider their ingrained stereotypes by deconstructing learnt cultural notions surrounding gender and its representation:

> Sometimes performances take a cliched model of "this is how it looks" -- men have the power, men are sensible, women are emotional, or men are active, and women are passive. These types of [attitudes] are deep in our culture. For me these are very interesting to study and to twist

> somehow. Stereotypes have so much power, they are recognizable [and] have something that is very true. Yet there are a lot of untrue things, which are contradictory and therefore interesting. – P 3

Stereotypes, while based on common perceptions, can include contradictory elements. Feminine characters may be perceived as women regardless of their actual gender, and analysing these conflicts reveals new meanings in their expression. Performers sought to question dominant gender roles and norms by turning them into theatre, playing with roles and norms, and deconstructing them. This was done by mixing details and elements of masculinity and femininity in the performance to address the stereotypical interpretation of gender and its sociocultural boundaries.

> Maybe the set up that I [as a male performer] am on stage with specific kind of attire and make up implicates the queerness of the situation. I am not attractive by normative standards; my body is not the one that is used for underwear commercials. Yet I choose to be exposed with that body. I offer a fiction of a different type of masculinity: 'what if a man is a type of a person wearing sequin-decorated ruffles.' Does that offer a different kind of perspective of thought for someone who sees it and thinks that the character is nonetheless a man. Commenting on the gender binary, what things are associated with what, who are biologically what, what are social [factors], and so forth. – P 3

> I like to include elements in my performances that break the assumptions related to the female gender, how women move or behave. I sometimes use more rough movements, or something else that is not pretty and sweet. – P 13

In both quotes, performers contrasted their performed bodies with the representations of cultural gender assumptions and gender performances, transcending the social boundaries of gender, and critique to dominance of gender difference (Gill 2007, 149, 158–159). Of the two quotes above, the first speaks of putting on makeup and being on stage in a 'sequin-decorated ruffles' as queering conventional male aesthetics. It translates the celebration of the female into male terms, presenting different opportunities to explore, twist, exaggerate and expand different genders. In the second quote, usage of rough, unladylike movements was not intended as impersonating men but to underscore the stereotypical description of the female gender. Gender roles are learnt and conventional cultural representations of masculinity and femininity based on repetition, but they can be transformed by doing otherwise (Rossi 2017, 27).

Another performance commented on masculine fragility in a less clichéd manner through a number that was serious, sensitive, and beautiful. It was an interesting masculine interpretation of the mermaid character, which is traditionally thought of as very feminine. At first glance, the character appears to be basic masculine, which is emphasised by his behaviour, but as the performance progresses, more feminine aspects of the character emerge as his expressions and demeanour softens:

> A workingman eating lunch: The character was a janitor on a lunchbreak. He had a fish wrapped inside a newspaper. In the beginning of the

> performance, the character used ‘macho mannerisms’ as he pretended to put out a cigarette with his tongue. He then went ahead to take off the work overalls in a very subtle way, revealing glittered nipples and a mermaid’s tail. He then opened his long hair and took off his cap, and a sea-themed, blueish crown was exposed underneath. He caressed the fish he had revealed from the newspaper against his chest and revealed a trident from his sweeping broom. (Field notes 2020).

And in another performance, by using varying modes of behaviour and gestures perceived as ‘masculine’, the performer called attention to binary gender divisions and how they can be dismantled. A woman portrayed herself as a taxi driver in the hustle and bustle of New York. The performance emphasized the heartbeat and ‘sexiness’ of the city, and the performer’s attire consisted of a black suit, tie, black glitter knee socks, white driving gloves, black “taxi cap”, and aviator glasses, with a black harness under her clothing. Her hair was loose and ‘messy’. The performance had strong vibes of the 1980s and punk culture, with the band Hanoi Rocks[10] playing in the background. Although the character’s gender was not defined in any way, she exploited stereotypically masculine traits through her presence: her behaviour was tough and assertive, even intimidating.

These performances can be understood as a critique of normativity, gender roles, male power, and the ways in which traditional masculinity and femininity – strength, toughness, softness, and sensuality – are used to stress the differences between men and women (Gill 2007, 158). The performances shared a focus on challenging and deconstructing stereotypes associated with gender difference, assumed physical gender and its expected behavioural patterns. This was articulated primarily through clothing, mannerisms, gestures, and facial expressions.

Historically, clothing has played a significant role in social control and power, providing social identities and reflecting differences in status and gender. Clothing not only serves as a surface for the real self but also gives the body meanings it would not have in itself. Clothing is a powerful indicator and producer of gender, as we are gendered through our clothes and appearance rather than our physical bodies (Parviainen 2024, 5-6). For example, a men's suit is not 'just' an accentuation of ‘natural’ masculinity, rather, a certain kind of masculinity is created by wearing a suit. Some of the meanings associated with dress are unwritten and invisible, and crossing those invisible boundaries reveals the meanings of clothing. Dressing requires a sense of space, as well as the ability to read and understand the culture around us and to recognise the rules that define our appearance (Turunen & Niiranen 2019, 16, 21, 25; Entwistle & Wilson 2001).

One participant (P 12) said that he did not really need extreme [masculine] gender characterizations – i.e. the pattern of exaggeration, parody and (self-)irony – in order to question a specific kind of masculinity. Instead, his presence and aesthetics combined feminine with masculine to create the portrayal of his choice. He said he creates extravagant, flamboyant fantasies, drawing much of his visual inspiration from history, such as the late Renaissance and Rococo periods. He drew on men's fashion but took a different view of its aesthetics and "what it means to be a man." He mentioned, for

example, pearl earrings, which were common accessories for men in portraits from the 1500s and 1600s, but are now more commonly associated with women:

> My numbers are allegorical in some ways. All my numbers question a specific kind of masculinity. - - I do not need to have a strong masculine stage presence; I can be as I please. Sometimes these are things that are more usually linked with some sort of femininity. - - My own aesthetic is not minimal; it is an over-the-top ruffled fantasy, and it is very theatrical. - - The character is not masculine in a stereotypical way, but it is undeniably a man. – P 12

Underlining the burlesque persona's cis-gendered identity can also be a way to draw attention to binary gender categories. Many burlesque performances in Finland deal with artists' right to own their femme representation. This means that the female artists (with both more norm-breaking and more classical depictions of femininity) make the female body visible and seen in society, not simply as objects but as active agents. They also draw attention to the critical attitude towards the demands of successful womanhood (Gill 2007). Finnish female burlesque performers also focus on female strength, aggression, and anger, or underline acting against 'the good girl' metaphor, questioning why a specific type of behaviour is considered feminine or masculine:

> I have wanted to deal with my [female] gender, which has often seemed too much since I was young and a teen. While I emphasize certain feminine signs in dress, my role models have been powerful female figures: those who squeeze to death with their thighs, wear fishnet stockings, or crush with stilettos instead of being helpless. They can run in high heels, not to escape but to go after. – P 15

To me, the above quote expresses a feminist stance on how burlesque examines female sexuality, female empowerment and embodiment (Siebler 2015, 572). The feminine characteristics of appearance – dresses, fishnet stockings, and high heels – are often constructed as heterosexual male perspective, while simultaneously restricting women's mobility and bodily autonomy (Siebler 2015, 562; Niiranen 2019; Brownie 2017; Summers 2001). However, the performer's reflections on her youth and her badass role models (Tura Satana, Mae West, Nina Hagen) indicate a mindset in which she and her idols portrayed sexualized femininity while also representing aggression, authority, taking charge and not being compliant. This in turn, expresses a refusal to submit to hegemonic masculinity and threatened male supremacy (Gill 2003) [11]. A decade after Siebler's article, burlesque very clearly explains, confronts and questions the objectification, degradation, and loss of power that are at the heart of a female sexuality defined by patriarchy.

Masculinity and manhood are also depicted in burlesque in many ways, from the basic guy and his normative masculinity to The Macho Man, dude, bastard culture, androgynous, artistic, and allegorical portrayals, and 'over the top, sweet' male images. The visible play with gender roles seems to confuse the normative concept of masculinity the most, especially when onstage expression uses clothing and appearance that employs femininity:

> The number had rococo aesthetics in the makeup and wardrobe. The male character was overly enthusiastic and excited over a bunch of grapes, which led to him disrobing his attire of jacket, shirt, trousers, shoes, a wig, and gloves. When undressing, his gestures were flirtatious and playful and he used the movements often seen in burlesque: large arches with the hands, rotating movements with the wrists, shaking his booty, biting fingers, brushing pieces of clothing along the body (especially in the crotch), stroking and whipping the body with clothes and hands. The performer glanced at the grapes several times during the number, followed by a bite of the lower lip and/or finger with an ecstatic expression on his face. As he took off his shirt which covered his buttocks, he turned his back to the camera and slowly pulled the shirt off his naked body. He then stroked his hands upwards against his hips accentuating his buttocks. He glanced over his right shoulder and rotated the wrist of his straightened right hand in a circular motion (right hand had the last piece of clothing: a single glove). He brought his right hand close to his face and sucked his middle finger. He opened his legs a little, leaned forward and shook his booty. He put his right hand and the glove between his buttocks, squeezed his cheeks together and pulled his hand away while the glove stayed between his buttocks. He grabbed the glove with his right hand and whipped it against his left arm and upper body. Finally, he grabbed the grapes and placed them in front of his genitals, turned towards the viewer [camera, as it was the time of the COVID] and ate a few grapes while walking towards the camera. He kneeled down, leaving only his face visible, and he stared at the viewer while greedily gulping grapes into his mouth. (Field notes 2020).

In the above depiction, the male character referred to the 18th-century French rococo era and its style emphasizing elegance, extravagance and femininity, characteristics not typically associated with masculinity. The performance redefined the characteristics of masculinity through clothing, make-up, and questioning of beauty ideals, but also through bodily actions. By biting the fingers or giving attention to the buttocks (slow reveal, strokes of hands and clothes against it) he gave special attention (both his own attention and the viewer's) to body parts that are not usually sensuously expressive in Western masculine stereotypes and explored the sensuality and sexuality of a male body, inviting viewer to "celebrate what they [can] find sexy about themselves and to flaunt it!" (Whitehead 2014, 32). Strengthening the representation of feminine masculinity revealed the dominance of heteronormative male imagery in Western culture (Gill 2007, 152, 158–159).

Conclusion

In this article, I examined the paradox of gendered imagery in Finnish burlesque art by analysing how the deconstruction of gender-related stereotypes are conveyed on burlesque stage by playing with nonverbal and kinetic means. There lies a contradiction between how burlesque inescapably reinforces normative gender representations yet at the same time seeks to violate stereotypical gender representations by exploring, confronting, and subverting them. There has been a concern among feminists that the

more people try to escape from this contradiction, the more it imprisons them. I examined two patterns to illustrate how the deconstruction of gender was addressed; the first one referred to the more ideological framing of this deconstruction of gender, while latter showed the more concrete ways of re-representing gender in the performances.

The pattern of *exaggeration, parody and (self-)irony* underlined testing the limits of gender categories by parodying and mocking normative gender descriptions and 'burlesquing' gender categories. This pattern depicts the subversive nature of burlesque, focusing especially on the parodying of normative gender performances thought exaggeration and irony. The pattern of *physical appearance, gendered mannerisms and clothing* was used to underline and unsettle societal and cultural descriptors associated with gender and to urge performers and viewers to see their own assumptions of gender. The presence and aesthetics of different gender markers were combined to emphatically critique normative gender categories and embrace gender diversity and fluidity. For example, men putting on makeup and performing in a sequin-decorated ruffles queered the conventional male aesthetics, and women characters using rough, bulky and assertive movements and gestures was to underscore the stereotypical description of female gender. For burlesque performers, deconstructing meant to explore, twist, exaggerate and expand gender roles and to transcend the social boundaries of gender. Making differences visible through alternative gender depictions highlights the expectations associated with gender roles.

The two analysed patterns can be fruitful tactics in framing the paradox of using heteronormative gender representation as a means for subversion, yet socio-cultural context, perception, and different views of thoughts affect how the audiences are receiving them. Therefore, their usage is not without the paradox in themselves, as they may in fact reinforce the very perceptions they claim to satirise.

In burlesque, resexualisation and self-objectification are seen primarily as liberating and empowering, but they can also reinforce the constructed nature of feminine and masculine identities and the surveillance of heteronormative gender stereotypes. The social construction of 'a man' and a 'a woman' are narrow, leaving other gender forms perceived as subordinate. A new perspective on resexualisation and power challenges the dominance of the male gaze, particularly when male and non-binary artists position themselves as sexualized objects. The concept of 'owning the gaze' (performers deciding themselves how they want to present their bodies, gender, sensuality, and sexuality) in burlesque performances challenges social status, expected behaviour, and body regulation, highlighting the importance of 'performing gender' when performing art. It challenges expected behaviour, body regulation, and social structures by highlighting their performative nature.

In burlesque performances, performers navigate societal expectations while simultaneously subverting them by, among other things, complicating notions of femininity and masculinity, presenting them as performative expressions rather than fixed parts of identity. This is also a way of challenging the male gaze. Moreover, it highlights performers' relationship with their bodies and the implications of being objectified within a patriarchal context. Burlesque embodies a mix of concealment and

revelation, aiming to critique traditional concepts of identity and challenging the stability of gender categories by addressing the constructed nature of femininity and masculinity that reflect power dynamics within a patriarchal framework.

In burlesque as an art form, as well as in research on it, the majority of the authors and interlocutors are assumed-female, which is why women are emphasised in the focus of the research object and are given voice and authority. For this reason, my focus on male and non-binary performers in addition to female is significant contribution to the field of international burlesque studies. Disruptions in heteronormative masculinity are illustrated through men's engagement in challenging traditional masculine gender roles by combining elements typically associated with femininity into male or non-normative representations. Redefining power and challenging traditional depictions of manhood shifts the perception of masculinity and femininity, emphasizing the narrow social constructs of gender. The use of exaggeration and irony highlights the normative aspects of gender expression introducing new interpretations to create a dialogue around gender identity.

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Endnotes

[1] ‘Burlesque’ is a term widely used to refer to as a mixture of different variations of contemporary burlesque art: vintage style or ‘classical’ burlesque. Burlesque draws from, among others, the 1920s-1940s Golden Era of Burlesque, often featuring pin-up aesthetics and elaborate costumes with feather boas; boylesque performed (mostly) by male-identified performers; draglesque (combining drag art and burlesque); and queerlesque (a subgenre of burlesque that evolved around sexual and gender minorities).

[2] Older women, bigger women, women with wrinkles, etc. are not included in sexual subjecthood and are subject to offensive and sometimes vicious representations (Gill 2003, 103).

[3] A member of the burlesque troupe who cleans and preps the stage and performers during burlesque events.

[4] Mehr 2019, 188–189; Giusti 2012; Baldwin 2010[2004], 10–11; Nally 2009.

[5] Pasties cover nipples. Pasties sometimes have tassels, which can be twirled.

[6] Divine was a drag character of Harris Glenn Milstead (1945–1988), known for having a shaved hairline to the middle of her head, where her wig was attached, and over-the-top makeup that had brows rising to her forehead and strong eye makeup that was applied to the brow.

[7] Boylesque is performed (mostly) by male-identified performers.

[8] Chippendales is a US male strip dance troupe that visually leans on the ideal of traditional masculinity.

[9] *Genderfuck* is a form of gender expression that seeks to subvert the traditional gender binary or gender roles by mixing traditionally masculine (such as a beard) and traditionally feminine (such as a dress) components (Nonbinary Wiki, no date).

[10] Hanoi Rocks were a Finnish rock band formed in 1979. They separated in 1985 after their drummer Nicholas "Razzle" Dingley died in a car crash in December 1984 (Wikipedia, 5.1.2025).

[11] See, e.g., Schippers 2007, 95–97.

Research data

Sixteen interviews (P1–P16) with Finnish burlesque performers. Conducted in the years 2020–2021. Longtime preservation of interview transcripts will be done to the Finnish Social Science Data Archive.

Observation on 15 Finnish burlesque events. Conducted in various Finnish cities over the years 2019–2021.

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