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Cultural Politics of Music Censorship in 'Post-Soviet' Finland

It has been argued that the existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics from 1917 to 1991 was an extremely significant factor with respect to freedom of expression in Finland. This is allegedly so primarily because, especially in journalism, issues possibly not favourable to USSR were subjected to deliberate control or 'self-censorship'. In the 1970s, this state of affairs, as well as the more general situation where both foreign and internal policies of Finland were adjusted to either perceived or real Soviet interests, became known as Finlandisation. In later years, the term has in fact come to signify the "result of becoming obliged for economic reasons to favour (or refrain from opposing) the interests of [a neighbouring state] despite not being formally allied to it politically".¹

According to the topmost political authorities of 1970s Finland, however, to talk about any form of censorship was misleading to say the least. In the words of the longest-standing President of Finland, Urho Kaleva Kekkonen (1900–1986; in office 1956–1981):

discussion on 'self-censorship' is based on a poor knowledge of the position of our country [...]. In our country, freedom of speech prevails, and thus the State does not or cannot aim at restricting the printed word. [...] When the interests of the nation are at issue, this can be called political wisdom.²

Regardless of the choice of terminology, the abolition of the USSR on 26 December 1991 constitutes an important transitory moment, as the cultural regulation based on interpretations of foreign policy inevitably changed. In the words of sociologist Pasi Saukkonen, the collapse of the socialist system "erased the foreign-policy-related conditions of Finnish internal affairs."³ It should be remembered, however, that in the realm of non-verbal cultural expression the implications of foreign policy are more contested. Also, while Finland's geopolitical position has changed, in the early 2010s the country is still situated in the liminal and politically highly charged space between

1 *Oxford English Dictionary*, accessed 12 February 2014. <http://www.oed.com>. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2 Quoted in Erkki Laatikainen, "Sananvapaus 1970-luvun Suomessa", in *Sensuuri ja sananvapaus Suomessa*, ed. Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen (Helsinki: Suomen sanomalehdistön historia -projekti, 1980), 170; my translation.

3 Pasi Saukkonen, *Erilaisuuksien Suomi. Vähemmistö- ja kotouttamispolitiikan vaihtoehdot*, (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2013), 27.

'east' and 'west', not least because the European Union has been demarked from Russia by Finland's eastern border since 1995. Thus the sociopolitical and cultural dynamics of Finlandisation may not have disappeared entirely. Hence the provocative use of 'post-Soviet' in my title, albeit without any intention to downplay the actual post-Soviet circumstances or to arrogate the term for mere sensational purposes.

The obliteration of the Soviet Union coincides further with another major societal transition, namely the shift from 'monocultural' to 'multicultural' Finland.⁴ To begin with, as the Iron Curtain was demolished, the amount of Russian immigrants in Finland increased roughly tenfold, from five hundred annual arrivals in the late 1980s to 5515 in the year 1991. Since 1992, the annual amount of Russian migrants into Finland has been two thousand on average. The year 1991 represents a peak also with respect to the annual increase in the number of foreign citizens in Finland, and immigration from Somalia in particular.⁵ The latter number is significant in that it signals an unprecedented change in the national 'ethnic palette', which in turn has brought forth re-evaluations about xenophobia and outright racism in Finland. Closely associated with this is the debate over 'hate speech' and its implications for freedom of expression.⁶

Questions about 'hate speech' and its criminalisation as a form of ethnic agitation and incitement to violence demonstrate clearly that freedom of expression is not an absolute right. It may be stated in the *Constitution* of Finland that "[e]veryone has the freedom of expression" that "entails the right to express, disseminate and receive information, opinions and other communications without prior prevention by anyone",⁷ yet even this constitutional freedom is subjected to possible restrictions on the basis of child welfare in particular. Also, while the current legislation of Finland does not include the term 'censorship',⁸ thus implying there is no such thing in the country, there are several articles in the Criminal Code in particular that condition and restrict public enunciations. Moreover, it is precisely child welfare that forms the justification for the *Act on Audiovisual Programmes*, which in fact may be taken as the only instance of legal censorship in Finland, in the sense of official supervision and control of art and the press.⁹ One should note however that the Act, entered into force in its initial form on the first of January 2001, represented a shift from previewing to classification.¹⁰

Yet what is of particular significance here is that on the basis of the Act, it appears that music may constitute a major alleviating factor when considering possible censo-

4 Ibid., 27–30.

5 *Statistics Finland*, accessed 12 February 2014. http://www.stat.fi/tup/tilastotietokannat/index_en.html.

6 cf. Reeta Pöyhkäri, Paula Haara and Pentti Raittila, *Vihapuhe sananvapautta kaventamassa* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2013).

7 *The Constitution of Finland*, 11 June 1999, 12 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1999/en19990731.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice.

8 *Finlex Data Bank*, accessed 12 February 2014. <http://www.finlex.fi>. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice & Edita, 2014.

9 cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*.

10 *Act on the Classification of Audiovisual Programmes*, 775/2000. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2000/en20000775.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

rial activities and mechanisms in twenty-first century Finland. The Act certainly carries the potential to subject certain musically unique audiovisual products to restrictions and even prohibition on the grounds of child welfare, but there is a pivotal music-related loophole in it. It is stipulated in the Act that if an audiovisual programme contains only music it is exempted from classification and labelling.¹¹ In the Act itself the types of programmes in question are not identified, but in the associated Government Bill, it is explicated that "for instance music videos as well as [...] movies that contain solely musical performances" belong to this category.¹² Thus the implication is that audiovisual programmes focussing solely on music are rarely if ever harmful for minors. Much has changed since the early 1970s, until which musical output on public service airwaves was subject to official inspection and possible bans on the basis of aesthetic quality and commercial, moral and political grounds.¹³

On the basis of these societal changes, then, it is my aim to investigate the ways in which the notion of censorship has changed in Finland in the context of music after the abolition of the Soviet Union. By emphasising the importance of the *notion* of censorship, rather than any normative definition of it, it is my intention to foreground the consequences of the usage of the notion as well as the meanings assigned to it – in other words, the *cultural politics of censorship*. An approach based on a normative definition would also be problematic since it would involve measuring any alleged act of censorship against the absence of the notion from the current legislation of the state, which does not recognise the term.¹⁴

Furthermore, censorship, as an activity inextricably embedded with power relations, is a form of political activity by definition. Thus it would make little sense to talk about politics of censorship. Yet this is what I aim at, in the most general of apprehensions, as the objective is to emphasise the power relations involved in the most mundane everyday practices. To be more precise, by incorporating the denominator 'cultural' here, I propose that alongside the official and otherwise authoritative definitions of censorship, it is also instructive to consider the "unsophisticated, or popular, apprehension of censorship"¹⁵ in all its variety of ways to make the notion meaningful. Simply put: all enunciations of censorship are real, and sometimes even correct in their own right; it is the usage of the notion, instead, that is more intriguing. In other words, what are we driving at when we are labelling something as censorship?

11 *Act on Audiovisual Programmes*, 17 June, 2011, 9 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/2011/en20110710.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

12 *Eduskunta – valtiopäiväasiakirjat*, "Hallituksen esitys Eduskunnalle kuvaohjelmalainsäädännön uudistamiseksi," accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/vex3000.sh?TUNNISTE=HE+190/2010>.

13 Raimo Salokangas, *Aikansa oloinen. Yleisradion historia, 2. osa, 1949–1996* (Helsinki: YLE, 1996), 98–103, 235–238.

14 *Finlex Data Bank*.

15 Helen Freshwater, "Towards a redefinition of censorship," in *Censorship & Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, ed. Beate Müller (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2004), 228.

Material and methodology

Certainly, the popular or unsophisticated apprehensions of censorship take myriad forms, as the notion can be operationalised in public and private discussions alike. It should also be noted that these discussions are not equal with each other in institutional terms. Here, the importance of journalism is paramount, for two reasons in particular: first, because in legal terms censorship is non-existent, it is the fourth estate that provides an institutional authority over the subject matter; and second, due to its role as a mass media practice by definition, journalism has the potential to reach and affect vast quantities of people. As the proverb goes, when it is in black and white, it is also true – or at least important. The mass media collection also accentuates the institutional dimensions of cultural politics involved here, both because of explicit aims to communicate with a large audience, and the self-regulatory practices and mechanisms that have been established to ensure the neutrality of the press. In Finland, a major organ in this respect is the Council for Mass Media, whose task “is to cultivate responsible freedom in regard to the mass media as well as provide support for good journalistic practice”.¹⁶

Therefore, I have produced my research material by probing into the digital archive of *Helsingin Sanomat*, the leading newspaper in the country in terms of circulation, from 27 December 1991 (the day after the abolition of USSR) until 3 June 2013 (the day my subscription to the archive ended). The probe is based on a permutation of the following keywords (with their associated linguistic forms):

sensuur/sensur*/sensor*/ennakkosens*/itsetsens**: covering all instances of (self-) censorship; and

musi/muusik**: covering all instances of music(ianship).

Certainly, a certain amount of relevant material has fallen through the cracks, because of exclusion of search terms such as ‘freedom of expression’ or ‘denial of performance’. But, as at the heart of the issue is the cultural politics of *censorship*, this is an obvious caveat.

As the result of the probe, a total number of 431 newspaper articles emerged. In many of these, however, the notion of censorship was not intimately connected to music. For instance, one might have an account of the UFA film production, with separate references to 1930s musical films and to the GDR censorship in the 1960s,¹⁷ a review of a theatrical play composed from Portuguese censors’ documents from the Facist era,¹⁸ or merely a listing of radio programmes that happen to include “musical memories from past years” and a feature on “The decades of the Finnish Broadcasting Company: From the shackles of censorship to a developing sound radio”.¹⁹ It should

16 *Julkisen sanan neuvosto*, “The Council for Mass Media – Basic Agreement”, accessed 15 September 2104. http://www.jsn.fi/en/Council_for_Mass_Media/basic-agreement/.

17 Matti Virtanen, “Metropoliksen, Dietrichin ja propagandafilmiin alkukoti,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 10, 1998.

18 Lauri Meri, “Kilpajuoksu saksien kanssa,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, August 23, 2012.

19 “ylen ykkönen...,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 5, 2001.

be also noted that due to the existence of only one sibilant, namely *s*, in the Finnish language in its written form, there was recurrent confusion between technological sensors and human censors. I have excluded the former from my material.

While it would be easy and maybe even tempting to discard the articles that deal with film-, theatre- and radio-related censorship as non-pertinent, such accounts point to the peculiarity of music as an object of censorship. Music censorship experts and activists Marie Korpe, Ole Reitov and Martin Cloonan remind us, on one hand, of antiquated ideas of music as a devilish cause for "sensual feelings of pleasure" that "lead unerringly to debauchery and thoughtlessness" which in turn creates a need of censorial control. On the other hand, they point to attacks against jazz, rock'n'roll, pop and rap where religious thought has been linked to racism and political agendas.²⁰ In both cases, significantly, ideological constructs were given an acoustic and thus a material existence through the aesthetics of music. It was the sound, rather than lyrics or demeanor, that constituted the grounds for censorship. In the contemporary situation, it appears that the only reason why a song could be banned because of aesthetic qualities, pertains to its volume – which of course means that the decision has to be made after the performance has begun.

As my material takes its physical form in written language and my aim is to unearth conceptualisations and contexts of usage of the notion of censorship, my analysis is based on approaches that are lumped together under the rubric 'discourse analysis'. While there is nowadays a multitude of strands of discourse analysis, I take my impetus from the foundational work in the field by philosopher Michel Foucault, who stresses the importance of 'a statement' as "[t]he atom of discourse", with its "distinct enunciative characteristics", that forms the basis for a particular "modality of existence". What is crucial here is that statements should not be conflated with sentences or any other strictly linguistic units, but instead considered as utterly relational, ideological and therefore irrevocably political occurrences; as a modality, a statement "allows [a group of signs] to be in relation with a domain of objects" and "to prescribe a definite position to any possible subject".²¹ In other words, statements are never neutral but always implicated in power relations that condition the formation of knowledge about a topic. And, as discourses are "made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined",²² they too are always already political constructs.

In terms of the actual analysis of the 431 *Helsingin Sanomat* articles, then, every printed occurrence of 'censorship', in all its variants, constitutes a statement. Next, these statements need to be collated with each other in order to be grouped together as expressions of a discourse. According to Foucault, this entails the description and study of "systems of dispersion", or, the regularities that interconnect "various strate-

20 Marie Korpe, Ole Reitov and Martin Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," in *Music and Manipulation. On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, ed. Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 242, 245–246.

21 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 80–81, 107.

22 *Ibid.*, 117.

gic possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes".²³ This again brings forth the political undertows of discourses.

Institutionalised discourses

In order to situate the *Helsingin Sanomat* material into the broader discursive field surrounding the notion of censorship, however, it is necessary also to juxtapose the material with more top-down, institutionalised discourses. There are three such domains in particular: legislation, activism and research. Regarding the first of these, one may note that the *Criminal Code of Finland* has a bearing on freedom of expression for instance in terms of ethnic agitation, incitement to war, public incitement to an offence, breach of the sanctity of religion, distribution of depictions of violence or sexual obscenity, public obscenity, dissemination of information violating personal privacy, and defamation.²⁴ In the words of the late professor of criminal justice Eero Backman, the pressure imposed by the Criminal Code on freedom of expression may be thought of as a form of "punitive censorship" that is conditioned by the broader societal context and therefore always subject to modification and manipulation.²⁵ Professor emeritus of public law Teuvo Pohjolainen, also emphasises the importance of criminalisation and penalties for freedom of expression. He further maintains that through retrospective supervision it is possible to restrict freedom of expression quite severely. Thus freedom of communication is not dependent on the system of supervision as such.²⁶

Activism that is related to issues of censorship is anti-censorship activism by default. In these circles, the crucial question may not concern the existence of censorship but instead the forms in which it manifests itself in different societal, cultural and historical contexts. Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan in fact emphasise the dynamics involved, between mass manipulation and humanitarian protection, and especially in relation to recent discussion over freedom of expression as opposed to various forms of hate speech.²⁷ There is however a curious tension in much of these activists' writing, as simultaneously with the idea of ever-present censorship there exists a drive towards defining what censorship 'really' is.

Definitions are a concern of scholarly research as well. According to Cloonan, who in fact is an academic by occupation, censorship should be understood as "the process by which an agent (or agents) attempts to, and/or succeeds in, significantly altering, and/or curtailing, the freedom of expression of another agent with a view to limit-

23 Ibid., 37.

24 *The Criminal Code of Finland*, 39/1889, ch. 11, 10 §; ch. 12, 2 §; ch. 17, 1, 10, 17–18 §; ch. 24, 8–10 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1889/en18890039.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice.

25 Eero Backman, "Sensuuri ja painovapaus oikeudellisina ilmiöinä," in *Suomen sanomalehdistön historia projektin julkaisuja n:o 17. Sensuuri ja sananvapaus Suomessa*, ed. Pirkko Leino-Kaukiainen (Helsinki: Suomen sanomalehdistön historia -projekti, 1980), 107–108, 110.

26 Teuvo Pohjolainen, "Viestinnän oikeudellinen sääntely," in *Suomen mediamaisema*, ed. Kaarle Nordenstreng and Osmo A. Wiio (Helsinki: WSOY, 2001), 230.

27 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," 258–259.

ing the likely audience for that expression."²⁸ The definition is flexible enough, but that is also where the risks reside. To begin with, to define is to exert authority over conceptualisation and categorisations, immediately leading to questions over not only the justifications of the authority itself but also the relationship to other definitions and conceptualisations of censorship. Cloonan in fact explicitly writes that the above definition is *for him* – which inevitably raises questions about his purposes and why should his definition be considered as better or more correct than any other definition of censorship. Furthermore, flexibility opens the door for the possibility of conflation between censorship and virtually any form of regulation. Here, all qualitative and speculative criteria only increase ambiguity; in relation to Cloonan's definition, one may ask for instance what constitutes a 'significant' alteration, or how can one ascertain who comprise the 'likely' audience for an expression in question. In the name of fairness, though, it should be noted that Cloonan does recognise the problematic nature of "a transhistorical definition of censorship".²⁹ And, to complicate things further, one may note the emergence of so-called new censorship studies, whose proponents nurture a distinction between 'regulatory' and 'constitutive' or 'structural' censorship. One, if not the, central aspect of the former is what has become labelled 'market censorship' in the western, neo-liberal societies; at issue here is how state policies are under lobbying driven by commercial interests.³⁰

As a result of the juxtaposition, one can distinguish between at least four different discourses. I have decided to refer to these, in no particular order of importance and for reasons explained in more detail below, as discourses of distantiation, red rag, IPR censorship, and self-censorship. All the quotations from the research material are translated by me. Regarding the citations, in addition, as my aim is to point to general tendencies, I will not refer to every article in detail.

Distantiation

First, as evidenced by the non-existence of the whole notion of censorship in the current legislation of Finland, one can argue for a *temporal distantiation* in relation to the topic. In other words, censorship is constructed as something that does not exist anymore. While this particular form of distantiation is highly national in nature, a counterpoint is provided by a *spatial distantiation* – for example on the basis of accounts in which censorship of music is associated predominantly if not exclusively in more remote, and by implication, less civilised parts of the world. For instance, in the anthology *Shoot the Singer!*, translated also into Finnish,³¹ music censorship is associated primarily with Asia, Africa, the Middle-East and the Americas. There are two essays

28 Martin Cloonan, "Call That Censorship? Problems of Definition," in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 15.

29 Ibid.

30 Müller 2004, 5; Martin Cloonan, "Popular Music Censorship in Africa: An Overview," in *Popular Music Censorship in Africa*, ed. Michael Drewett and Martin Cloonan (Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2006), 6.

31 Marie Korpe, ed., *Ampukaa artisti! Musiikkisensuuri nykypäivänä* (Helsinki: Like, 2006).

focussing on Europe, though, one on Turkey³² and the other on France.³³ Yet in both cases, spatial distantiation is present implicitly, through issues pertaining to ethnic minorities, immigrants and multiculturalism. Thus censorship becomes conceptualised, however inadvertently, as a regulative mechanism that is directed to and maybe even needed in situations where a nations' 'own' cultural repository is supposedly challenged by 'foreign' peculiarities.

In my material, the discourses of both temporal and spatial distantiation are prevalent, and overwhelmingly so. Regarding the former, there are recurrent references for instance to Finland of the 1960s, with a particular emphasis on the bans dictated by YLE, the Finnish public service broadcasting company. Here, the notion of censorship is frequently conceived as a Finlandised form of self-censorship, as is the case also with coverage on the opera *Kaivos* ('The Mine'), composed by Einojuhani Rautavaara between 1957 and 1963, and 'finally' performed in live concert for the first time in 2010. The opera is based on the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, which according to the coverage caused the then Director of National Opera to suggest some changes to the libretto.³⁴ Also in a review of two rereleases of Finnish wartime propaganda songs, the post-war foreign relations with the Soviet Union are brought forth as the cause for original censorship and discrimination against their makers. Interestingly enough, there are passages in the review that imply that by post-Soviet standards too, anti-Soviet refrains such as 'aiming at the Russkies between the eyes' are "too rough".³⁵ Temporal distantiation goes sometimes hand in hand with the spatial dimension. For example in an obituary for country'n'western singer Kitty Wells it is mentioned that there were attempts to ban her song *It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels* in 1952 in the USA.³⁶ The same goes for a couple of accounts on Soviet rock, as well as for the total of nine articles where Giuseppe Verdi's works, most notably *Un ballo in maschera*, are at issue. Furthermore, in relation to more recent events, in one particular commentary on the political significance of popular music, the fate of the Russian activist group Pussy Riot is juxtaposed with explicit reference to censorship of punk rock in its early days. The writer also highlights the promotional value of turmoil by quoting the lyrics of a song by a nationally well-known rock band, Eppu Normaali ('Abe Normal'): "The more you raise hoo-ha, the more your children love me."³⁷

With respect to spatial distantiation in a more contemporary sense in general, there are recurrent references to countries such as Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan and Russia. On the basis of this, then, the implication is that censorship is an activity conducted predominantly by various 'Oriental' populations and especially within Mus-

32 Şanar Yurdatapan, "Turkki: sensuuri eilen ja tänään," in *Ampukaa artisti! Musiikkisensuuri nykypäivänä*, ed. Marie Korpe (Helsinki: Like, 2006), 233–241.

33 Daniel Brown, "Rap ja sensuuri Ranskassa," in *Ampukaa artisti! Musiikkisensuuri nykypäivänä*, ed. Marie Korpe (Helsinki: Like, 2006), 242–255.

34 Samuli Tiikkaja, "Einojuhani Rautavaaran epäonninen esikoisoppera esitetään vihdoinkin," *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 24, 2010.

35 Vesa Karonen, "Kenttäpostia. Sota-ajan aarteet," *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 16, 2003.

36 Pertti Avola, "Kitty Wells säväytti esifeministisellä hitillä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 20, 2012.

37 Jyrki 'Njassa' Jantunen, "Rääväsuuta ei haluta Venäjälle," *Helsingin Sanomat*, August 20, 2012.

lim societies. There is however one curious incident over an interactive classical music radio show, where the absence of preselecting phone operators supposedly resulted in Swedish journalists becoming cautious about dealing with classical music in a humorous fashion in a live show: "In a meeting of Nordic radio people, the Danish and the Norwegians were excited about the programme, the Swedes disapproved. To embark upon a live broadcast without precensoring respondents feels, for some reason, too daring for classical music journalists."³⁸ Thus Finland emerges a less censorial country than Sweden.

Furthermore, as an extreme form of distantiation one may separate those instances where the argument is made, or the implication is, that censorship does not exist, or is not needed, in Finland. Regarding a non-profit, leftist radio channel operating on voluntary labour, it is maintained that:

Anarchy works. The channel has operated without disruption since 1988, and there has not been a need to censor anything. Not once has [the channel] got processed by the Council for Mass Media. Most discussion was raised by a feature on White Power music, broadcast in years past.³⁹

Likewise, in a reportage on a social-work-related rap project for pupils in a special school, rapper Steen1 who worked as an educator in the project, is quoted remarking that "[w]hen I originally heard of the project, I was worried that the fellas' texts will be censored. Luckily this has not happened". In the article, Steen1's own encounters with mass media regulation are mentioned too, not only in relation to the topics of his output but also due to his original stage name Steen Christensen, which is the real name of a Danish convict who killed two Finnish policemen in 1997.⁴⁰

In an article on a composing competition of new political songs in 1996, in turn, the instigator of the competition ponders his role especially in relation to the definition of a 'political song' and is quoted saying that he "decided not to become a censor of any kind." While this suggests a general anti-censorial stance with respect to contemporary Finland, in the article the competition is contrasted with the "Finnish governmental practice of an institution ordering critique from its subservients", thus suggesting that some form of censorial mechanisms do exist in the country. By that token, it might be also noted that the competition was not open but based on invitations sent by the instigator.⁴¹

Red rag

The quote emphasising the love for hoo-ha suggests that, in addition to various forms of spatiotemporal distantiation, it is possible to consider censorship as a kind of *red*

38 Milla von Konow, "Pajatso nauraa vakavalle musiikille," *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 26, 1995.

39 Sampsa Oinaala, "Lähiradiossa vallitsee vapaus," *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 26, 2011.

40 Panu Hietaneva, "Naulakallion pojat räppäävät elämästään," *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 27, 2006.

41 Miska Rantanen, "Työttömyys, läänien lakkauttamishanke ja harmaa talous uusien poliittisten laulujen aiheina," *Helsingin Sanomat*, August 31, 1996.

rag discourse. In this sense the C-word, as it were, incites a strong reaction and a pull towards the phenomenon. In other words, at issue is the ways in which the activity and the notion of censorship are connected to creating publicity, either intentionally or involuntarily. Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan for instance point to difficulties in analysing the financial effects of censorship in this respect, as some artists might even benefit from the curiosity stimulated by the media coverage of bans.⁴² The red rag discourse is intimately tied into the idea that there has been a gradual shift from first religious and then state censorship to something that may be called market censorship.⁴³ Here, however, the distinction between official 'censorial' intervention and commercial decision-making becomes blurred. On the other hand, the interrelations between business and the legal system, with respect to controlling freedom of expression, have long been recognised. According to Backman, freedom of press for instance, and in particular, needs to be understood as a combination of economic and democratic interests. In addition, by juxtaposing democratic parliamentarism with socialist regimes, he maintains that the former relies on economic power structures whereas the latter is grounded on state ownership.⁴⁴

Following German studies scholar Beate Müller, the notion of market censorship may be conceived as one dimension of a broader field of 'new censorship', constituted by different regulative and constitutive, or structural, manifestations as they are for instance inscribed in legislation or put to practice in different professional fields, such as mass communication. Müller, however, warns against over-employing the term in order to avoid confusion as well as "over-accentuating the similarities between professionalism and censorship".⁴⁵ This stance is echoed in my material in an interview, from 2001, of a major radio executive as he notes, first of all, that the music broadcast on one of the major public service radio channels is "accommodated to the average adult, domestic taste". Later, in relation to accusations of his censorial decisions especially in the 1980s, he juxtaposes censorship with "the application of a medium's decision-making procedures". Actual censorship, according to him, emerges only if a state official bans something.⁴⁶ This corresponds with Müller's definition of censorship proper as "an authoritarian control over what reaches the public sphere by someone other than the sender and the intended receiver of a message"; a control that "operates on the basis of official regulation (if not legislation), institutionalization, and administration of the control procedures in place".⁴⁷

In my material, however, the links between market forces and the notion of censorship are recurrent, while not very dominant. The links in question receive their most

42 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," 247.

43 Sue Curry Jansen, *Censorship. The Knot That Binds Power and Knowledge*. (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Cloonan, "Popular Music Censorship in Africa."

44 Eero Backman, "Sensuuri ja painovapaus oikeudellisina ilmiöinä," 109, 111.

45 Beate Müller, "Censorship and cultural regulation: mapping the territory," in *Censorship & Cultural Regulation in the Modern Age*, ed. Beate Müller (Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2004), 5, 9–10.

46 Tapio Siikala quoted in Timo Hämäläinen, "Radio ei enää tuo yhteisiä elämyksiä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 23, 2001.

47 Müller, "Censorship and cultural regulation," 12.

explicit form in a reportage on a theatre festival in 1995 where a group of playwrights and directors discussed the future of the art form. In the text, the drive towards producing stage comedies and musical plays are equated with "economic censorship".⁴⁸ A momentous sidetrack here nevertheless is that music as an aesthetic practice accrues censorial potential itself, as it hinders the production of allegedly proper theatre.

The promotional value of restricted access, in turn, is openly acknowledged in accounts on the "raunchy music videos" by rapper Petri Nygård that were removed from YouTube. Because of this, the artist is mentioned being "the most sought-after domestic public figure in [...] Google."⁴⁹ In a follow-up feature to this, he himself is quoted saying thus:

The Internet has always been my medium, 'cos there's no other channel for my music [. . .] Radios complain that this is too obscene and horrible to be played, and there ain't even a decent music channel on television in Finland [;] music is there mostly at a time of day when nobody is watching. Otherwise it's just reality and whatever shit they're broadcasting. This situation partly forces you there, into the net. [...] Sure it's always more interesting, like what the fuck they have in there, if a video has been censored [. . .]⁵⁰

A somewhat different take on the issue is provided by two articles on rock music, one dealing with the ways in which rock journalism is dependent on topics that are allegedly forbidden by record companies' marketing departments, and the other how the idea of censorship is utilised in the construction of romantic rock values especially in terms of authenticity. In the former, the constraints and prohibitions posed by the record companies are associated with attempts to build "a rock star cult", supported by an anecdote from an interview session with Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders: "the PR person listed forbidden topics to us, divorce and some others. In the interview, before we had time to say anything, Hynde started to talk about her divorce".⁵¹ In the latter, in turn, it is maintained that "[a]ccording to the orthodox rock myth, one must live on the edge, be decadent and an outsider – and preferably misunderstood and censored by the establishment".⁵²

A peculiar case implicated in the red rag discourse with its intimate association with the mass communication context, is constituted by a debate over one particular music video, namely *Mikan faijan BMW* ('Mike's Father's BMW') by artist Anssi Kela. On 9 February 2001 it was reported that the Telecommunications Administration Centre of Finland had suggested that the video be removed from the rotation of a music matinee on television, because of a visible suicide note and on the grounds of child welfare. The very next day, however, a TAC official denied all involvement and interest in the case – and it was revealed the same day that the decision not to air

48 Hannu Harju, "Pöytälaatikoiden helmet ja markkinavoimien möröt," *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 24, 1995.

49 Jyrki Räikkä, "Petri Nygård nousi rivoiksilla Google-kärkeen," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 8, 2010.

50 Jarkko Jokelainen, "Suomen etsityin mies," *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 11, 2010.

51 Noora Mattila, "Sitten kun levy on kaupoissa," *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 13, 2010.

52 Vesa Sirén, "Kurt Weil on rocktähtien suosikki," *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 25, 1996.

the video had in fact been made by the editorial team of the television programme in question.⁵³

IPR issues

Closely linked to the notion of market censorship, and fuelled by the discussion over the so-called digital revolution in particular, is the debate over the impact of digital technology and the challenges it has posed to the management of intellectual property rights (IPR). Here, a pivotal point of reference is constituted by the *Copyright Act*, most recently revised in Finland in 2010 to meet the technological changes. Regardless of technology, however, but within certain limitations, “copyright shall provide the exclusive right to control a work by reproducing it and by making it available to the public, in the original form or in an altered form, in translation or in adaptation, in another literary or artistic form, or by any other technique.”⁵⁴ It has been nevertheless pointed out by numerous scholars and cultural commentators that copyright legislation in general serves the interests of music publishing industry rather than individual artists. Swedish scholars Ulrik Volgsten and Yngve Åkerberg for instance maintain that copyright may in fact be interpreted as “an infringement on the democratic right to use one’s symbolic environment in free expression”, especially if, and when, it “is used to prohibit musical reuse on economic, rather than moral, grounds”.⁵⁵ Therefore, it is possible to talk about a discourse that centres on the notion of *IPR censorship*.

It probably comes as a surprise to no-one that the number of accounts pertaining to IPR censorship is highly biased, in quantitative terms, towards the last couple of years of the survey period; against six articles published between 2009 and 2012 there is only one other, from 1997. A distinctive feature in all the six more recent articles is, undoubtedly equally unsurprisingly, that they are in some way or another associated with cultural piracy and what is often explicitly labelled as ‘internet censorship’. In other words, there is a rather constant juxtaposition of opinions originating from within various strands of cultural industries, against arguments centring on freedom of expression from the end-user’s stance. Another peculiar characteristic in these six articles is that while music as a specific form of cultural expression was not always, if not very often at all, at the heart of the matter, there was always a reference made to downloading music. Also, when there were proponents of cultural industries interviewed, they represented the music industry.

A telling example is constituted by an account on the demand posed by the music producers’ association to one telephone operator to block access to the Pirate Bay website in 2011. In the article, Vice President of the Pirate Party is mentioned saying

53 “Jyrki poisti itsemurhasta viestivän videon televisiosta,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 9, 2001; “Telehallintokeskus ei sensuroinut videota,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 10, 2001.

54 *Copyright Act*, 404/1961, 2 §. Unofficial translation, accessed 30 May 2013. <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1961/en19610404.pdf>. Helsinki: Ministry of Education and Culture.

55 Ulrik Volgsten and Yngve Åkerberg, “Copyright, Music, and Morals. Artistic Expression and the Public Sphere,” in *Music and Manipulation. On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*, ed. Steven Brown and Ulrik Volgsten (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 350.

that to block Pirate Bay would constitute censorship; as a response to this, a representative of the music producers is quoted deeming such arguments naïve and maintaining that “[t]his has nothing to do with censorship; instead at issue is an intention to prevent an egregious infringement of copyrights”.⁵⁶ Another example, although with somewhat broader cultural and societal implications, concerns the introduction of the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement for the European Union to ratify in 2012. In the article, it is mentioned that Finland is less suspicious towards the agreement, whereas in comparison Germany, Poland and Holland are dubious towards it. Thus the implication is that Finland is more strongly governed and manipulated by copyright associations than some other European countries.⁵⁷

Self-censorship

The notion of self-censorship is a particularly delicate topic to touch upon in the context of Finland, due to the alleged period of Finlandisation during the Cold War. This adds a new layer to Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan’s remark that self-censorship can take the form of a “voluntary ban” in some situations and, at times, for “purely emotional (and perhaps even irrational) reasons”.⁵⁸ It should be noted though that the importance of socio-political surroundings with respect to self-censorship has been recognised. In the words of Mike Jones, at issue is in fact “perhaps the most disturbing and pernicious” form of censorship.⁵⁹ Yet for instance in Jones’s case, self-censorship takes place because of local or domestic disturbances, whereas the notion of Finlandisation rests on foreign relations – which is probably why it apparently is so troublesome for many a Finn, as it at least potentially poses a challenge to the integrity of national identity.

In my material the notion of self-censorship is not very often directly linked to the national past burdened by Finlandisation. In an album review from 1999, one particular and ostensibly eccentric musician is characterised as “at best [...] a verbalist, but this is seldom understood in this country of novelists, self-censorship and police”.⁶⁰ The notion of self-censorship is linked to the cultural climate of the mid-1960s also in an interview of a leading member of the so-called new song movement of those days, though with a reference to the restrictions concerning covert advertising in public service radio at the time.⁶¹ Here, then, self-censorship is equated with conscious market-oriented decisions over what to include in the lyrics. The implication also is that restrictions of covert advertising would be a phenomenon of the past. It may be that these kinds of restrictions are not so central within the public radio service anymore,

56 Teemu Luukka, “Musiikkituottajat vaatii Elisaa estämään pääsyn piraattisivustolle,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, May 27, 2011.

57 Virve Kähkönen, “Miljoonat vastustavat piraattisopimusta,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, February 29, 2012.

58 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, “Music Censorship from Plato to the Present,” 260.

59 Mike Jones, “Marxists in the Marketplace”, in *Policing Pop*, ed. Martin Cloonan and Reebee Garofalo (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 110.

60 Jukka Hauru, “Dave Lindholm: Valkoinen & Ranka,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 18, 1999.

61 Jukka Yli-Lassila, “Vielä kerran Vessa, vesiposti ja Mononen...”, *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 19, 2003.

but they are enforced by the Council of Mass Media in Finland. Thus one might argue that it would be entirely possible to claim that similar pressures towards self-censorship in this sense exist even today. Yet through an explicit connection to the 1960s the Finlandised past is evoked.

As a counter-tendency of sorts, one may note that the emotional and possibly irrational aspects of self-censorship are present in many of the articles, especially as a hindrance for high-quality artistic expression. For instance, the work of conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen is reviewed as dismantling “modernistic self-censorship”, which is also to distantiate censorial activities in temporal terms.⁶² The temporal dimension is also present in a review of a musical stage play, assessed as “the theatre event of the year 2010”, in which “un-censored” expression “revives the faith in socially conscious theatre”.⁶³ In a similar vein, there are references in the material to several music-oriented stage plays and musicals proper that include, according to the reviews in question, un-censored dance movements either in childlike or straightforward manner, or are unaffected by such (meta)physical constraints as “the censoring cortex”⁶⁴ or “censorship of feelings”.⁶⁵ Moreover, in a feature on contemporary folk vocalist Anna-Kaisa Lieder, she is quoted saying in relation to her artistic doctoral studies that “I let my body work and I stopped self-censorship”.⁶⁶ Furthermore, in an account of the television entertainment of the early 1990s, one particular comedy group is characterised as working “like a band. [...] People who know each other can throw jokes and ideas without censorship”.⁶⁷ While the prefix ‘self’ is missing here, the connection to mental processes is explicit.

In all these cases, then, the stance towards self-censorship is one that emphasises the lack of any emotional or psychological, even subconscious, restrictions as the prerequisite of top-notch art. While there are no direct references to the Finlandised variant of self-censorship, one may wonder to what extent this ‘artistic discourse’ at hand constitutes an extension and continuation of the psychosocial trauma of Finlandisation, as it were.

Conclusion

While the different variations of the discourse of distantiation are clearly dominant in my material, the existence of other discourses on censorship suggest two things in particular. First, that various dimensions of censorship are continuously present, albeit possibly only dormant. This is also to recognise that censorship is a discursive formation in the widest sense of the term, or a *dispositif*, referring to the ways in which the discursive and the material are intimately interrelated and intertwined. In other

62 Jukka Isopuro, “Stokowskin jalanjäljissä,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 3, 2007.

63 Maria Säkö, “Arvaamattomasta väkivallasta muodostuu teatteritapaus,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 24, 2010.

64 Jussi Tossavainen, “Suuntana luova hulluus,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, April 17, 1998.

65 Hannu Harju, “Kun tunteiden sensuuri murtuu,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, January 10, 1998.

66 Pirkko Kotirinta, “Lauluääni on kiinni luissa ja ytimissä,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 17, 2005.

67 “Viihde lepää vanhan varassa, televisio varoo riskejä,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, December 17, 1992.

words, at issue are, on one hand, concrete regulative mechanisms and practices with their equally concrete consequences, and, on the other, different ways to conceptualise, critique and justify the practices in question. The fact remains that the *Act of Audio-visual Programmes* does entail an element of pre-examination that corresponds to conventional notions of censorship to a considerable degree, yet there is not a single reference to the Act in my material. Instead, the instances worthy of the label 'censorship' are more contested in nature.

This leads directly to the second concluding point, namely that there is a constant struggle over who has the authority to define and use the notion of censorship. At this point in time in Finland at least, and maybe more widely in the so-called Western world, those who argue for its 'new' forms especially in relation to commercial and copyright-related forms tend to be dismissed as naïve and even being incorrect. Thus the circle is completed, as in this manner one returns to the confines of the discourse of distantiation. But, even in its most conventional and strictest comprehensions, censorship is not rendered obsolete or impossible in legal terms. Coming back to the *Constitution* of Finland, all "basic rights and liberties" are subject to restrictions under situations that "pose a serious threat to the nation", although within the limits of "international human rights obligations".⁶⁸ This, echoing Backman's words once more, suggests that "pre-censorship can be established in exceptional circumstances" and that in an societal crisis, "the face of pluralism accrues a different form".⁶⁹

While the *Constitution* is unabashedly nationalist in its formulation, the implication is that there always exists the possibility of circumstances in which to restrict freedom of expression is desirable and even necessary, in order to protect children and other groups. This leads back to the dynamics of censorship in terms of juxtaposing mass manipulation and humanitarian protection.⁷⁰ While wartime censorship has not been exercised in Finland for seven decades or so, one might speculate to what extent the financial crisis of the late noughties and early 2010s carries a similar potential of 'exceptional circumstances', due to the amplified stratification of societies in economic terms in particular. Add to this debates over multiculturalism, and one may argue that current circumstances are in fact acknowledged as exceptional to a certain level. While the Finnish legislation does not recognise the term 'hate speech', there have been incidents in which some prominent populist right-wing politicians have been sentenced to fines on the basis of ethnic agitation. Related to this is the emergent concern over literal threats expressed towards people who work with migrants or study multiculturalism and racism; reportedly, some of these people have become more cautious about their public performances, which in turn inevitably leads to less diversity in the public debate over the issue.⁷¹

With respect to music, the two very prominent topics in relation to multiculturalism, namely Islam and rap, are largely absent from the discussion on censorship that

68 *The Constitution of Finland*, 23 §.

69 Eero Backman, "Sensuuri ja painovapaus oikeudellisina ilmiöinä," 119.

70 Korpe, Reitov and Cloonan, "Music Censorship from Plato to the Present," 258.

71 Pöyhkäri, Haara and Raittila, *Vihapuhe sananvapautta kaventamassa*, 133–142.

actually takes place in 'post-Soviet' Finland. Certainly, various Islamic regimes are condemned because of their censorial activities against music, also in its acoustic form; yet this is but another reiteration about the prevalence of the discourse of distantiation. In comparison, one might note that while not explicitly linked to the notion of censorship but rather to the idea of banning music, the most vocal proponents for exclusion of music from schools have been converts to fundamentalist Islam with non-migrant backgrounds.

Regarding rap, in turn, it might be noted that while it is not a frequent topic in my material, as a specific genre of music it is accrued with a distinct potential of containing features that, in conventional terms, may be censored. It would be equally easy to write about the tendency or even requirement to equate 'immigrant rap' with English rather than Finnish language, but this does not happen too often; instead, it is the Finnish-language obscenities by 'white' Finnish rappers that yield commentary on possible censorial mechanisms in action. But here again, one is faced with the apparent and quite reasonable juxtaposition of censorship proper and socio-cultural conventions as a form of regulation. The point is, however, and despite different interest groups, that both, or all, of these forms can, and more importantly, most certainly *will* be labelled as censorship in a suitable context. In this way, and in this sense, censorship can always be enacted and operationalised, even if in its most obscure and inhuman ways:

If the Wonderful Mandarin suite by Bartók [...] in Tampere-talo was, in its violence, X-rated, [a day later] at the Helsinki Music Centre the same was only PG. The reason being the move from unsophisticated acoustics to censoring acoustics.⁷²

As if, in the end, there is no human agency involved in the most fundamental ways of censorship – save for the minor detail of constructing the acoustic spaces in the first instance, and also that somebody really *needs* to put the notion of censorship to work.

72 Jukka Isopuro, "Tampere filharmonian näytön paikat," *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 8, 2012.